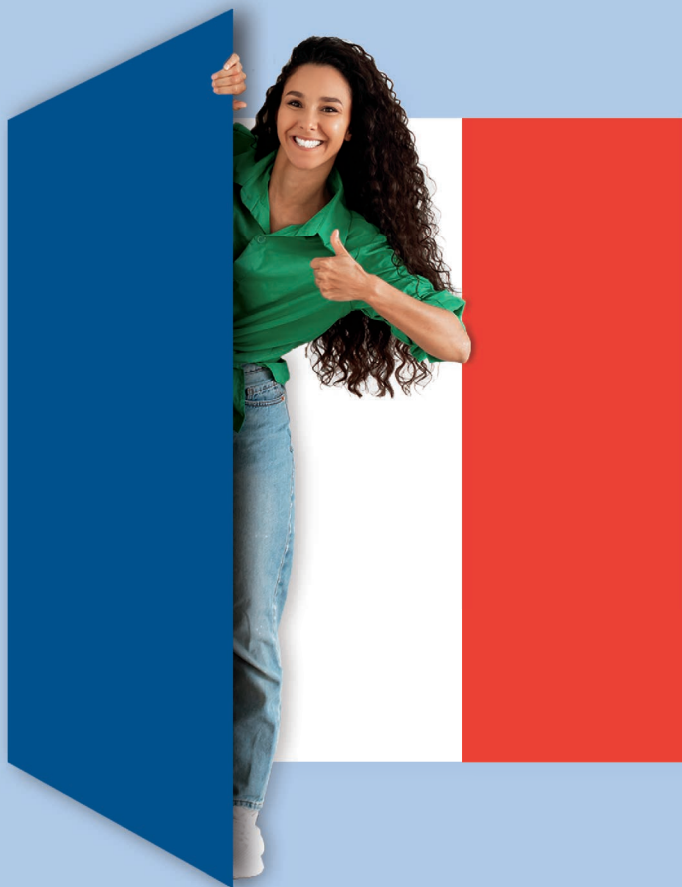


From  
‘learning to use’  
towards  
‘using to learn’?



*Long-term effects of structure-based versus dynamic usage-based programs for French*

Wim Gombert



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Groningen Dissertations in Linguistics 221

**Vakdidactiek**  
Geesteswetenschappen



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The work in this thesis has been carried out under the auspices of the Graduate School for Humanities (GSH) from the University of Groningen and the Center for Language and Cognition Groningen (CLCG) and was financed by the Dudoc-Alfa program.

Dit proefschrift werd ondersteund door het Dudoc-Alfa programma dat eerstegraads bevoegde docenten de mogelijkheid biedt om, naast hun baan in het onderwijs, vier jaar lang een promotieonderzoek uit te voeren op het terrein van de vakdidactiek van de geesteswetenschappen.

Het Dudoc-Alfa programma is een gezamenlijk initiatief van de faculteiten Letteren/ Geesteswetenschappen van de Open Universiteit, de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Tilburg University, de Universiteit Leiden, de Universiteit Utrecht, de Universiteit van Amsterdam en de Vrije Universiteit, in samenwerking met het Programmabureau Duurzame Geesteswetenschappen.

Dudoc-Alfa wordt gecoördineerd door een speciaal daarvoor ingestelde Stuurgroep Vakdidactiek Geesteswetenschappen. Het programma wordt mogelijk gemaakt door een subsidie die speciaal door het Ministerie van OC&W beschikbaar is gesteld in het kader van Duurzame Geesteswetenschappen.

ISBN: 978-94-6458-702-9

Cover: Gerhard Visker

Lay-out & printing by: Ridderprint | [www.ridderprint.nl](http://www.ridderprint.nl)

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# From “learning to use” towards “using to learn”?

Long-term effects of structure-based versus dynamic usage-based  
 programs for French

## **Proefschrift**

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de  
 Rijksuniversiteit Groningen  
 op gezag van de  
 rector magnificus prof. dr. C. Wijmenga  
 en volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties.

De openbare verdediging zal plaatsvinden op  
 donderdag 17 november 2022 om 16.15 uur

door

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geboren op 31 mei 1961  
 te Zwollerkerspel

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# VOORWOORD

---

## EEN LANGE ZOEKTOCHT

---

Bijna 40 jaar geleden begon ik aan mijn loopbaan als docent moderne vreemde talen. Al snel merkte ik dat de opleiding die ik daarvoor had gevolgd aan de Nieuwe Lerarenopleiding (NLO) te Nijmegen een goede was. Ook maakte ik daar kennis met de communicatieve methode, die net ontwikkeld was en die erg belangrijk werd gevonden voor de Europese eenwording. Immers, wat was nu beter voor de integratie van al die volken en culturen in Europa dan dat ze met elkaar in gesprek zouden gaan. Deze communicatieve methode leek in staat om deze integratie te versnellen.

Vol verwachting en met veel zelfvertrouwen begon ik op 22 augustus 1983 aan mijn baan als docent Frans en Engels op een middelbare school in de stad Groningen. Maar zoals veel startende docenten, heb ik een aantal jaren nodig gehad om mijn docentvaardigheden uit te breiden met een vaardigheid die je vooral in de praktijk leert: orde houden. Na een aantal jaren vooral gericht te zijn geweest op het ontwikkelen van deze fundamentele vaardigheid, kwam er ruimte om de focus te verplaatsen naar de kwaliteit van het lesgeven zelf. Want de kritische geest, die ik had ontwikkeld tijdens mijn opleiding in Nijmegen, kreeg ruimte om te reflecteren op de eigen praktijk. En wat ik zag, stemde me niet vrolijk. Mijn leerlingen konden prima in het Engels en het Frans lezen, ze hadden een goede beheersing van de grammatica, hadden heel veel belangrijke woorden en zinnen uit hun hoofd geleerd, kenden de onregelmatige werkwoorden uit hun hoofd maar spontaan een gesprekje voeren, dat werd lastiger, tenminste voor Frans. Voor Engels viel het nog wel mee.

Een tijdlang kon ik mijn geweten nog sussen met de gedachte dat ik leerlingen slechts tot halverwege hun leerroute bracht (het eind van de onderbouw) en dat mijn collega's in de bovenbouw de spreekvaardigheid wel goed zouden ontwikkelen. Immers, zo hield ik mezelf voor, ze moeten toch eerst veel leren voordat ze echt de taal kunnen gebruiken. Dat vond ik logisch. Voordat je kunt eten, moet je toch ook eerst boodschappen doen? Maar toen ik zelf Frans ging geven in bovenbouwklassen, ontdekte ik dat het lastiger was dan ik dacht om leerlingen na 5 of 6 jaar ook goed Frans te laten spreken. Het meest confronterende (en vervelende) moment was de toets spreekvaardigheid in de examenklas. Ik vroeg me regelmatig af waar ik 5 of 6 jaar mee bezig was geweest als ik tijdens de toets ontdekte dat de meeste leerlingen slechts uit het hoofd geleerde zinnestjes konden reproduceren.

Toen de frustratie hierover groeide, ben ik gaan zoeken. Hoe kon ik de spreekvaardigheid van mijn leerlingen op een niveau krijgen dat acceptabel was voor mij en voor hen? Deze vraag leidde tot een zoektocht die heel lang geduurd heeft en die mij bij verschillende mogelijke oplossingen bracht. Eerst zocht ik het antwoord in een verbeterde samenwerking tussen docenten in de vakgroep vanuit de gedachte dat leerlingen voortdurend te maken hadden met andere docenten die weer andere dingen belangrijk vonden en hun eigen accenten plaatsten. Een consistente aanpak door docenten zou effectiever moeten zijn. Ik geloof daar nog steeds in maar het zorgde niet voor een hoger niveau van de spreekvaardigheid. Vervolgens zocht ik het antwoord in het vergroten van de motivatie bij leerlingen. Ik werkte meer met eigen lesmateriaal naast de leergang. En dan vooral met muziek en met video, wat in die tijd een tamelijk nieuw medium was voor leerlingen. Leerlingen vonden de lessen inderdaad leuker en deden beter hun best maar ook dit zorgde niet voor een hoger niveau van de spreekvaardigheid. Daarna zocht ik een antwoord in de ICT. Ik had kennis gemaakt met een elektronische leeromgeving, ACE, waarin je als docent oefeningen kunt aanmaken die dan door leerlingen via internet gemaakt kunnen worden en meteen gecorrigeerd worden door het systeem. In een aantal jaren heb ik de grammatica en de luistervaardigheidstraining van een complete onderbouwmethode gedigitaliseerd en kon ik online bekijken of leerlingen goed hun best deden. Dit leverde veel tijdswinst op: Elke les spaarde ik op die manier 15-20 minuten die ik kon inzetten voor het ontwikkelen van de spreekvaardigheid. Het leek het ei van Columbus: Efficiënter en moderner werken zou wellicht ook motiverender zijn. En ik kon inderdaad meer tijd besteden aan de ontwikkeling van de spreekvaardigheid. Maar het gedroomde hogere eindniveau voor spreken kwam er niet. Ik had nog steeds geen antwoord op mijn vraag.

Maar ik ging verder met zoeken en zocht het hele internet af naar informatie. In november 2011 las ik op internet de masterscriptie van Audrey Rouse-Malpat over de AIM methodiek en was blij verrast: Als de helft van wat zij beweerde waar was, moest ik die methodiek hebben. Ik heb vervolgens alle mogelijke trainingen gevolgd in Amsterdam en in Canada (de bakermat van de AIM methodiek) en heb in 2012 de methodiek ingevoerd. Al snel had ik door dat leerlingen inderdaad veel beter werden in spreken. Mijn zoektocht leek ten einde. Ik had een antwoord op mijn vraag: Natuurlijk is het goed als docenten op één school een consistente werkwijze hanteren, als er motiverende werkvormen worden gebruikt en als de tijd efficiënt gebruikt wordt. Maar er is meer nodig voor het effectief ontwikkelen van de spreekvaardigheid: een consistente aanpak die gebruik maakt van de nieuwste inzichten vanuit onderzoek over hoe een vreemde taal het best geleerd kan worden: Dompel leerlingen onder in de vreemde taal, daag ze uit om deze actief te gebruiken. Maximaliseer het gebruik van de doeltaal in de les en zorg ervoor dat leerlingen de taal ook durven gebruiken doordat ze niet meer bang zijn om fouten te maken.

Maar bovenal: Ik ontdekte dat de vergelijking met boodschappen doen als voorwaarde om te kunnen eten, niet opging: Het is beter om de vreemde taal te leren door deze meteen te gebruiken dan deze pas te gaan gebruiken als je genoeg geleerd hebt. Het wordt er ook nog eens veel leuker door.

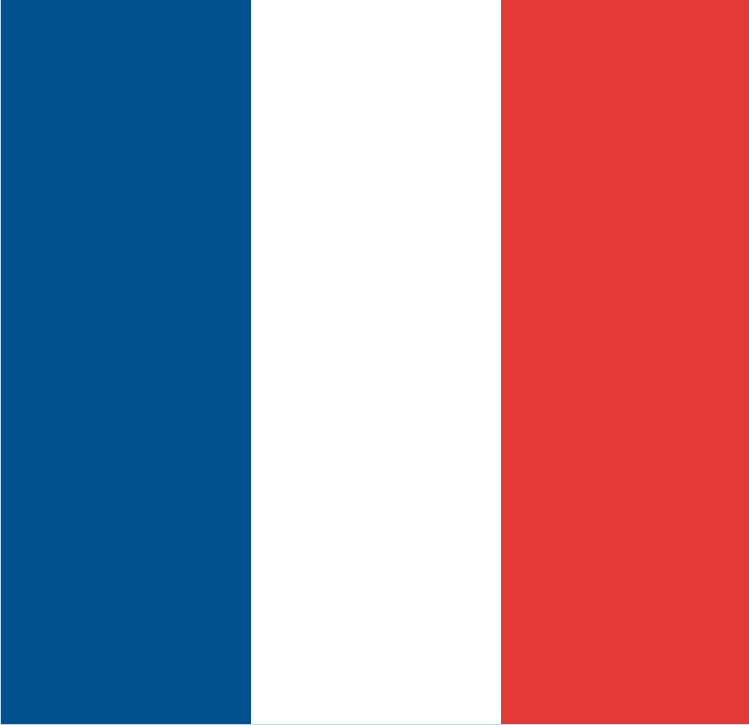
Tenslotte kon ik een lang gekoesterde droom in vervulling laten gaan: “werken aan de grenzen van het weten”. Ik heb wetenschappelijk onderzoek kunnen doen naar de effectiviteit van deze methodiek. Hiermee hoop ik veel docenten in de toekomst te kunnen overtuigen van het feit dat het echt mogelijk is om een hoger niveau van spreekvaardigheid te krijgen bij leerlingen. En het mooiste is, dat je werk er veel leuker door wordt!

---

## **DANK!**

Deze zoektocht is mogelijk gemaakt door verschillende personen die ik daar erg dankbaar voor ben. Om te beginnen mijn ouders die, ondanks dat het niet hun wereld was, mij toch stimuleerden om te gaan studeren. Ik had ze er erg graag bij gehad tijdens de verdediging. Verder natuurlijk Tineke, mijn echtgenote en mijn maatje, die mijn gemopper en frustratie wel eens zat was maar mij toch van harte is blijven steunen tijdens mijn zoektocht. Vervolgens Wendy Maxwell, die AIM heeft ontwikkeld vanuit een herkenbare frustratie: Ook zij raakte gefrustreerd over wat haar leerlingen (niet) konden na 6 jaar. En natuurlijk Audrey Rousse-Malpat die mij op het spoor gezet heeft van AIM en die mij ook heeft geïntroduceerd in de wereld van de taalwetenschap. Samen vervolgen we nu een reis waarbij we docenten Frans willen helpen om de Franse lessen zodanig in te richten dat het niveau van spreekvaardigheid verhoogd wordt. Tenslotte Marjolijn Verspoor en Merel Keijzer die mij begeleid hebben bij dit onderzoek en voortdurend heel kritisch, gedegen, inspirerend en motiverend commentaar gaven op wat ik deed en schreef. Ik vond jullie begeleiding erg fijn en ik heb heel veel van jullie geleerd.

Uiteraard zijn er nog vele anderen geweest die mij gesteund en geholpen hebben tijdens deze lange reis: schoolleiders die mij gefaciliteerd hebben, collega's die mij gemotiveerd hebben, familie, vrienden en bekenden die hun belangstelling toonden, medewerkers en collega-promovendi binnen de vakgroep Applied Linguistics van de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen die mij geholpen hebben en samen met mij naar verre plaatsen zijn geweest voor het bezoeken van congressen. En niet te vergeten DudocAlfa. Dit programma zorgde niet alleen voor facilitering in de zin van een beurs waardoor ik vier jaar lang drie dagen per week vrijgesteld was van lessen maar ook voor ondersteuning in de vorm van de halfjaarlijkse intervisieweekenden in Ede waarin gedegen trainingen en prettige intervisiesessies plaats vonden maar waar het ook heel erg gezellig was.



# CHAPTER 1

---

## INTRODUCTION

In her dissertation on the development of French in the Netherlands, Voogel (2018) describes the state of teaching French as a Foreign Language (FFL) in the Netherlands based on a survey among teachers of FFL and 25 follow-up interviews in 2015 (first published in a professional magazine for teachers; Voogel, 2016).

According to Voogel (2016), teachers of FFL in the Netherlands signaled a vast decline of perceived importance of French following major educational reforms at the end of the 20th century. She pointed to various contributing factors: a significant reduction in instruction time over the past two decades, increased competition from other foreign languages and other subjects such as science and economics; the steep decrease of the number of higher educational programs that require French and the increased importance of English, Mathematics and Dutch in the secondary school curriculum as a result of their newly gained status of core subjects in the curriculum.

Voogel adds to this that, in a society in which social, economic, and political importance have come to dominate choices at all levels, French is considered less important than before and a reduction of classroom time for French seems a logical choice. At the classroom level, the decline of the status of French inevitably led to a reduction of the number of students opting to study French (Voogel, 2016).

However, other factors mentioned by French teachers themselves (as revealed in Voogel's questionnaire) suggest that there might be more to it than just a negative spin-off caused by a decline of social, economic, or political importance as perceived by students and parents in the light of the changed curriculum. Students might also be less attracted to French (and German) because they do not expect to achieve a high level and to learn what they really want to learn, as is the case with English as a foreign language. Teachers in the survey mention that students often perceive French to be a particularly difficult language to learn. They also point out that only reading skills are tested in the final exams. These are seen as important reasons for a decline in the number of students opting for French to complement their secondary school curriculum.

Several attempts to make the French classroom attractive again were mentioned by the French teachers who completed the survey, such as organizing extracurricular projects, using technological devices, or organizing educational trips to France, but none of these led to a long-term and substantial increase in interest in French as a secondary school subject. Although these attempts undoubtedly resulted in a higher level of motivation in specific and individual French classrooms, teachers did not report a higher level of skills or a higher number of students opting for French as a result overall. Only one positive development was mentioned by these same teachers: the number of candidates who registered for the French DELF<sup>1</sup> exam, which is a highly esteemed, international exam, did rapidly increase.

---

1 Diplôme d'études de langue française (DELF) is the French equivalent of the Cambridge exam. Students in regular secondary schools can opt to sit this external exam and receive an internationally recognized certificate. In addition to the regular teaching programs for French in secondary schools, students can decide to enroll in follow-up courses depending on their level and prepare for the DELF exams in all four skills at all levels (A1, A2, B1 and B2).

In short, as part of the survey conducted in 2015 by Voogel, three aspects emerged that French teachers in the Netherlands then mentioned as developments to have detrimentally influenced the popularity of French in the Dutch secondary school curriculum: the decline of the importance of FFL in the curriculum, the experienced difficulty of French and the focus on written skills over spoken proficiency. Unfortunately, different short-term attempts to revive FFL have failed to be effective, and the overall picture that emerged from this survey is a rather negative one.

The claims made by teachers of FFL, as reported in the survey (Voogel, 2016; 2018), appear to be justified and the disappointment they expressed is understandable. Disappointingly, however, no teacher who participated in this survey reported any attempt to opt for a different approach to teaching French as a foreign language or adapt their teaching program in accordance with what second language development researchers have reported in terms of effective foreign language instruction (cf. chapter 2). Teachers can autonomously decide to reform the curriculum in an attempt to provide an impetus to the overall effectiveness of FFL. The only positive development mentioned by these same teachers, the number of candidates who registered for the French DELF exam that showed an increase, suggests that curriculum reforms might be a promising direction for the revival of FFL: The DELF exam assesses all four skills and expects students to follow a supplementary teaching program, which enables learners to develop these four skills to the level expected for the exam. This is in stark contrast with a sole focus on reading skills, as is the case with the regular exam.

Voogel's analysis of the decline of French in secondary schools is valuable as it presents a clear picture of the situation in 2015. This situation seems, unfortunately, largely unchanged at present (cf. Michel et al., 2021). It is therefore all the more vital that changes are implemented in the FFL curriculum. With the Common European Framework for Reference to Languages (European Parliament, 2022) stipulating fluency in at least two foreign languages other than the native language, it is high time to show that the perceived difficulty in learning French and perceived impossibility of obtaining high levels of French language proficiency are largely due to the way the subject has been and mostly continues to be taught.

No curriculum reform can be instantiated without a solid foundation of research insights from the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). FFL teaching programs, like other foreign language teaching programs in the Netherlands, are predominantly designed from a structure-based perspective: a great deal of time is used for (explicit) instruction and practice with grammar (West & Verspoor, 2016) and for developing reading comprehension strategies (Voogel, 2018). The focus on grammar is often motivated by foreign language teachers as essential for developing writing skills, while the focus on reading seems to be a logical consequence of the fact that the final exam in the Netherlands is a reading comprehension test. As the use of the native language (L1) in the classroom is thought necessary due to the nature of grammar instruction

and reading strategies, target language use is often minimal (West & Verspoor, 2016). But this focus on grammar and reading may be at the expense of the development of oral skills (speaking and listening), as very little class time is left to practice such skills.

Although most foreign language teachers in the Netherlands regret this situation and would like to have more of a focus on oral skills in their programs (Voogel, 2018), the importance attributed to grammar and reading prevents these same teachers from changing the teaching program. Adding to this complex picture of foreign language teaching in the Netherlands is the growing influence of available coursebooks and the workload of Dutch foreign language teachers. According to Westhoff (2004, p. 108) innovation in foreign language teaching stagnates because of a lack of appropriate course materials. As profit is the primary goal of educational publishers, coursebook design is usually based on commercial interests and Dutch teachers of modern foreign languages (who are claimed to be highly dependent of coursebooks, according to Westhoff) prioritize “educational comfort” over “effectiveness” when choosing new course materials. This may in large part be due to the workload of Dutch teachers, which is considered relatively high when compared to the workload of foreign language teachers in other countries. As part of a fulltime position, the workload for Dutch foreign language teachers generally amounts to 30% more classes compared to their European colleagues abroad, with on average 30-40% more students in their classes (Westhoff, 2004; p. 86). As a result, Dutch teachers have less time available to prepare classes, making them more dependent on readily available coursebooks. Despite communicative claims, these coursebooks still largely follow a structure-based design, emphasizing grammar and reading strategies, and often encouraging the L1 as the language of instruction in teacher manuals (Westhoff, 2004; West & Verspoor, 2016).

## **PERSONAL RATIONALE FOR THE CURRENT STUDY**

---

Like Voogel’s respondents, I had become frustrated as an FFL teacher in that my students were not able to speak French after six years of instruction. They could read and understand French but did not feel confident enough to speak. I had been using traditional FFL methods up until then, but in 2011 I decided to change and use a different method, the Accelerated Integrative Method (AIM) (Maxwell, 2001; Arnott, 2011) with a new cohort starting their first year of secondary school. Both the traditional methods and AIM are supposed to be communicative in nature, but the traditional methods that the school at which I worked employed, contained a great deal of explicit grammar and could be considered structure-based (SB) in nature, which may be considered a weak version of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The AIM method contained a great deal of target language exposure, with a great deal of repetition built in and could be considered dynamic usage-based (DUB) in nature, which may be considered a strong version of CLT.



In 2014, I was asked to participate in Rouse-Malpat's longitudinal research project in which she compared the effectiveness of FFL traditional programs with AIM at the end of three years (Rouse-Malpat, 2019). At that time, I was still teaching the older cohorts (those who sat their final exams in 2015 and 2016) on the basis of traditional coursebook methods. Inspired by Rouse-Malpat's research, I decided it would be a good time to investigate learning outcomes after six years of traditional methods and compare them with the learning outcomes of the younger AIM cohorts (who sat their exams in 2017-2019).

Rouse-Malpat in her work (2019) had focused on productive skills only (speaking and writing), but I decided to test the students not only on speaking and writing but also on reading and listening, especially because FFL teachers seem to believe that only a structure-based (SB) approach can prepare students adequately for such skills that to a large degree determine the final exam grade. Voogel (2016) indicated that teachers find it hard to prepare students for the final exams and develop communicative competence at the same time. This opinion is based on the assumption that it is necessary to spend a great deal of time on reading in general and on exam training in particular to prepare for the final exam and that explicit grammar instruction is necessary to avoid errors and develop writing skills (Gunnarson, 2012). Such assumptions lead to an increase in time spent on written skills (reading and writing) at the expense of oral skills (listening and speaking). As a result, mainstream FFL teaching programs can be characterized as weak versions of CLT: they are structure-based with a heavy focus on written skills, and little attention to oral skills. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that schools which used a DUB approach in the first three years often continue with an SB approach in the final three years, as they fear that a DUB approach cannot prepare students adequately for the final exams. Of the 80 schools in the Netherlands which currently employ the AIM method in the first three years of their curriculum, only a limited number continue to apply AIM principles in the final three years, and usually revert to French coursebooks instead. Indeed, whether a full DUB approach for six years can also prepare students adequately for the final exams in terms of reading and writing skills, is an empirical question and one that many FFL teachers in the Netherlands need an answer to before they feel comfortable to implement changes. Therefore, this dissertation aims to compare SB and DUB FFL learners after 6 years of instruction on reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

To meet this aim, the following research question forms the foundation of this study:

*How does a weak CLT approach based on structure-based principles compare to a strong CLT approach based on DUB principles after six years of instruction with regard to receptive (reading and listening) and productive (writing and speaking) FFL skills?*

To answer this question, this study compares the learning outcomes of the two different FFL teaching programs in Dutch VWO (pre-university education). One program follows a mostly SB design realized by means of two complementary coursebooks, both of which are commonly used in the Netherlands. The other program is the AIM program, which itself complies with DUB perspectives on language development.

Rather than looking at its effects after 3 years of instruction, the study reported in this dissertation compare an SB and a DUB approach (realized by means of coursebooks versus the AIM method, respectively) after the full six years of pre-university education in the Netherlands.

## **AN OVERVIEW OF THIS DISSERTATION**

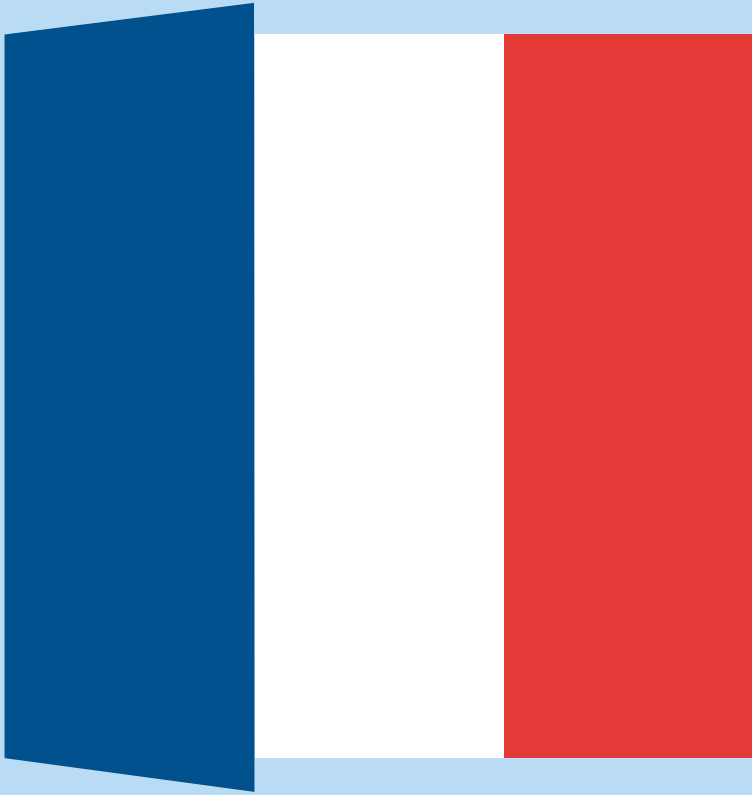
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Chapter 2 presents a brief history of foreign language teaching practices, ending with CLT, which can itself be subdivided into a weak and a strong version. It is argued that an SB view of language can be related to and equated with weak versions of CLT and a DUB view of language to strong versions.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the general design that formed the foundation of this study and the challenges faced in the study comparing the SB and DUB approaches to FFL instruction. Chapter 3 presents general information to place the separate studies that are reported in subsequent chapters in a bigger framework. It concludes with a brief summary of each study reported in Chapters 4-7.

Chapter 4 explores how receptive skills develop as a function of the two different teaching methods after six years of instruction. Chapter 5 does the same for writing skills and chapter 6 presents more details by exploring the use of chunks in writing. Finally, chapter 7 presents a study targeting how speaking skills develop after six years of either one of the two teaching methods. Chapter 8, then, summarizes the findings of the separate studies and will attempt to relate these to the SLA literature, completing the research and teaching cycle.





# CHAPTER 2

---

## **COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN PRACTICE: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

The study reported in this dissertation aims to compare the effects of two communicative methods of teaching French as a Foreign Language (FFL) after six years of instruction. The first, structure-based (SB), could be considered a “learning to use” approach and the second, Dynamic Usage-based (DUB), a “using to learn” approach. This chapter presents a brief history of some major foreign language learning approaches and assumptions as they historically shaped both the research field and educational practices; its main aim is to detail the differences between the two communicative approaches, explicating why a structure-based view of language is more in line with a “learning to use” approach and a usage-based view on language with a “using to learn” approach. This chapter thus builds the foundations for this dissertation’s work, linking linguistic theory with the empirical findings of subsequent chapters.

## LEARNING TO USE VERSUS USING TO LEARN

When observing major changes in the L2 learning paradigm through time, they all represent steps in the development from a rather theoretical approach in which L2 learning was thought to contribute to the development of intellectual competence towards a more pragmatic approach, in which L2 competence was considered necessary for the development of communicative skills. Howatt (1984), describing different Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) practices, introduced two terms to describe these two approaches to L2 learning and development: “learning to use language”, in which L2 learning leads to L2 use, and “using to learn language”, in which L2 use leads to L2 learning (Howatt, 1984; p. 279). In order to explain the differences, it is necessary to describe some major steps in the development of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as a research field first and the insights that resulted from these steps.

## THE EARLY HISTORY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Latin, which was the only foreign language studied five centuries ago, gradually lost its status of language of spoken and written communication from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and ‘modern’ languages like French, Italian and English, started being studied as well. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, foreign language teaching in these languages was mainly inspired by the study of classical Latin in which grammar analysis and rhetoric were important elements. In so-called “grammar schools”, foreign language learning practice focused on the learning of grammar rules, verb conjugations, translation and on writing accurate sentences (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This approach to foreign language teaching is generally referred to as the Grammar translation method and its characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

**TABLE 1.** Characteristics of the grammar-translation method

1. The goal of foreign language learning is to be able to read its literature and to develop intellectual abilities.
2. Written skills (reading and writing) are the main focus of teaching.
3. Input is provided by bilingual (L1-L2) word lists (contextualized by means of L2 texts) and grammar rules.
4. Language practice is usually limited to writing correct sentences.
5. Lexical and grammatical accuracy are considered the most important measures in writing.
6. Deductive grammar teaching is the standard (studying the rule is followed by practice through translation).
7. The L1 is used as language of instruction.

based on Richards & Rodgers (2014, pp. 6-7)

## FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE 20TH CENTURY

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In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many factors influenced foreign language teaching and prompted a move towards oral proficiency as the primary target of foreign language teaching: As a result of the United States entering World War II, the US army needed fluent users of different languages as interpreters, code-room assistants and translators. Special army programs consisted of intensive oral practice aimed at attaining a high conversational proficiency which before that time had not been the main aim of existing foreign language courses (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Post-World War II immigration in the United States, which was massive as illustrated by Kirk and Huyck (1954), the internalization of education and globalization led to an increase of the need for oral interaction between speakers of different languages outside the army. This resulted in the global spread of English for social, cultural, political, and economical purposes around the world (Hüppauf, 2004), and to a redesign of the prevalent foreign language courses at the time to facilitate oral proficiency.

Approaches like the Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching were a result of this increased importance attributed to oral proficiency (Richards & Rodgers, 2014) in teaching English as a foreign language. British applied linguists started studying the content of language programs systematically, using methodological principles relating to selection, gradation and presentation of lexical and grammatical L2 content. These systematic accounts led to a fundamental change in the foreign language curriculum that spanned far beyond the British borders. In this approach to L2 teaching, which thus originated in Great Britain and came to be known as the Oral Approach (Richards & Rodgers, 2014), the choice for vocabulary to be studied was based on frequency. Attention to grammar, furthermore, was reduced to basic grammatical patterns needed to communicate.

In the 1960s, a situational element was introduced as a key feature of the Oral approach, whereby new linguistic items (words mainly) were embedded and offered to learners within contextual cues and (often visual) aids in instructional materials. This led to the use of the term Situational Language Teaching as a subtype of the Oral approach. Both the Oral approach and Situational Language Teaching considered oral skills and oral language proficiency as the primary goal of language learning and proposed a type of behaviorist, habit-learning instructional design and an inductive approach to grammar for L2 teaching programs (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In a behaviorist, habit-learning design, knowledge is received by the learner as input, and anchored into memory by repetitive, imitative drills before being able to use a given language construction or word in actual practice without hesitation and without thinking (French, 1955; Frisby, 1964).

Around this same time period, the audiolingual approach emerged, based on the previously mentioned “Army Method” (VanPatten & Williams, 2015). In this behavioristic approach, inspired by the prominent school of behavioral psychology (Cf.



Skinner, 1957), repeated imitation of correct models (stimulus-response pattern drills) was seen as crucial in foreign language learning: Learning happens when a stimulus elicits behavior in the sense that it triggers a response, and reinforcement is provided to guide the learner in activating the right response: positive when the response is appropriate and negative when the response is inappropriate. Maximal use of the target language for instruction was seen as necessary to prevent the students' L1 from interfering in this process.

Where L2 performance through practice and input frequency was the primary focus of the audiolingual method, L2 competence was the primary focus in Chomsky's linguistic theory that came to heavily influence L2 research from the 1970s onwards. Departing from Chomskyan theorizing, the focus was very much on how such grammatical competence could be achieved (for a more nuanced take on this view, see Hulstijn et al., 2015).

## **THE COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) APPROACH**

Building on earlier language teaching developments that prioritized oral proficiency, such as the Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching, CLT came to dominate foreign language teaching in the world in the 1970s, and communicative competence replaced grammatical competence as the central notion in foreign language teaching. CLT approaches adopted a broader view of language in which both L2 competence and L2 performance were deemed important. Communicative competence came to be viewed as the ultimate goal of language teaching (Hymes, 1972) and an accumulative result of other competences like grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). The acquisition of linguistic resources needed to serve L2 performance (Halliday, 1970) and L2 acquisition was considered to emerge on the basis of communicative acts underlying the ability to use language for different purposes (Widdowson, 1978).

Partly coinciding and following this CLT shift was a political movement for a united Europe, with intercultural awareness of European citizens and the interaction between these citizens being considered as important tools. As a result, the Council of Europe prioritized language teaching and the further development of CLT was supported by the Council of Europe's activities in the final decades of the 20th century (European parliament, 2022). While the focus of a traditional syllabus at the time was generally restricted to linguistic forms like grammar and vocabulary acquisition and drills, a CLT syllabus was more skills-based and focused on communicative handling given situations or topics as well as grammar and vocabulary that came to be integrated thematically in such situations and topics (Van Ek & Alexander, 1980). And while a traditional, grammar-based methodology focused on the accurate comprehension and production of sentences and grammatical patterns, often using teacher-fronted, lecture-type

activities, the CLT approach focused on meaningful interaction in which errors were to be accepted as part of the learning process, placing fluency on a par with accuracy in terms of importance. As such, CLT proponents advocated an inductive approach to the teaching of grammar, with an emphasis on pair and group work.

## **THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CLT APPROACH IN TEACHING PRACTICES**

Despite these clear intentions advocating oral proficiency, the movement towards CLT that started in the 1970s has led to different versions which, according to Howatt (1984), can be labeled as either “weak”, when the focus is on the acquisition of knowledge which is seen instrumental to communication or “strong”, when the focus is on communication which is seen instrumental to the acquisition of knowledge. Scholars like Dörnyei (2009), Waters (2012), Lightbown and Spada (2013) and Richards and Rodgers (2014) all argue that most CLT inspired teaching programs in the world can still be considered structure-based in that such programs continue to have a strong focus on learning linguistic items (grammar rules, words, spelling, pronunciation) and on learning comprehension strategies rather than their productive counterparts. As a result, many CLT programs should in actual fact be considered a weak version of CLT in accordance with the distinction made by Howatt (1984). This view was supported by Waters (2012) who, after reviewing CLT approaches and methods since 1995, found evidence of increased advocacy of the “communicating to learn” orientation at the theoretical SLA research level, while at the level of classroom practice the “learning to communicate” orientation had come to dominate.

According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), it was the initial lack of theoretical insights as to L2 language learning, combined with the vast popularity of the CLT approach all over the world in the early years of CLT, that might very well have led to this great variety of different, sometimes even seemingly incompatible, instructional designs that all fall under the umbrella term CLT. Long (2000) pointed out that, at the time, there was not one widely accepted theory of language learning and Chomsky’s view of language focused mainly on syntax and grammar, with rather predictable rules. CLT practices were thus implicitly based on a vast amount of formal or structural theory of language, and there was only a limited amount of theory on language learning that lay at the basis of CLT teaching practices (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Only Johnson (1982) proposed elements like “real communication” and “meaningful tasks” to support the language learning process. In later stages of CLT practices, however, Johnson (1984) and Littlewood (1984) proposed a skill-model of learning in support of CLT teaching, involving cognitive and behavioral aspects.

This model was based on different existing theories at the time: First, the creative-construction hypothesis, which states that input from the target language is essential

and language learning naturally results from this input as it triggers learners to constantly formulate hypotheses and have prospective expectations about the patterns of the language (cf. Dulay & Burt, 1975, who later inspired Stephen Krashen to formulate his monitor theory); Second, the interactional theory, which claims that language acquisition results from the natural interaction between children and their environment, more specifically, parents or caregivers (cf. Rudd & Lambert, 2011) and, finally, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning, which postulates that language learning primarily occurs during social interactions between individuals followed by individual internalization of social behaviors (cf. Lantolf, 1994). As a result of the introduction of this skill-model of learning, CLT teaching practices came to be founded on key notions such as input-focused attention (creative construction theory), meaningful interaction (interactional theory), negotiation of meaning, feedback and scaffolding (sociocultural theory).

## **KRASHEN'S HYPOTHESES**

Another important shift of focus occurred when Stephen Krashen introduced different hypotheses relating to second language acquisition. As part of the monitor hypothesis, Krashen (1978) explains the relationship between acquisition and learning: the acquisition system is responsible for spontaneous L2 production, while the learning system acts as a safeguard by monitoring and editing L2 production. According to Krashen, the role of the monitor is minor and varies per learner as a function of, for instance, the degree of self-confidence.

In his acquisition-learning hypothesis, Krashen (1981) distinguishes between language acquisition resulting from a subconscious process in an inductive and learner-centered approach and language learning that emerges from a conscious process of learning through formal instruction in a deductive and teacher-centered approach. According to Krashen, language learning often involves translation and the use of the L1 and only results in language knowledge, while language acquisition focuses on communication and results in mastery of the language in conversation.

In the affective filter hypothesis, Krashen (1982) distinguishes a number of affective variables which facilitate second language acquisition: motivation, self-confidence, anxiety and personality. In Krashen's view, successful learners are extroverted and self-confident, have a low level of anxiety and a high level of motivation. Low motivation, low self-esteem, anxiety and introversion, on the other hand, can raise the affective filter and impede language acquisition. In his input hypothesis, Krashen (1985) explains that the process of acquisition starts with comprehensible input which he defines as "i+1" (one step beyond the current level of linguistic competence) in line with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Krashen claims that language acquisition follows a natural order, which should be guiding for teachers when designing a syllabus.

Finally, in the natural order hypothesis, Krashen (1987) suggests that, although studies clearly show a natural and predictable order with regard to the acquisition of grammatical structures, a language syllabus should never be sequenced in line with this natural order.

Although Krashen's hypotheses have received much criticism (for an excellent overview, see Zafar, 2009), they are particularly valuable because they have shed a different light on the process of learning a foreign language. Based on the then prevalent Chomskyan view of language and innateness, Krashen's hypotheses added to the growing importance of exposure to the L2 and of the implicitness of (subconscious) language acquisition.

A decade later, Lewis introduced the lexical approach (Lewis, 1993), in which grammatical rules were viewed as lexical patterns. In support of the lexical approach, Schmitt and Schmitt (2000) developed a cognition-based learning theory based on the finiteness of human short-term memory, which drives our brain to prefer storing lexical chunks (prefabricated sequences, fixed expressions, grammatical patterns, etc.) instead of individual words. Under this premise and based on these developments, the role of grammar teaching was significantly reduced, but the movement was also met with considerable reservations in foreign language teaching, perhaps because the newly proposed methods were not seen as consistent with the still dominant and widely accepted Chomskyan linguistic theory.

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## FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AS INFORMED BY SLA RESEARCH

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VanPatten and Williams (2015, p. 9-11) summarize what we know about SLA as a result of a vast research tradition. Table 2 lists their 10 most robustly attested observations with regard to SLA, based on well-established empirical findings, which are very much in line with a strong version of CLT.

**TABLE 2.** Ten observations for effective L2 learning

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1. Exposure to input is a prerequisite for SLA.
  2. A considerable amount of SLA happens incidentally.
  3. Learners come to know more than what they have been exposed to in the input.
  4. Learners' output (speech) often follows predictable paths with predictable stages in the acquisition of a given structure.
  5. SLA is variable in its outcome.
  6. SLA is variable across linguistic subsystems.
  7. There are limits as to the effects of frequency of exposure on SLA.
  8. A learner's first language does not exert great influence on the SLA trajectory.
  9. There are limits as to the effects of instruction on SLA.
  10. There are limits as to the effects of output (learner production) on language acquisition.
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Based on VanPatten and Williams (2015, p. 9-11)

Unfortunately, despite the advances in theoretical insights into SLA, strong CLT practices with a great deal of exposure and interaction only sparsely came to be implemented in the foreign classroom, and teachers to this day often prefer weaker CLT versions with remnants of the older grammar-translation approach. Dörnyei (2009) gives two pragmatic reasons as to why teachers all over the world continue to adopt such approaches. Teachers rely heavily on ready-to-use textbooks, as they offer safe and easy-to-implement teaching materials in situations where class sizes are predominantly large and where teachers experience a huge workload or have insufficient L2 communicative competence. Moreover, knowledge and skills that emerge from such weak CLT approaches can easily be assessed by discrete-point (multiple choice) tests (Dörnyei, 2009, p.273).

In the same vein, Lightbown and Spada (2013) state that, despite the communicative intentions proclaimed by the CLT movement, language teaching all over the world can still be characterized as predominantly structure-based (SB), evidenced by modern coursebooks designed from CLT perspectives. By extension, most language teaching practices in secondary schools around the world can still be characterized as explicit and grammar based.

## **STRUCTURE-BASED VERSUS USAGE-BASED VIEWS ON LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

As Long (2000) pointed out, at the time when CLT was introduced, there was no widely accepted linguistic theory that could directly support such communicative language teaching and its emphasis on exposure. From the grammar-translation method to communicative methods, the basic view of what language is, has remained structure-based. Chomskyan and structural linguistics proponents view language as a rule-governed complex system, where “form”, “meaning” and “use” are seen as separate entities and the focus is usually on syntax and grammar, which are very much seen as the core components of language (Long, 2000). This can be illustrated on the basis of a short French narrative (with an idiomatic English translation gloss) as an example.

(1) *Il était une fois une maman cochonne qui avait trois petits cochons.*

Once upon a time there was a mama pig who had three little pigs.

From a structure-based perspective, the sentence in example 1 could be broken down into major constituents and analyzed further from the syntactic to the morphological level, focusing on gender, agreement and tense. Implicit to such an approach is the consideration that a speaker builds such a sentence by applying grammatical rules while producing it and that, over time and as second language proficiency increases, this process becomes (more) automatic. Even though SB views do not deny the existence

of meaning and language use, the focus is first and foremost on grammatical form, with meaning and use added as separate components at a later stage. Example 2 below illustrates this deconstructing process.

(2) *Il* (Subject-pronoun)

*était* (predicator-third person singular-past tense)

*une fois* (adverbial-noun phrase)

*une maman cochonne* [*qui / avait / trois petits cochons*].

(Subject Attribute-noun phrase modified by a relative clause)

Another way of approaching this example is through the lens of usage-based theory (for an overview, see Ellis & Wulff, 2015). A usage-based view does not deny that sentences have major constituents that can themselves be broken down and analyzed, nor that there are regularities in language, but usage-based approaches emphasize that such categories are superimposed at the analytical level by linguists and, for learners, they do not necessarily have any psychological reality (Cf., Devitt, 2003). Instead, the premise underlying usage-based approaches to language learning is that a speaker uses sequences of sounds (forms) that have been used and that have been encountered in similar contexts (use) with a similar denotation (meaning). Form-use-meaning combinations that have been used most frequently, and are thus most salient for learners, are the ones that are typically learned first, that become entrenched in the mind, and are eventually produced automatically. Some of these sequences are rather fixed (as in chunks or other multi-word sequences) but others have open slots, and the sequence can form a template for new-to-be-acquired sequences and constructions (as in Verb-Argument Constructions). Example 3 illustrates form-function combinations.

(3) *Il était une fois* (a fixed phrase that is used to introduce a fairy tale)

*une maman cochonne* (a being)

*qui avait* (expressing some possession)

*trois petits cochons*. (some beings)

Departing from this foundation, usage-based theories thus view language as a complex and dynamic system where form, meaning and use are integrated and continually interact and give rise to new utterances. Tomasello (2003) (and many others) have applied usage-based theorizing to first language acquisition and, more recently, usage-based theories (strongly aligned with Cognitive Linguistics) have found their way into SLA (Bybee, 2009, Cadierno & Eskildson, 2015, Tyler & Ortega, 2016, Ellis et al., 2016, Verspoor et al., 2012, Schmid, 2020).

The main difference between structural and usage-based theories, then, is that language from a usage-based perspective is not seen as a largely independent systematic

system consisting of many separate parts that can be combined in different ways, but as a holistic meaning-making entity that emerges through use. For language learning to occur, usage-based proponents do not rely on an innately available and separate language learning device that has come to characterize language learning in Chomskyan theories (cf. Chomsky, 2009), but rather language is learned by making use of general learning mechanisms, such as the ability to perceive, associate and schematize (Ellis & Wulff, 2019).

## **A USAGE-BASED PERSPECTIVE**

From a usage-based perspective, language is meaning-driven and consists of meaningful units which are conventionalized through use and interaction (Schmid, 2015), and language is seen as a complex adaptive system, which itself may consist of different subsystems (e.g., phonology, lexicon, syntax, etc.), but these subsystems do not operate in isolation and instead continuously interact over time, with each other and with other non-language specific (sub)systems (like motivation and general aptitude) (Schmid, 2015). As the continuous interaction of these complex (sub)systems is unique per individual, individually owned and often non-linear and unpredictable developmental paths emerge.

By extension of Schmitt and Schmitt's language learning theory (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2000), the basic linguistic units in usage-based language theories are units (Langacker, 2007), also referred to as constructions (Ellis, 2013). All constructions consist of a given form with associated meaning, which need to be learned in conjunction by a learner. The learning of these constructions, often referred to as form-use-meaning mapping, is essential in SLA and takes place by association. In such associative learning, input frequency plays an important role by definition: the more frequent a construction appears in the input, the better this construction is learned and entrenched. As its activation level increases, and the construction is more readily available for subsequent use (Ellis, 2013).

In a usage-based approach, the effectiveness of the form-use-meaning mapping process can be affected by aspects like saliency, redundancy and noticing. Every language typically expresses concepts (meanings) by means of different forms and learners tend to block certain forms once a basic form is activated repeatedly. In naturalistic, usage-based settings, learners are invited to learn efficiently by focusing on this basic variety of highly reliable forms (saliency) and by ignoring forms that hardly contribute to communication (redundancy). As many features of L2 input have a low frequency, a low saliency and a high redundancy, a certain degree of intentionally focused attention (noticing) is needed to help learners notice these forms and integrate them in their linguistic repertoire (Schmidt, 2001).

Much of the SLA usage-based research (cf. Ellis, 2013) has focused on constructions at the clausal level, usually referred to as Verb Argument Constructions (Croft, 2012), and has shown that learners tend to start using such constructions with the most frequent verbs (e.g., give) and slowly but surely add less frequent ones, reflective of the fact that acquisition is input-driven.

## **A DYNAMIC USAGE-BASED (DUB) PERSPECTIVE**

Because the usage-based term “constructions” may remind us more of form than meaning and does not make explicit that form-use-meaning mapping always occurs in a pragmatic context (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2000), Verspoor (2017) suggested another term to be used for conventionalized expressions: Form Use Meaning Mapping (FUMMs). For example, “*Il était une fois*” is a chunk to mean “once upon a time” and is a typical phrase to start a fairy tale in French. With that, it constitutes a prime example of a FUMM instance. The term FUMM also includes other multi-word (idiomatic) expressions and grammatical sequences at the phrase level (such as an article with a noun). Verspoor (2017) proposes the term dynamic usage-based (DUB) approach to emphasize the dynamic interaction of different sub-systems within language itself and the dynamic interaction between language learners and their environment, resulting in a non-linear language development paths, with (often unpredictable) phases of heightened levels of variability signaling change in language and variation among learners.

When considering language learning from a DUB perspective (Cf. Verspoor, 2017), frequent exposure to meaningful and authentic sequences in an appropriate (preferably multi-modal) context is critical for language development to occur. This input ideally consists of constructions with a certain form, a certain meaning and a certain use, which need to be strongly connected to enable entrenchment. The connection between these aspects is strengthened as exposure is repeated and is actively used by the learner. Each time a learner is exposed to a FUMM or uses it, the activation level of that particular FUMM increases, resulting in entrenchment. From a DUB perspective, this entrenchment process is essentially dynamic and variable across individuals.

It has been suggested that an L2 teaching approach designed from a DUB perspective should focus on the entrenchment of FUMMs by providing high exposure levels to and promote active use of the L2 (Rousse-Malpat & Verspoor, 2018). The input should be appropriate for the learner (given their current proficiency level) and comprehension of the input should be scaffolded (e.g., by gestures, visuals, paraphrases, etc.) (also following Krashen, 1985). Target language use in the classroom is important as it generates considerable exposure, especially in contexts where out-of-class exposure to the target language is minimal. At lower proficiency levels, a great deal of imitation and repetition of input is essential, but as the learner develops, other activities facilitating



more creative language use may increasingly be introduced in the program (Rousse-Malpat & Verspoor, 2018). This initial strong focus on imitation and routinization is different from the behavioristic pattern-drills in the audio-lingual method, as FUMMs are introduced and used in a coherent and meaningful context instead of a structural context (Arnott, 2011). From these prerequisites, it follows that a DUB approach is very much in line with the 10 observations for effective L2 learning presented in Table 2 and, when implemented in the classroom, would create a strong version of a CLT approach. It also aligns with earlier proposals by, for example, Lewis (1993) and Schmitt and Schmitt (2000), which focused on the lexicon and multi-word sequences as the foundation of language rather than grammar. And, finally, it is very much in line with Long's (2000) advocacy of "focus on form", which involves briefly drawing students' attention to different linguistic elements such as words, collocations, grammatical structures, pragmatic patterns, and so on, but always in context, and only as they arise incidentally in lessons in which the overriding focus is on meaning or communication.

## **SUMMARY: A STRUCTURE-BASED BIAS IN SLA RESEARCH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING**

Even though most applied linguists would endorse a strong CLT version based on theoretical insights related to optimal second language development, what can be witnessed in actual classroom practice is typically still a weaker version of CLT. One of the reasons, may be that when CLT considerations for SLA classroom practice took off, the most widely accepted linguistic theories at the time were still structure-based, which presuppose that language is primarily rule driven, especially with regard to syntax and morphology. Much L1 and L2 research has therefore also focused on the acquisition of these rules and may have inadvertently frustrated the efforts of L2 teachers to integrate strong versions of CLT into their classroom practice (see also Dörnyei, 2009, cited previously).

Secondly, the nature of SLA research itself, which needs to be scientific and replicable, has been dominated by short-term interventions in laboratory-type studies to control for as many variables as possible, but lack ecological validity and may not be applicable to actual classroom situations (Hulstijn, 1997; DeKeyser & Botano, 2019). Finally, educational publishers have developed a huge number of integrated coursebooks, which claim to be communicative in the sense that all four skills are targeted (Richards, 2006, p.45) but offered the weak version of CLT. These ready-to-use coursebooks, which have reduced the teachers' workload significantly (Dörnyei, 2009, see above), became so popular that they received the status of curriculum (Dubin & Olshtain, 1986).

## THE IMPLICIT-EXPLICIT DEBATE

SLA research in the past decades has focused to a great extent on the implicit-explicit debate and is summarized in Ellis (2015) as follows:

*Implicit learning is acquisition of knowledge about the underlying structure of a complex stimulus environment by a process which takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operations. Explicit learning is a more conscious operation where the individual makes and tests hypotheses in a search for structure.*

*(Ellis, 2015, p. 2)*

Over the past decades, a large body of research on what has been termed form-focused instruction (FFI), as opposed to more meaning-based instruction, has been carried out, comparing the effectiveness of both ends of this continuum; many of these studies have been synthesized in several meta-analyses and research reviews (e.g., Norris & Ortega, 2000; De Graaff & Housen, 2009; Spada & Tomita, 2010). These have shown quite convincingly that explicit types of instruction are more effective than implicit types of instruction, judging from the substantially larger effect sizes that are generally observed for explicit treatments. In light of the worldwide predominance of structure-based teaching practice and structure-based course materials as witnessed by Lightbown and Spada (2013), it seems reasonable to assume that these research outcomes have found their way into schools and have even come to dominate discussions on foreign language teaching at the level of classroom practice.

At the same time, however, several researchers have cautioned that the effects of explicit instruction may have been overestimated (e.g., Doughty, 2003; DeKeyser, 2003), as research designs may have favored explicit types of instruction for several reasons: Norris and Ortega (2000) point out that instructional treatments in FFI research have tended to focus on specific language structures and on short-term outcomes; only very few longitudinal and/or long-term FFI studies have been conducted. Short treatments may well work against implicit types of instruction in the case of L2 learning. Implicit learning processes probably require more time on task in order to be effective as a great deal of input is needed to facilitate implicit learning (Ellis, 2015). Another reason why FFI research may have been biased against implicit treatments is its overreliance on more explicit measures of linguistic ability, which may have favored explicit types of instruction. Andringa and Schultz (2018) argue that meta-analyses have not sufficiently taken differences in amount of exposure to the target structure into account. This too, may have favored explicit types of instruction, as these may often be more intensive in terms of exposure: each and every item in explicit exercises tends to expose learners to the target structure, while in implicit types of instruction, exposure may be more incidental and less intensive.

Recent FFI studies, which seem to be more and more designed to accommodate some of the research flaws mentioned previously, show a different tendency in outcomes, as witnessed by three more recent meta-analyses. Goo, Granema, Yilmaz and Novella (2015) analyzed 30 studies published between 1990 and 2006. Although their analysis, which addressed the concerns raised above, still confirmed an advantage of explicit over implicit instruction, they found a greater effect size for implicit instruction than reported by both Norris and Ortega (2000) and by Spada and Tomita (2010). Andringa and Schultz (2018) re-analyzed the studies in the Spada and Tomita (2010) meta-analysis and found that, when controlling for the amount of exposure, explicit and implicit instruction were equally effective. They suggested that the effectiveness of explicit instruction might reside in more intensive exposure (Andringa & Schultz, 2018). Finally, Kang et al. (2019) meta-analyzed 54 empirical studies conducted between 1980 and 2015 and found that explicit and implicit instruction were equally effective in immediate post-tests, but implicit instruction was more effective in delayed post-tests. Kang et al. (2019) suggest that the larger relative number of studies using free response measures might have contributed to this result, supporting Doughty's (2003) concern that testing instruments in these past studies have favored explicit treatments.

## **CLASSROOM RESEARCH AND SCIENTIFIC CONTROL**

The fact that SLA research is usually based on short interventions and uses specific testing instruments rather than free response data may be related to the demands imposed on scientific research. Scientific research is considered reliable if there is maximal control over variables and findings can be generalized (Polit & Beck, 2010). A good study can be repeated with different participants, using the same experimental design and producing the same outcomes (Lamal, 1990). Consequently, most SLA studies conducted to support teaching practices are short-term laboratory studies in which a single intervention targeting one specific linguistic feature is typically tested (often with university students as participants), and experimental conditions are fully controlled, as explained above. However, the question remains if these findings are relevant for the multi-faceted and complex teaching programs as a whole, also evidenced by the earlier finding that delayed retention tests have been found to favor implicit over explicit language teaching in terms of long-term effects (Kang et al. (2019).

It follows that classroom research, especially in the case of longitudinal approaches, may be considered incompatible with scientific values. According to Waters (2012), it “seems likely that classroom-level teaching methods, rather than undergoing some kind of theory-driven ‘second coming’, will continue to be based rather less on the findings of SLA studies than on enduring situational realities” (p.448). Yet, what happens in a classroom is too complex to allow laboratory studies to inform L2 teachers on the instructional effectiveness of an integrated foreign language teaching program.

Enduring situational realities are influenced by policymakers, educational advisors, teacher trainers, and educational publishers, but what happens in the actual foreign language classroom may be most directly related to coursebooks. Therefore, the role of coursebooks needs to be investigated further.

## THE ROLE OF COURSEBOOKS

In the past decades, parallel with the rise of CLT principles in foreign language teaching, a rise in the use of coursebooks can be seen, as “ready-to-use” and integrated coursebooks offer structured content in a uniform format for simple and quick implementation (Crewe, 2011). These coursebooks are generally considered important in many teaching programs because they serve different purposes: (1) they lend authority to the teacher as content mediator and offer a clear overview for students of what needs to be learned (Haycroft, 1998), (2) they serve as a resource and reference, both for teachers and students (Cunningsworth, 1995), (3) they provide face validity to many learners and teachers (Dubin & Olshtain, 1986, p. 167), and (4) they serve as an entire teaching program and their writers as curriculum designers (*ibid*, p. 170), henceforth facilitating the teachers’ work. They may even be seen as a crucial resource which serves the need for guidance for the less experienced and non-native speaking teacher (Crewe, 2011).

The central role of coursebooks in foreign language teaching practice is best described by Tomlinson (2016), who claims that “... a coursebook which achieved a perfect match with SLA principles would not achieve face validity and would almost certainly not sell” (p. 18). As coursebooks nowadays play a prominent role in foreign language teaching, they should therefore be discussed in a study of effective foreign language teaching programs. In the light of the previously mentioned observation that CLT practice generally embodies a weak version of CLT, prioritizing language learning over language use (Howatt, 1984) or communication (Waters, 2012), it is interesting to investigate the role played by modern coursebooks.

On several occasions, Tomlinson (2011, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c) published different criteria supported by SLA research, which he claimed to be important for “durable and effective language acquisition (Tomlinson, 2016, p. 6)”. Five of these criteria (See Table 3) are claimed to be essential in the development and evaluation of coursebook materials.

**TABLE 3.** Five prerequisites for course material development

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1. Learners need to be exposed to rich, recycled, meaningful and comprehensible input of language in use.
  2. Learners need to be affectively engaged.
  3. Learners need to be cognitively engaged.
  4. Learners need to be helped to pay attention to form when/after focusing on meaning.
  5. Learners need to be given ample opportunity to use the language for communication.
-

Different investigations of modern coursebooks in the light of these criteria (Tomlinson et al., 2001; Masuhara & Tomlinson, 2008; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2013; Tomlinson, 2013a, Tomlinson, 2016) have prompted Tomlinson to conclude that “global coursebooks were much more likely to help learners acquire knowledge of the language than an ability to use it for communication” (Tomlinson, 2016, p. 7).

The general picture that results from these studies is one in which coursebooks and classroom practices, although in theory aiming at operationalizing a strong version of CLT with a focus on communicative competence, in practice only operationalize a weak version of CLT principles, with a strong focus on teaching (about) language structures. Based on his findings, Tomlinson (2016) claims that, nowadays, educational publishers have a crucial influence on foreign language teaching practice as they design coursebook units in accordance with the sequence of (1) language presentation, (2) language practice and (3) language testing, where language practice is usually operationalized by conventional exercises such as filling in the blanks, sentence completion, tense transformation, true/false statements, multiple choice etc. In Tomlinson’s view, these exercises “have no theoretical or research justification but (...) are easy to use and to mark and are expected by parents, administrators, teachers and students” (Tomlinson, 2016, p. 18).

## **COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE NETHERLANDS**

In the previous sections, it has been argued that foreign language teachers around the world are unlikely to use strong versions of communicative language teaching approaches but generally adopt rather weak versions, with structure-based coursebooks at the heart of their programs. As the study that forms the basis of this dissertation is conducted in the Netherlands, it is important to see to what extent the findings apply to foreign language teaching in the Netherlands.

Popma (1997) and Hermans-Nymark (2006) concluded that, in general, commonly used CLT coursebooks for foreign language teaching in the Netherlands reflect a structure-based design. More recently, this finding emerged in a comparative study of coursebooks for German as a foreign language as they are used in a Dutch versus Finnish setting: the Dutch coursebooks followed a structure-based design, while Finnish coursebooks tended to follow more recent and newly gained (theoretical) insights (Tammenga et al., 2019). Although most coursebooks used in Dutch foreign language teaching programs claim to follow a communicative design inspired by the CLT approach and aim to develop communicative competence as advocated by different CLT proponents like Halliday (1970), Hymes (1972) and Widdowson (1978), a different picture emerges when these coursebooks are analyzed: The graded acquisition of selected structural and lexical items constitutes the backbone of these coursebooks,

which often adopt an explicit and deductive approach to grammar, emphasize lexical and grammatical accuracy and impose the use of the L1 as the language of instruction.

This SB approach is not only reflected in the adopted coursebooks but in classroom practices as well. Recently, West and Verspoor (2016) looked more closely at foreign language teaching practices in the Netherlands and showed that the predominant approach was still grammar-translation-based in most schools, with an emphasis on written language, and that target language use was poor. This was also found by Kaal (2018), who investigated teacher and teacher trainer beliefs on SLA and reported a predominant focus on structural aspects.

However, in a number of schools, West and Verspoor (2016) found different methods that are in line with strong versions of CLT and DUB principles: Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS), first developed in America by Blaine Ray, which focuses on comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982) and the Accelerative Integrated Methodology (AIM), first developed in Canada by Wendy Maxwell (Maxwell, 2001), which focuses on exposure to and active use of the L2. Both approaches reflect a natural (first) language learning design as they start with oral skills and introduce written skills later in the program. Both approaches have been reasonably successful in their implementation in a number of schools, but they only conquered a niche without influencing foreign language teaching practice at large, according to Hulshof et al. (2015, p. 401).

There are two factors in particular that seem to contribute strongly to the status quo in Dutch foreign language teaching practices: the educational reforms at the end of the previous century and the relative workload of teachers in the Netherlands. In his description of foreign language teaching and learning in the Netherlands until 2000, Wilhelm (2018) mentions the growing influence of experts from different disciplines, such as educationists, on teaching practice towards the end of the previous century” (Wilhelm, 2018, p. 26).

## **EDUCATIONAL REFORMS AT THE END OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

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In the nineties, major educational reforms were initiated by policymakers and implemented in Dutch secondary schools. A new, learner-centered curriculum was designed and implemented. In this curriculum, a strong emphasis on active and independent learning was viewed as crucial: students were expected to take responsibility for their own learning progress, assisted by the teacher, acting as a coach, or by a teacher assistant. Since this new curriculum was implemented in 1997, a rough trend or movement can be discerned by which the role of the student in the learning process increased, while the role of the teacher decreased. Teachers had to design detailed study guides with which students were able to take agency over their own learning process and carry out the learning activities by themselves. The role of the teacher changed from

initiating and directing learning activities (which was now done in the study guides) to monitoring learning activities (Westhoff, 1996). A large part of the available contact time was allocated for this work on the study guide (language practice), which was often organized as part of group work and only needed non-experts (teacher assistant or fellow teachers) to safeguard the fact that all students followed their study guide. Unfortunately, this learner-centered approach favored written assignments, decreasing the amount of target language use and the time spent on oral skills.

The emphasis on learning competences of the learner and the distant teacher made learning resources more and more important. As a result, educational publishers became increasingly important and were influenced by this learner-centered educational practice to design appropriate course materials.

## **DUTCH TEACHERS' WORKLOAD AND THE INFLUENCE OF PUBLISHERS**

The relatively high workload of Dutch teachers might additionally encourage the use of these coursebooks which, by nature, are typically structure-based. As a result, FLT programs in schools are assumed to be heavily influenced by educational publishers rather than SLA research (Tomlinson, 2016). Although these publishers may have access to knowledge provided by SLA research, they are claimed to be guided by commercial interests and will prioritize content which sells.

The influence of publishers is still growing in the Netherlands because schools have to apply European procurement procedures when choosing course materials. Educational publishers offer contracts, and schools usually prefer the cheapest options. As a result, schools are typically contractually obliged to use coursebooks, and there is no room or need for teachers to design their own materials. Still, the textbooks do offer reading texts and listening exercises which could be used for exposure, and there are a few teachers (see Rousse-Malpat, 2019) who use the target language almost exclusively during class time. In her investigation comparing students of French in the Netherlands who were taught using a mostly target language approach versus those who were not, Rousse-Malpat (2019) found the target language students to clearly outperform their counterparts who were taught the foreign language mainly through the medium of the L1 in both speaking and writing. Still, these high-exposure learners were less proficient than those who were taught using the Accelerated Integrated Method (to be discussed below). Unfortunately, most FFL teachers in the Netherlands prefer to spend most of the classroom time explaining grammar in the L1 (cf. West and Verspoor, 2016) for reasons outlined above.

Another longitudinal study that shows that it may not be the textbook itself but how teachers choose to use it was conducted by Piggott (2019). In her dissertation, she compared two cohorts of students of English over the course of two years using the same English textbook taught by the same team of teachers, but in the experimental group

the pages with grammar explanations were torn out. Rather than spending time on explicit grammar explanations in the L1 and doing the related exercises, teachers in the experimental condition spent more time on the listening and reading materials offered by the textbook. While the explicit group in general performed better on accuracy measures, the implicitly taught group outperformed in terms of complexity and fluency measures.

However, as West and Verspoor (2016) showed, there were exceptions in methods used and some teachers were using strong versions of CLT with the target language spoken almost exclusively and students communicating in the target language, specifically in French classes that used AIM, which can be considered a strong version of CLT aligned with specific dynamic usage-based (DUB) principles in that it offered a great deal of exposure and has built in a great deal of repetition of FUMMs. Examples of strong versions of CLT which have been investigated (cf. Rouse-Malpat, 2019 and Piggott, 2019) show that structure-based approaches are not needed for effective second language acquisition. However, these studies have been conducted in the lower classes of secondary schools with 12-14-year-old students and have tested the participants at the end of a 2-year or a 3-year program. The question remains if such a usage-based program, if it is extended to 6 years, remains effective after 6 years, particularly with regard to writing skills and reading skills, which are considered extremely important by Dutch policymakers and by the majority of L2 teachers and form an important part in the final school exams in the later years of secondary school.

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## CONCLUSION

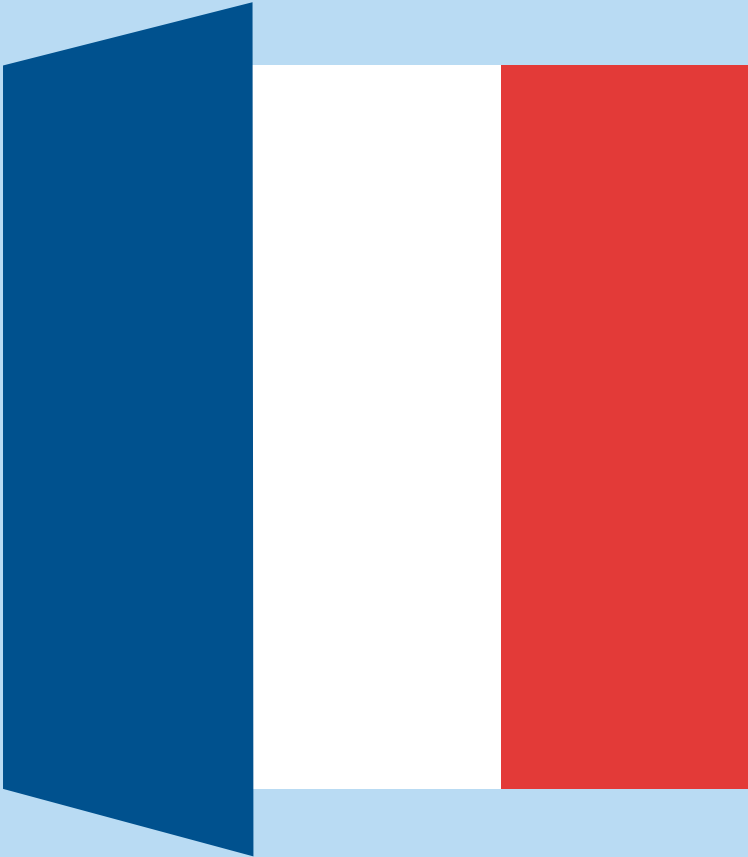
Despite the fact that “using to learn” language teaching approaches have been strongly encouraged based on SLA research carried out over the last 4 decades, most methods around the world, and in the Netherlands as well, can still be characterized as “learning to use” and are predominantly structure-based, failing to meet communicative demands (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). We have argued in this chapter that teachers might still be subconsciously influenced by Chomskyan or other structural thought that language is highly systematic and driven by form and that this belief may be fueled by external factors such as work pressure, but crucially, also the role of commercial coursebooks.

We also presented usage-based theories of language that are very much in line with a “using to learn” foreign language teaching approach. Constructions (or FUMMs) are conventionalized symbolic units of language with particular semantic, pragmatic, and discourse functions and they become entrenched as language knowledge in the learner’s mind when they are heard and used by the learner. We have attempted to show how usage-based theories can find their way to classroom practices. There is no doubt that a focus on grammar helps in achieving morphological or syntactic accuracy, but the question is whether accuracy can also be achieved without teaching grammar explicitly



and, specifically, how this develops over a longer period of time, as this chapter has also pointed to the shortcoming of much research being based on short-term laboratory studies.

The next chapters deal with a comparison between two teaching methods after six years of instruction, one with a common Dutch FFL approach and the other in line with a strong version of CLT in which DUB principles are applied. The assumption will be that the weak version, with its heavy emphasis on explicit grammar and teaching, will be effective in reading and writing development in the target language, but that the strong version, with its heavy emphasis on L2 exposure and interaction might be as effective in reading and writing, but much more effective in achieving speaking and listening competence.



# CHAPTER 3

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## **THE STUDY: AN OVERVIEW**

The goal of this chapter is to outline the study that formed the basis of this dissertation and that set out to compare the effectiveness of two foreign language teaching programs, both of which claim to be Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methods, but one that is more in line with structure-based and the other with usage-based views of language and language development. The investigation is based on a long term six-year design of language instruction in all four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Before discussing the separate studies in separate chapters, this chapter briefly mentions some of the challenges faced in conducting the study and discusses and justifies the overall research method. At the end of the chapter, the specific research questions and separate studies to answer these research questions are presented. The aim of the chapter is thus to provide a framework in which to embed the experimental subsequent chapters.

## CHALLENGES IN DESIGNING THE STUDY

### DESIGNING A DYNAMIC USAGE-BASED TEACHING PROGRAM

The first challenge in this study was designing a 6-year French as a foreign language teaching (FFL) program in the context of the Netherlands that aligned with Dynamic Usage-Based (DUB) principles (see Chapter 2 for an elaborate discussion of DUB). Regular coursebooks for L2 French in the Netherlands usually provide teaching materials for the full six years of pre-university secondary school and can be considered the equivalent of a curricular teaching program, as they are designed as a fully-fledged program intended to meet curricular demands. Hence, a consistent, structure-based (SB) FFL teaching program in the Dutch context can be equated with a regular coursebook. Usage-based approaches, like the Accelerative Integrated Methodology (AIM) and Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS), usually do not provide fully-fledged coursebooks but provide principles for teaching with specific course materials and rely heavily on the teacher as the architect of the program (see Chapter 2 for details). Therefore, the first goal of this study was to create a consistent 6-year DUB FFL teaching program, suitable for this effect study.

In their description of the history of foreign language teaching in the Netherlands, Hulshof et al. (2015, p. 401) mention TPRS and AIM as two innovative approaches which came to occupy a niche without truly influencing foreign language teaching at large. AIM was chosen as the basis of the 6-year DUB program for two reasons: (1) AIM is a complete method worked out in detail and one that has been in use in different schools in the Netherlands since 2007, while TPRS is used mainly as a supplementary activity to a regular coursebook and (2) AIM relies on two fundamental principles--exposure and active use--while TPRS relies more on one fundamental principle only--comprehensible input. Developing all four skills is the central goal of commonly used CLT coursebooks that, by consequence, generally aim to offer both exposure in developing receptive skills (reading and listening) and promote active productive language use (through writing and speaking), AIM was thought to be a better candidate than TPRS to compare effectiveness of this DUB approach vis-à-vis its more traditional structure-based counterpart.

However, as AIM was originally designed for very young children and as a method only offers materials to be used in the first three years of secondary school, a follow-up of this approach, referred to as AIM extended (AIMe) had to be developed for the final three years, using the same DUB principles. Indeed, the underlying premise of the current study was to compare an SB and DUB approach across the full six years of pre-university Dutch secondary education.

## **OPERATIONALIZING EFFECTIVENESS**

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Another challenge in designing and setting up the series of studies underlying this dissertation was the operationalization of effectiveness. Effectiveness is generally measured in terms of (ultimate) language proficiency attained by the students. Proficiency, in turn, is usually measured through both receptive and productive tasks and tests. Within the language classroom, receptive skills are reading and listening, which in the Netherlands are traditionally measured using (closed type) listening and reading tests. Cito (the Dutch national testing agency) designs and validates tests that are compulsory for all schools at all levels (this is most poignantly illustrated in the reading tests that make up the final exam for any modern foreign language in the Netherlands) or recommended but administered and used by almost all schools (e.g., listening skills as tested as part of (final) school examinations). When comparing the effectiveness of receptive skills attained by DUB and SB students, it was therefore relatively easy to rely on these nationally administered, standardized tests.

However, foreign language proficiency is much more than merely attaining reading and listening skills. A proficient learner, especially in a united Europe aiming at the integration of its citizens (European Parliament, 2022), should be able to converse and interact freely with other speakers (native and non-native alike) of that target language. Therefore, it is even more interesting to measure effectiveness of different teaching programs in terms of free oral and written production. A number of problems occur, however, when designing tests to measure productive skills. First, overreliance on more explicit measures of linguistic ability in testing may favor explicit types of instruction. Several authors (e.g., Doughty, 2003; DeKeyser, 2003) have cautioned against this possible test bias due to the differential nature of instruction type (predominantly explicit vs. predominantly implicit; see Chapter 2 for a more elaborate discussion). Finding a free response task that (objectively) assesses speaking and writing proficiency and that does not bias SB students was therefore a challenge.

## **RECONCILING ECOLOGICAL VALIDITY AND EXPERIMENTAL CONTROL**

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A third and final challenge was obtaining ecological validity and at the same time ensuring a degree of experimental control. According to Hulstijn (1997), Second Language Acquisition (SLA) investigations tend to be primarily pursued under laboratory conditions, which is counterintuitive as ecologically valid L2-instruction by default takes place in real-life, actual classrooms. In a survey of SLA research, DeKeyser and Botano (2019) qualify the number of articles reporting on actual classroom experiments as "...distressingly small from the point of view of practitioners eager for research findings that can unambiguously inform their classroom teaching..." (p. 4). Although experimental control is considered of the utmost importance in SLA research, we also considered it vital to design a study meeting ecological validity demands to

bridge the gap between research and classroom practice and to generate implications for actual classroom teaching practices. High ecological validity can only be obtained by examining and targeting actual teaching programs which are used in actual schools with actual students in actual classrooms, and which consist of numerous multi-faceted activities, planned and unplanned, in response to the need of students. In other words, a final challenge in this study was trying to overcome the apparent incompatibility of ensuring high ecological validity of the study while at the same time ensuring experimental control.

## METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN AND SET-UP

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This dissertation consists of a number of sub studies that all collectively aim to shed light on the long-term effects of two types of CLT practices of French in the Netherlands: a weaker SB method and a strong DUB approach. Even though each sub study has its own unique underlying methodology, we here present a general overview of the participants, the two teaching methods, and the types of tests that formed the basis of the current investigation.

### **PARTICIPANTS**

Participants were 17- to 18-year-old students in five cohorts in their final year at a Dutch secondary school in the north of the Netherlands. All participants had a high scholastic aptitude, as they had been selected for the Dutch VWO (pre-university education). The first two cohorts consisted of 55 students in total, who had all started secondary school in either 2009 or 2010 and had followed a traditional SB L2 French teaching program in all six years. They took their final exams in 2015 and 2016, after six years of their pre-university secondary schooling. The other three cohorts consisted of 78 students in total, who had all started to learn L2 French in 2011, 2012 and 2013 and had followed a DUB L2 French teaching program throughout their six years of secondary school. They took their final exams in 2017, 2018 and 2019. As in the Netherlands speakers are rarely exposed to French in their everyday lives, and students were unlikely to have had any relevant exposure before starting French in secondary school, a pretest was not carried out, as all students were absolute novice learners. During the six-year program, too, they were unlikely to be exposed to French outside of class (except for their homework assignments) and extramural exposure was not taken into account. In other words, the student cohorts were similar in their starting level, hours of French classes as well as out-of-class exposure, with the main difference being their method of language instruction. Table 4 below details the different cohorts that formed the basis of our investigation. It should be noted that the teacher (who was also the researcher) was kept constant across all cohorts and conditions.

**TABLE 4.** Overview of participants

Cohort	Exam year	Number of SB participants	Number of DUB participants
2009	2015	26	0
2010	2016	29	0
2011	2017	0	35
2012	2018	0	23
2013	2019	0	20

## THE TEACHING APPROACHES OUTLINED

When reading and writing about Instructed SLA as it is organized and practised in schools, it is important to have a common understanding of different terms, starting with the notions and constructs of method, approach, design and procedure in teaching SLA. Richards and Rodgers (2014) use the notion of method as the overall term and distinguish three levels of conceptualization and organization:

1. The approach is a set of assumptions (a theory) about language and language learning.
2. The design is an overall plan describing the objectives and the syllabus of the method, as well as the roles played by the learner, the teacher and the instructional materials.
3. The procedure describes the classroom techniques, practices and behaviors.

In our study, the books and toolkits offered will be considered the methods and the approaches are SB or DUB, respectively. The design considers the objective (communication in both methods), the syllabus (selection and organization of language content), the types of tasks and activities and the role of learners, teachers and instructional materials. The procedures include the language spoken in class, the exercises that form part of the approaches and other classroom-related activities, such as testing.

## THE STRUCTURE-BASED METHOD

Two FFL coursebooks were used in the SB cohorts: “Grandes Lignes” (Bakker et al., 2005) and “Libre Service” (Breek et al., 2003). These coursebooks are called “methods” because they contain ready-to-use instructional materials that help the teacher execute the procedures which have been designed in accordance with the theoretical principles of a structure-based approach. “Grandes Lignes” was used during the first three years and “Libre Service” in the final three years of the SB-taught students.



## A STRUCTURE-BASED DESIGN

These coursebooks claim to apply CLT principles and develop all four language skills, and there is no denying they could be used as such, but actual practice in the Dutch classroom puts a focus on grammatical accuracy that logically follows from how the coursebooks are set up.

## A STRUCTURE-BASED PROCEDURE

Each unit consists of a short text to be read for comprehension, a list of expressions and words from the text with their Dutch translations, several exercises in which students are asked to interact with each other using (pre-formulated) questions based on the vocabulary items and text, and a substantial number of exercises in which grammar is offered and practiced, with a heavy focus on verb forms. In each unit, additionally, a great deal of time is spent on activities targeting the development of comprehension strategies (through reading and listening). These reading and listening texts provide exposure to linguistic items like (thematic) vocabulary and grammar rules. Following these activities, certain linguistic items (words and rules) are thus highlighted and practised, and word lists have to be memorized. The acquired knowledge is regularly tested, often by means of discrete-point tests. Most activities on comprehension strategies and linguistic knowledge are conducted in the L1 (Dutch), as it is considered necessary for the students' comprehension and henceforth make learning more effective (Van Compernelle, 2015).

On the whole, L2 exposure and active use are rather limited and most in-class teaching, and interaction is also done through the medium of the L1. Table 5 provides a more elaborate overview of the main characteristics of the method in terms of an SB approach, a design which can best be described as a functional spiral around a structural core (Brumfit, 1980) and classroom procedures which not only aimed at developing explicit (grammatical and lexical) knowledge but also at explicitly training comprehension strategies as the central exam is limited to testing reading comprehension.

**TABLE 5.** Main characteristics of the SB approach

- 
- Activities target the development of all four L2 skills.
  - Intensive reading and listening activities are embedded in a focused comprehension approach.
  - Writing skills are expected to develop through translation and closed writing exercises targeting specific linguistic elements.
  - Oral practice is usually confined to closed-type exercises or in L1 scripted dialogues.
  - Focused practice for the acquisition of separate lexical, phonological and grammatical knowledge.
  - A thematic approach to vocabulary learning, with word lists to be memorized.
  - Regular use of the L1 to explain grammatical rules, give classroom instructions and discuss activities targeting comprehension skills.
  - Vast amounts of instruction and practice on verb conjugation and tense use.
  - In terms of writing instruction, grammatical accuracy and structure are emphasized.
  - A lot of time is spent on the development of test-wise strategies to adequately prepare students for the final reading and listening exams.
- 

## **THE DYNAMIC USAGE-BASED METHOD**

The DUB method in this study was realized using the Accelerative Integrative Methodology (AIM) which is an FFL method created by Wendy Maxwell ([www.aimlanguagelearning.nl](http://www.aimlanguagelearning.nl)). Unhappy with the method she used as a French teacher in which learners were not actually using the language very much, she developed this method which could be considered a strong version of CLT that is in line with DUB principles in that it provides a great deal of meaningful interaction in the target language. It focuses on Form Use Meaning Mappings (FUMMs) (short phrases with a specific meaning in a specific context – see Chapter 2 for a more detailed account), builds in a great deal of repetition through playful drills, and focuses on form in the broadest sense: pronunciation, intonation, multi-word expressions and other common sequences. To use the AIM method as it is meant to be, teachers need specific training for the method and buy toolkits for the different modules. These contain scripted lessons that the teacher can apply in class. As the target language and language of the classroom is French only, the materials are not context-specific and can be used in French classrooms around the world where novice learners first learn French.

## **A DYNAMIC USAGE-BASED DESIGN**

A list of approximately 2000 words (the so-called pared-down language – PDL) is at the heart of the design. The selection of words and expressions for this PDL was not only based on the relative frequency but also on the usefulness for beginning language learners (functional vocabulary for naming objects and activities in the language classroom), on the scope of a word (words that have a wider scope can be used in more contexts and will be better activated in the mind) and on the reliability of a word (the PDL avoids the diversity of written French verb-forms by offering only one oral verb-

form that can be used reliably in basic interaction. This PDL is used to develop plays, songs, and stories for students to participate in and work on collaboratively.

As a next step, simple gestures were attached to each word in the pared-down-language, making the teaching multi-sensory; thus, as part of the AIM method, students learn vocabulary during class through visual, auditory and kinesthetic tools, making strong associations between form (the sound and the gesture), use (the context) and meaning. The use of high-frequency vocabulary items and chunks, introduced with gestures and contextualized in stories, drama, songs and dance, are supposed to help students make strong associations between form, use and meaning (Arnott, 2011). Grammar is first treated as chunks and practiced orally. Once students master a specific rule, this rule is inductively highlighted as part of the oral practice.

## **A DYNAMIC USAGE-BASED PROCEDURE**

All linguistic items (words, chunks, grammar rules) are learned through routinization activities (playful drills) in the classroom, with students facing the teacher in a circle for playful drills. Students sit in small groups for collaborative, creative and communicative tasks aiming at developing speaking and writing skills. No activity lasts longer than 10 minutes, so there is lots of movement and excitement throughout the lesson. Students participate in all activities in the target language, and they learn to think and write creatively while practicing oral communication primarily. The method helps students feel comfortable to express themselves in the target language from the first lesson onwards.

AIM has originally been developed for use in L2 French classes in Canada (students aged 8-14) and the vocabulary involved in the four AIM-modules is limited (as a result of the choice for a pared down language, which facilitates input and output repetition). Students in the final three years of Dutch secondary school need more vocabulary as well as authentic input to further develop their skills and prepare for the final exams. Therefore, AIM extended (AIMe) was created based on similar AIM principles for the final three years. As the learners had achieved enough basic vocabulary with the help of gestures, they were not really needed anymore for comprehending new words. The lessons therefore consisted of meaningful, multi-modal authentic exposure by means of video material to be watched several times at home and discussed in detail in class. Table 6 provides an overview of the main characteristics of the AIM method in terms of a DUB approach, design and classroom procedures. The table also lists the characteristic of the extended AIMe method that was created specifically for the purpose of the current investigation.

**TABLE 6.** Main characteristics of the DUB approach**First three years: AIM principles**

- Activities target the development of listening and speaking first, achieved through exclusive use of the L2 in the classroom, facilitated by the use of gestures to enhance and consolidate meaning.
- Highly controlled and repeated L2 exposure through carefully structured teacher scripts that build on stories, classroom language and the introduction of linguistic items.
- A restricted vocabulary (Pared Down Language - PDL) of 2000 words is offered to students in three years. The selection of the words is not only based on frequency, but also on functionality and scope<sup>2</sup>, in order to enhance input and output repetition, and henceforth facilitate a more solid entrenchment of form-meaning mappings.
- A lexical and inductive approach to basic grammar and verb conjugation is offered through the use of oral routinization activities.
- Most activities focus on oral skills. Other skills are expected to develop implicitly.
- Development of productive fluency is facilitated by a focus on creative sub-skills, (like improvising and paraphrasing) and anxiety reduction (absence of corrective feedback and focus on positive reinforcement).
- Introduction of reading and writing occurs only after six months and after associations between sounds and meaning are fully entrenched.
- Students develop their writing skills through free narrative writing assignments based on the stories introduced in class.

**Final three years: AIMe (modifications of AIM principles):**

- L2 exposure through teacher scripts is replaced by extensive and authentic oral and written input through online learning systems like FluentU ([www.fluentu.com](http://www.fluentu.com)) and Zeeguu ([www.zeeguu.org](http://www.zeeguu.org)).
- L2 exposure, as provided through online learning systems, is now provided at home in order to have more classroom time available for speaking activities. Teacher dashboards in all systems guarantee quantitative and qualitative teacher control.
- The use of gestures is now limited to routinization activities with the AIM vocabulary of the first three years in order to keep form-meaning mappings of this basic vocabulary entrenched.
- In terms of writing skills, students first participate in guided writing tasks and subsequently in free narrative and argumentative writing tasks.

**MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS**

Effectiveness is generally measured in terms of language proficiency attained by the students and proficiency is usually taken to comprise both receptive and productive skills. Receptive skills of reading and listening are traditionally measured using objective (often multiple choice) tests and are easy to use. In the Netherlands, the national testing agency (Cito) designs and validates reading and listening comprehension tests that are compulsory for all schools (reading skills form the main component of the written final Central Examination for the modern foreign languages in the Netherlands) or recommended but administered by almost all schools (listening skills as tested in the School Examinations). Therefore, measuring the effectiveness of the SB and DUB

2 For instance, instead of more specific words like *'mer'* (sea), *'étang'* (pond), *'fosse'* (ditch), *'canal'* (canal), *'fleuve'* (river), a more generic word like *'eau'* (water) is used which can be used in a large number of contexts, providing a lot of opportunities for repetition.

programs in reading and listening skills was relatively easy as these tests were readily available, and scores could easily be compared with the national average scores as a benchmark. But measuring the language production skills of speaking and writing was more challenging. Because speaking and writing skills cannot really be measured by means of closed question types, reliable free response tests for the assessment of oral and written production had to be designed and validated.

For reading and listening, standardized Cito tests were thus used. For speaking and writing, students' proficiency was measured while speaking or writing about a given topic. The choice of topics and the amount of knowledge the students have on a topic may well impact on results. Therefore, to avoid bias as a result of differences between cohorts, a special 30-hour intervention was designed and implemented in both programs. During the final two academic years, students in both programs worked on seven different newsworthy topics that formed the basis of the oral, listening, vocabulary and writing activities that they did in class during these final two years.

The speaking test, which was done in pairs, was done on the basis of four topics that were preselected by the teacher; each student pair was allowed to pick two out of four subjects, one of which was subsequently chosen at random by the interviewer at the beginning of the test. For the writing test, which was administered individually, the same four topics were used. At the beginning of the test, two out of four topics were selected and presented by the teacher and each student chose one of these topics to write about at the start of the test. The general idea was to have students prepare the topics to the extent that they felt comfortable, but spontaneous language was still possible, encouraged and, indeed, needed.

## STUDY DESIGN AND ANALYSES

The overall research question for this classroom study is as follows:

*Which of the two CLT programs is more effective after six years of French instruction in a Dutch secondary school curriculum: a weak version of CLT with a predominantly explicit, structure-based textbook program or a strong version of CLT with a predominantly implicit, dynamic usage-based program?*

To answer the overall research question, four sub studies were conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the programs pertaining to the four individual language skills. Effectiveness is operationalized as students' scores on reading, listening, writing and speaking tests administered in the final year of secondary school.

In general, variation in outcomes might be triggered by group effects, and multi-level analyses might be needed to take these group effects into consideration, but as students in the same cohort often changed groups in their six years of secondary school,

group effects could not be calculated as they were assumed to change every year over the course of 6 years. Therefore, simple T-tests were considered sufficient.

### **STUDY 1: COMPARING READING AND LISTENING SKILLS**

At the end of six years, all students were tested on reading and listening skills. Measuring reading and listening skills is relatively easy because of the availability of valid and objective tests from Cito. The scores of the groups were also compared to the national average. As these receptive skills are tested on the central final exams, they are considered extremely important by policymakers, schoolboards and teachers. Thus, L2 teaching programs usually spend vast amounts of time on specifically training for these exams in the final three years.

### **STUDY 2: COMPARING WRITING SKILLS**

At the end of the six years, all students were tested on their writing skills. The students were asked to write on a pre-assigned topic. All writing samples were rated by a group of trained experts by means of holistic scores using a detailed rubric and by an automated analysis of morphosyntax (cf. Bartning & Schlyter, 2004), complemented by analyses on Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency scores such as text length, sentence length and Guiraud (Granfeldt & Ågren, 2014).

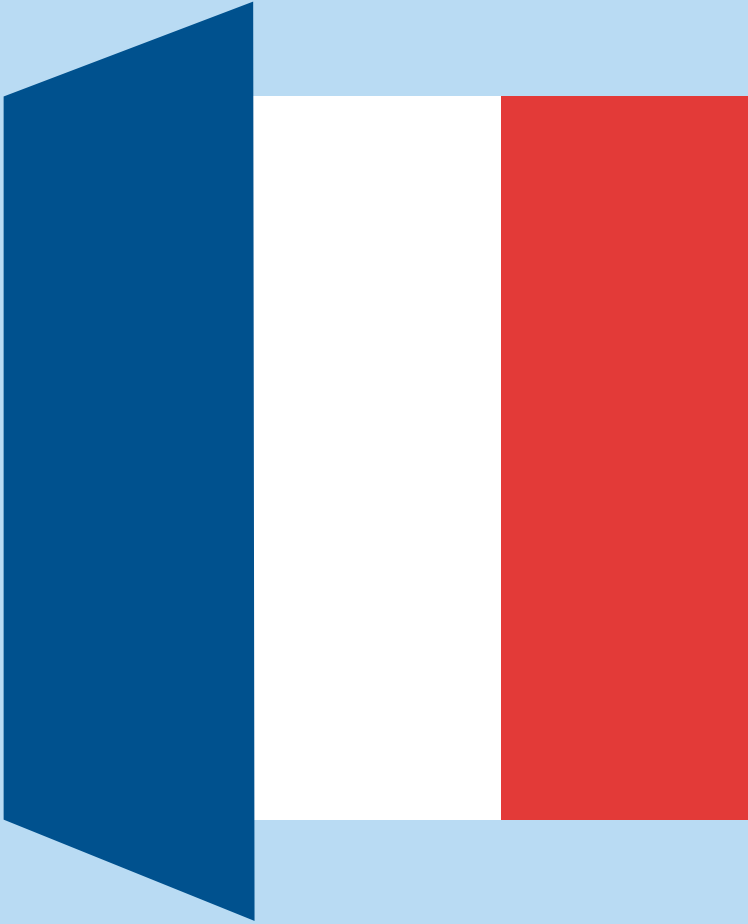
### **STUDY 3: COMPARING CHUNK USE IN WRITING**

Nowadays, chunks are considered a crucial aspect of L2 development; they contribute to fluency and authenticity of L2 use and may also speed up L2 development (Gustafsson & Verspoor, 2017). L2 studies have also shown that chunks are good indicators of proficiency level (Forsberg, 2010; Hou et al., 2018; Verspoor et al., 2012). For that reason, a third study was conducted to examine the frequency and use of different types of chunks in writing in the SB and DUB groups.

### **STUDY 4: COMPARING SPEAKING SKILLS**

At the end of the six years, all students were tested on their speaking skills. To be able to compare these skills between the two programs, a valid and reliable oral proficiency test had to be developed. The test was based on a test developed and validated by the Centre for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington: The Student Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA). The SOPA in turn is based on the Proficiency Guidelines (ACTFL, 2012) of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the American equivalent of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which makes use of a rating scale comprising 4 dimensions and 9 levels (Thompson et al., 2002). Because this test was designed specifically for children in elementary school foreign language programs, the content of the test was adapted to contain topics that are

more in line with the interests of 17-18-year-old Dutch students of French at the end of secondary school. The test was tried out in a pilot study and the results of were analysed in great detail. It was further validated by comparing scores with classroom grades and objective scores and proved to be ecologically valid and reliable. The ratings of the pilot test served as a benchmark for the ratings throughout the five years of the study.





# CHAPTER 4

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## **THE ROLE OF EXPOSURE IN DEVELOPING READING AND LISTENING SKILLS**

*This chapter has been submitted in its current form.*

## ABSTRACT

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This chapter compares the receptive skills—reading and listening—after six years of instruction in two different Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) programs. The first one is a weak version with a structure-based (SB) syllabus at its foundation and the other a strong version that takes a dynamic usage-based (DUB) approach. It is argued that both reading and listening skills heavily depend on lexical knowledge rather than grammatical knowledge, and that therefore grammar knowledge plays less of a role in these skills. Moreover, many studies have shown that lexical knowledge is related to the amount of exposure in reading or listening. Because the SB students read a great deal to prepare for their central exams, little difference between the two groups is expected in terms of reading. However, the DUB students have been exposed to oral language a great deal more than the SB students; therefore, the DUB students are expected to outperform their SB counterparts in this skill. The results indeed show that the SB and DUB learners had comparative reading comprehension scores after six years, but the DUB learners obtained significantly higher listening comprehension scores.

## INTRODUCTION

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Although communicative language teaching (CLT) has become the norm in second language pedagogies around the world, in daily practice weak versions with structure-based (SB) approaches, especially grammar translation, are still prevalent in the practices of foreign language teachers (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013). In Dutch secondary schools, too, West and Verspoor (2016) found a prevalent explicit focus on grammar, a frequent use of the L1 (mother tongue), the use of translation, learning vocabulary with translation equivalents and an emphasis on written language. At the same time, a growing number of Dutch secondary schools adapt their language teaching practices following insights from usage-based linguistic and dynamic systems theory, captured in a holistic teaching pedagogy referred to as dynamic usage-based (DUB) approaches (cf. Verspoor, 2017). Characteristic of this method is frequent exposure to meaningful and contextualized language, ensuring an entrenchment of lexical formulaic sequences in learners that they can start producing early on in their language learning trajectories (Rousse-Malpat & Verspoor, 2018). Given its underlying premises, the approach has become especially popular for French in the Dutch context, as a language with little to no exposure outside of the classroom.

With an inherent communicative focus, it is no wonder that effect studies into the effectiveness of L2 French lessons at the Dutch secondary school level have compared L2 French productive skills—speaking and writing. The results have been unambiguous: after three years, DUB learners significantly outperform SB learners in both speaking and writing, even when L2 exposure across conditions is kept constant (Rousse-Malpat, 2021; Rousse-Malpat et al., 2022). After six years, this difference is still attested, with DUB learners using more complex sentences (This dissertation, chapter 5) and target-like chunks (This dissertation, chapter 6). No differences were found as to accuracy in speech and writing, which is important as knowledge on morphosyntax is acquired implicitly by DUB learners by default. Based on frequent exposure and in the absence of overt grammar instruction, they master the same level of accuracy compared to peers taught by means of explicit grammar instruction.

Although the focus has thus been on productive skills, listening and reading outcomes have remained under-researched. As listening and reading scores in large part make up the modern foreign language final national exams in the Netherlands, it is important to see how SB versus DUB taught secondary schoolers differ in their receptive French skills performance after six years of instruction. This paper first of all theoretically explores the facets of reading and listening development and instruction in the L2 before turning to exposure and frequency more directly and how they relate to the study's outcomes.

# LITERATURE

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## LEXICAL AND GRAMMATICAL KNOWLEDGE IN LISTENING AND IN READING

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The strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and successful reading comprehension is well documented (Urquhart & Weir, 1998; Koda, 2005; Perfetti et al., 2005; Grabe, 2009), leading some researchers to propose a vocabulary threshold needed for general language comprehension (e.g., Laufer & Sim, 1985; Hazenberg & Hulstijn, 1996; Laufer, 1992;) and effective comprehension of written texts specifically (Hu & Nation, 2000; Laufer, 1989; Nation, 2006). Apart from lexical knowledge, grammar knowledge has also been posited as a prerequisite for successful reading comprehension, because learners need to grasp a text's coherence (Gívon, 1995). Grabe (2005) has even composed a (check)list for grammar cues that play an important role in learners' comprehension of written texts.

The relative importance of lexical and grammatical knowledge for the development of reading comprehension has recently been closely examined by Zhang (2012), in a study comprising 190 adult EFL learners in China. A structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis of the data showed that, after controlling for grammar knowledge, vocabulary knowledge contributed significantly to reading comprehension, but the opposite did not hold: grammar knowledge did not significantly contribute to the model after controlling for vocabulary knowledge. Similar results were obtained by van Gelderen et al. (2004) and Raudszus et al. (2018), who found that lexical knowledge (in addition to working memory) was a strong predictor of reading comprehension scores. On the other hand, Jeon and Yamashita (2014), in a meta-analysis examining 58 studies on L2 reading comprehension published between 1979 and 2011, found a stronger correlation between L2 reading comprehension and L2 grammar knowledge ( $r=.85$ ) than between L2 reading comprehension and L2 vocabulary knowledge ( $r=.77$ ).

With past studies thus pointing at both lexical and grammatical skill development as predictors of reading comprehension, listening skills seem to be more unambiguously modulated by vocabulary knowledge. In a study in which 154 fourth-semester students of Spanish at the college-level participated, Mecartty (2000) found vocabulary knowledge to play an important role in the development of listening comprehension, but the same was not found for grammatical knowledge. This is supported by Stahr (2009), who found a strong correlation between L2 vocabulary knowledge and listening comprehension in a study comprising 115 advanced Danish EFL students. Finally, in a study with 84 Canadian learners of L2 French in a French immersion program, designed to investigate the contribution of different variables to successful listening comprehension, Vandergrift and Baker (2018) found that L2 vocabulary knowledge was the strongest predictor, while auditory discrimination ability and working memory were only moderate predictors.

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN READING AND LISTENING

Two major differences between reading and listening need to be noted, having been pointed out by Field (2008). In written forms (i.e., in reading), the spelling is standardized while in phonological forms (underlying listening comprehension), sounds vary within and between users. In reading, blank spaces, moreover, separate written forms, facilitating rapid recognition, while listeners are confronted with connected speech, impeding instant recognition. Related to this, reading is recursive, allowing readers to check and recheck in search for meaning, while speech is ephemeral: once a form is produced, it is difficult to recall the same form in search for meaning. Looking for meaning is thus even more crucial in listening versus reading tasks.

Learners tend to base L2 segmentation in listening tasks on their L1 (Cutler, 2001). In the case of L2 French with a high level of connected speech (*liaison*) segmentation is particularly complex for L1 Dutch learners due to misalignment of word and syllable boundaries (Gustafson & Bradlow, 2016). Extensive practice and in particular encountering form-meaning pairs more frequently through high exposure has been claimed to aid listening development (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). One especially fruitful strategy appears to be to capitalize on conventionalized form-meaning mappings, also known as chunks. Tang (2013) investigated the relationship between chunks and listening ability and found a strong correlation between the number of acquired chunks and L2 listening scores. According to Lewis (1993), too, the mastery of chunks can facilitate language processing speed, as chunks are readily available as a result of repeated exposure (Gustafson & Verspoor, 2017), and, once automatized, chunks can form shortcuts in processing (Pawley & Syder, 1983; Wray & Perkins, 2000): “It seems that we use prefabricated sequences as a way of minimizing the effects of a mismatch between our potential linguistic capabilities and our actual short-term memory capacity” (Wray & Perkins, 2000, p. 15).

To summarize, both in reading and listening, lexical knowledge plays a strong role. Grammatical knowledge also plays a role in reading but seemingly less so in listening. This is not surprising as the ultimate goal of both reading and listening is to extract meaning from forms and lexical knowledge is more meaningful than grammatical knowledge. Being repeatedly exposed to most notably chunks can facilitate language comprehension. Not all L2 pedagogies offer such repeated formulaic lexical exposure to the same extent, however.

## EXPOSURE AND FREQUENCY IN SB VERSUS DUB PEDAGOGIES

If lexical knowledge is crucial for Second Language Acquisition (SLA), learners need to be exposed to this knowledge frequently and repeatedly for language skills to develop effectively (Ellis, 2002; DeKeyser 2007; Segalowitz & Hulstijn, 2005). Although much remains unknown about the optimal form of repetition, for instance pertaining to

the effects of time distribution in SLA (spaced repetition versus massed repetition: see Serrano, 2012), there is a general consensus that repeated exposure to the L2 is a prerequisite for all language skills to develop (Segalowitz, 2010).

Focusing on the Dutch context, the beneficial role of L2 exposure on the development of language skills has been amply researched, for instance in bilingual education. Verspoor and Edelenbosch (2009) followed 456 students in six different secondary schools (4 bilingual and 2 monolingual) during the first three years of their secondary education. As is typical in these effect studies, they targeted specifically productive language skills; students in the bilingual streams with about 15 hours of English exposure a week scored better on writing skills than students in the monolingual who had about 3-4 hours of exposure a week. Importantly, however, the 'high-exposure' students also showed more knowledge of lexical chunks, further aiding them in their writing.

In a classroom study involving 416 Dutch learners of L2 English, Piggott (2019) compared Dutch secondary school students in a predominantly explicit, low-input program to those enrolled in a predominantly implicit, higher exposure program. All four language skills were tested at the end of the first and the second year. The results on the reading tests showed a steeper developmental curve in the high-input program. For listening, more mixed findings were obtained: students in the high-input program scored better after one year but students in the low-input program obtained higher scores after two years. The complexity of this study, however, is its focus on English. English is very prevalent in the Dutch linguistic landscape and out of class exposure is substantial, making it difficult to disentangle pedagogical effects from general input conditions.

Complementary evidence is available for French, however, specifically in a number of recent studies on the Accelerative Integrated Methodology (AIM). AIM is a predominantly implicit and high-exposure method developed by Maxwell (2001), originally intended for use in Core French and Immersion programs for L2 French in Canada. A great deal of exposure is provided by the teacher through carefully structured teacher scripts based on storytelling techniques. Gestures are used to enhance form-meaning mappings. Active use of L2 French is provided by target language use (French only rule), and meaningful communicative activities based on the story themes (for more details, see Arnott, 2011). The AIM method can thus be described as a DUB as opposed to an SB language teaching method. In a three-year longitudinal study comprising 229 students, Rousse-Malpat et al. (2022) found that the high-exposure AIM program was more effective than its SB low-exposure counterpart in developing both speaking and writing skills.

Building on these findings, the current study examined the instructional effects of AIM after six years. DUB students continued to score much better on oral proficiency than the SB learners (this dissertation, chapter 7). Although holistic expert ratings did not indicate further differences between DUB and SB students in terms of written accuracy,

indicate further differences between DUB and SB students in terms of written accuracy, high input DUB students did write longer texts and used longer sentences, making their writing more complex overall (this dissertation, chapter 5) This was corroborated by significantly more lexical chunks that were attested in the DUB learners' writing compared to their SB counterparts (this dissertation, chapter 6).

In short, earlier work has shown the clear need for lexical (chunk) mastery in listening and reading development. The need for grammatical competence is also needed in reading comprehension, although seemingly less for successful listening comprehension. This outcome directly translates to which L2 pedagogical approach (SB versus DUB) is more successful to promote lexical (chunk) mastery. Available work looking into the latter question has focused largely on productive skill development, however, and the relationship between these pedagogies and productive skills is largely lacking. Against the backdrop of what has been discussed so far, such a focus on receptive skills is much needed to advance our scientific understanding of SLA processes as a function of teaching methodologies but also to inform teaching practices.

## **THIS STUDY**

The aim of this study is to compare the effectiveness of an SB versus a DUB teaching program on L2 French reading and listening comprehension after six years of pre-university secondary education in the Netherlands. The SB program provides relatively little authentic exposure in favor of explicit, often L1-medium instruction in the first three years and provides a great deal of dedicated reading and listening exam training in the last three years. The DUB L2 teaching program provides a great deal of L2 exposure with little to no explicit instruction and without dedicated exam training during the six years of instruction. During the last three years, the focus remains on developing oral skills based on content provided by means of online L2 videos and other materials. The research question underlying this study is as follows:

*How do SB versus DUB teaching methods differentially affect reading and listening skills after six years of instruction?*

As in the DUB teaching method there is significantly more exposure to oral language as compared to the SB teaching method, DUB students are expected to outperform their SB counterparts with regard to their listening skills. Because SB students have to read a great deal to prepare for their central exams, they are expected to perform equally well as their DUB counterparts with regard to their reading skills.

# METHOD

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## **PARTICIPANTS**

For this study, 133 learners at the same school in the North of the Netherlands were tested at the end of six years of instruction (at age 18). The SB group consisted of 55 students who had started high school in 2009 and 2010. The DUB group comprised 78 students who had started in 2011, 2012 and 2013. At age 12, all 128 students had a high scholastic aptitude, as measured on the basis of the national curriculum test designed by the Dutch national testing agency (Cito). Dyslexic students and those who took more than 6 years to complete their secondary school were excluded from the dataset.

## **SB AND DUB INSTRUCTION**

The SB program in Year 1-6 was designed on the basis of two CLT coursebooks: “Grandes Lignes” (Bakker et al., 2003) for the first three years and “Libre Service” (Breek et al., 2003) for the final three years. These frequently used coursebooks consisted of different, thematically organized units. Class time consisted of approximately one third of reading and listening activities, one third of explicit grammar instruction and practice, and one third of speaking and writing activities. Each unit contained source texts which students had to read and listen to in class and exercises to develop each of the four skills, starting with receptive skills and working towards productive skills. Before actually reading, or listening to the texts, one or two introductory activities such as vocabulary exercises were done to scaffold for comprehension. Exercises started with global comprehension questions, followed by detailed comprehension questions and explicit instruction on comprehension strategies, mostly in the L1. The L2 was used primarily during speaking activities. Each chapter also offered exercises where grammar rules could be put to practice and a list of new vocabulary was presented to be memorized.

In addition to the lessons in the coursebook, the teaching program in the final three years consisted of two supplementary components providing receptive skills training to comply with curricular demands. The first one was a French literature course that was structured on the basis of extensive reading activities at home. The second one targeted the national standardized reading and listening exams and provided strategy-based training drills for both exams and extensive practice with exam formats.

The DUB program in years 1-3 was operationalized as the Accelerative Integrated Methodology (AIM<sup>3</sup>). This method consisted of storytelling in the L2 with lots of authentic exposure, imitation and repetition. The L2 was exclusively used; the emphasis was on oral production, and there was no explicit grammar instruction. The DUB program in years 4-6 was an extension of the AIM method, labeled AIM extended (AIMe), which also provided extensive L2 exposure at home and active use of the L2

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3 See Arnott (2011) for more details



in the classroom, with the “French only rule” providing maximal target language use. Students were asked to work with authentic videos and internet texts at home in online learning systems, which contained teacher dashboards to ensure quantitative and qualitative monitoring. Most of the available class time was spent on task-based activities targeting productive skills (speaking 80%, writing 20%)

The required literature component was also designed with DUB principles in mind, with integrated content and language learning. Students were asked to prepare a test on French literature by watching many YouTube lectures, providing L2 exposure and content on the history of French literature at the same time. This course was followed by actually reading French novels or watching theater plays to target reading, listening and speaking skills. The standardized reading comprehension exams were tackled by means of an additional 10-hour program providing instruction on and targeted practice with reading comprehension strategies.

The first three years of instruction were quite different in the SB and DUB programs in that the SB program was very grammar-oriented with little target language exposure and the DUB program was very much exposure-oriented with little attention to grammar (cf. Rouse-Malpat et al., 2022 for details).

In the final three years, both programs comprised a total number of 385 hours of class time and preparation time but differed markedly in what happened in class. In the SB program, L2 exposure was mainly confined to the classroom and was usually followed by comprehension activities. In the DUB program, L2 exposure was provided at home through online learning systems containing videos and texts and was followed by lexical practice and conversations about the content in class. However, reading and listening skills do not develop solely through activities that specifically target these skills but also through other aspects of a teaching program, like lexical practice, grammar instruction and chunks. This too constitutes exposure. Therefore, table 7 gives a rough estimate of time spent on the activities specifically targeting reading skills and on other relevant program elements during the final three years, split per teaching program.

**TABLE 7.** Time spent on reading skills (including literature)

Program elements specifically targeting reading skills	SB	DUB
Extensive reading (just reading)	25	50
Intensive reading (reading and exercises)	60	0
Reading exam practice	10	10
Reading exam strategies training	30	5
Amount of instruction time for reading activities:	125	65 <sup>4</sup>
Percentage:	32%	17%

4 Classtime for the DUB group consisted mostly of speaking rather than reading activities so the emphasis of the methods was crucially different

Table 8 gives a rough estimate of time spent on the activities specifically targeting the listening skills and on other supposedly contributing program elements.

**TABLE 8.** Time spent on listening skills (including literature)

Program elements specifically targeting listening skills	SB	DUB
Extensive listening (just listening)	10	50
Intensive listening (listening and exercises)	35	0
Listening exam practice	10	0
Listening exam strategies training	5	0
Amount of instruction time for listening activities:	60	50
Percentage:	15%	13%

## TESTS

Reading and listening skills were tested in the final year on the basis of the national final exams, which were developed by Cito as the national testing agency. The final reading exams consisted of different kinds of closed-type questions (like true/false, cloze, etc. but mostly multiple choice) and a limited number of open-ended questions. The final listening tests consisted exclusively of multiple-choice questions. These tests were official final exams, so they were not the same for all cohorts, but the Cito (Dutch national testing agency) provides grades which are normalized to ensure reliability between years. Therefore, the final grades were taken as the basis for the analysis.

## STATISTICAL DESIGN

As the independent variable, teaching program, only had two levels (SB or DUB), Hotelling's  $T^2$  was selected as an appropriate test to determine the effect of both teaching programs on the reading and listening skills after six years of instruction. SPSS for Windows 27.01 (SPSS, Inc. Chicago, IL) was used and basic requirements of Hotelling's  $T^2$  were checked. SPSS was used to test for linearity, multicollinearity, outliers, normality, sample size and homogeneity of variances. After checking assumptions, Pillai's Trace ( $p < .001$ ) was calculated to determine if there was a significant difference between the programs and the effect size was also calculated using Cohen's  $d$ .

## RESULTS

Preliminary assumption checking revealed that there was a linear relationship between Reading and Listening scores in each group, as assessed by means of a scatterplot. There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by Pearson correlations:  $r < .9$  ( $r = .713$  for group 1 and  $r = .537$  for group 2). We found one univariate outlier in group 1 and there were no multivariate outliers in the data, as assessed by Mahalanobis distance ( $p > .001$ , maximum value = 10.12 and critical value = 13.82). Reading and Listening scores were normally distributed for each group, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Armstrong, 2014):  $p > .125$ . There was homogeneity in our data, as assessed by Box's test of equality of covariances matrices ( $p = .322$ ) and homogeneity of variances could be assumed, as assessed by Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance ( $p > .05$ ).

As most assumptions were thus met, except for one univariate outlier found in the SB group, and the number of participants in this group was rather large (55), we assumed the result would not be affected and we decided to use a Hotelling's  $T^2$  test for all data, including the outlier. The difference between the programs on the combined dependent variables was statistically significant,  $F(2,125) = 13.389$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Wilks'  $\Lambda = .824$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .176$ .

To compare each dependent variable, independent samples t-tests were performed on reading scores and listening scores separately. Table 9 shows the mean reading and listening scores per condition as well as the comparison results. .

**TABLE 9.** Reading and listening scores after six years of instruction

	SB program N=55	DUB program N=73	Cohen's <i>d</i>	Significance (2-tailed)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
Reading scores (Max. 10)	6.36 (1.28)	6.67 (1.07)	$d = 0.26$	$p = .143$
Listening scores (Max. 10)	5.96 (1.32)	7.06 (1.24)	$d = 0.86$	$p < .001^{***}$

Independent samples T-tests showed a significant difference between both groups of students on listening in favor of the DUB students ( $p < .001$ ), with a large effect size ( $d = 0.86$ ), and a non-significant difference between both groups on reading skills ( $p = .143$ ), with a small effect size ( $d = 0.26$ ).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

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This study compared receptive skills in learners who had been taught on the basis of two different instructional programs: Structure-based (SB) and Dynamic usage-based (DUB) programs. The results showed that, after six years, DUB and SB learners are similar in reading skills, but DUB students outperform SB students on listening skills with a large effect size.

SB students thus produced similar scores as the DUB students in reading after six years. We argue that this is due to L2 lexical knowledge and reading exposure. In the first three years, typical SB programs focus primarily on the acquisition of lexical and grammatical knowledge as building blocks of the L2. In the final three years, SB teaching programs usually provide a great deal of L2 exposure not only through coursebooks, but also through an additional literature component, frequent reading exam practice, and frequent memorization of explicit L1-L2 word lists. The findings obtained in our study are very much in line with the literature. Research has shown that reading comprehension is greatly affected by the amount of lexical knowledge (cf. Hazenberg & Hulstijn, 1996; Laufer, 1992; Laufer & Sim, 1985; Hu & Nation, 2000; Laufer, 1989; Nation, 2006), indicating that without sufficient lexical knowledge, other factors will probably fail to meaningfully contribute to comprehension.

Although the high degree of L2 exposure in the last three years to prepare for the reading exam aided SB students in obtaining enough lexical knowledge for reading comprehension, it did not facilitate their listening comprehension development. Four aspects may have played a role. First, the programs differed very much in the amount of L2 oral exposure provided. In a DUB program, maximal target language use in all six years and immersion-like activities with videos through online learning systems at home in the final three years provided far more input repetition for auditory form-meaning mappings to become entrenched compared to the minimal exposure in their SB-taught peers.

Second, although segmentation skills, which are considered to contribute to the development of listening skills, are not explicitly practised in either the SB and the DUB program, the DUB program provided a great amount of exposure to oral French in the first three years with a great deal of repetition. In the last three years, videos in online learning systems with French subtitles were provided and students invited to read along. The repeated and simultaneous processing of oral and written forms is likely to induce segmentation skills.

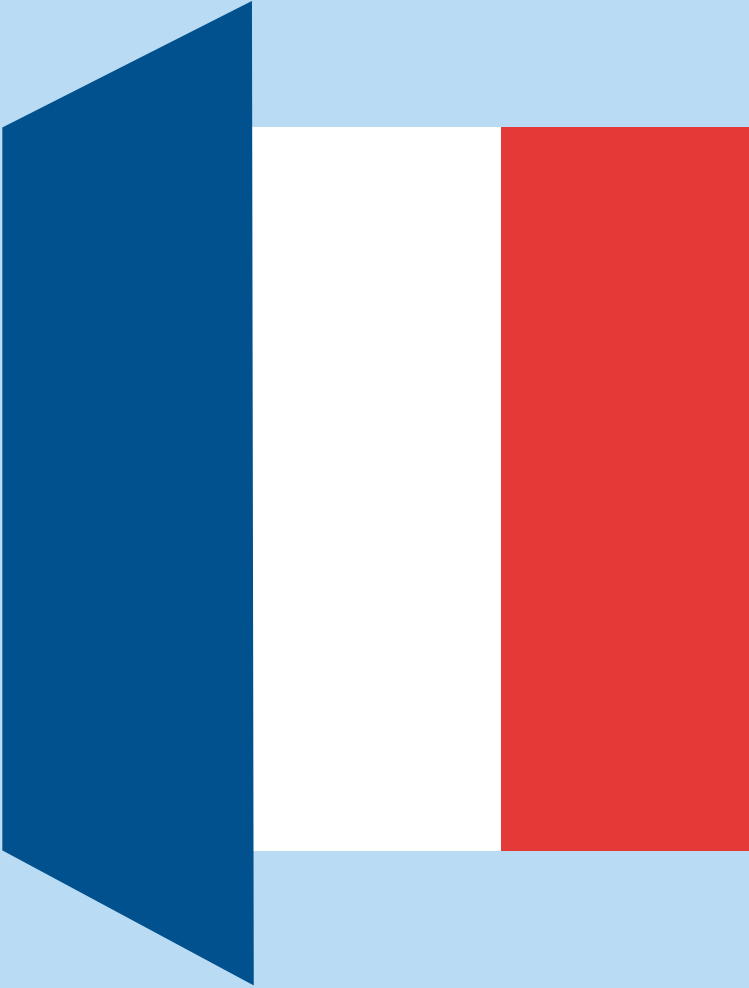
Third, the need for phonological memory skills is expected to largely depend on the speed of meaning retrieval which, as argued by different authors (cf. Pawley & Syder, 1983; Lewis, 1993; Wray & Perkins, 2000; Tang, 2013; Gustafson & Verspoor, 2017) will

greatly benefit from a more entrenched auditory vocabulary and the mastery of chunks that can be the result of abundant L2 exposure in this DUB program.

Finally, students' listening anxiety caused by the ephemeral and timed character of auditory input, especially during listening tests, is expected to be reduced considerably as students develop a certain listening ease caused in particular by target language practice. In the DUB program, students are expected to speak only French in class, which also helps maintain form-meaning mappings in everyday conversation, and after six years, listening to French L2 is business as usual and anxiety is greatly reduced as a result of routine mechanisms.

To summarize, an increased exposure to written language in an SB program has led to reading skills to develop as effectively as in a DUB program. However, due to the complex nature of listening skills, a great deal of oral L2 exposure is needed to induce segmentation and phonological memory skills and to reduce listening anxiety which might explain why a DUB program, with a great deal of exposure to oral language, may be held responsible for a more effective development of listening skills.

Although reading skills do benefit from an explicit training program which is a major part of the L2 curriculum in most schools in the Netherlands, such a program needs considerable time in order to be beneficial. This study has convincingly shown that reading skills will develop implicitly and reach a satisfactory level without such a program. The level of oral skills (speaking and listening) will clearly benefit from frequent exposure to and active use of the target language (major tenets of the DUB approach), while the level of written skills (reading and writing) will remain target-like. Consequently, if we consider oral skills to be the main goal of L2 instruction, it is rather strange that the final L2 exams in the Netherlands only test reading skills. Testing oral skills instead of reading skills would align the final exam with this goal.



# CHAPTER 5

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## **STRUCTURE-BASED VERSUS DYNAMIC USAGE-BASED INSTRUCTION: L2 FRENCH WRITING SKILLS AFTER SIX YEARS OF INSTRUCTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOL**

*This chapter is accepted as a paper for publication in the Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics (DuJAL). A shortened version in Dutch has been published in Levende Talen Tijdschrift (<https://lt-tijdschriften.nl/ojs/index.php/ltt/article/view/2037/1639>)*

## ABSTRACT

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This chapter compares the writing skills after six years of instruction in two different communicative programs. The first one is a “weak” version with a structure based (SB) syllabus and the other a “strong” version with a dynamic usage based (DUB) approach. It is argued that writing skills may rely more than any other skill on a Focus on Forms (FoFs) approach. This is partially motivated by early findings in SLA research, which showed that explicit instruction is more effective in foreign language acquisition (Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada & Tomita, 2010) and is even considered essential to achieve accuracy in advanced writing (Gunnarsson, 2012). The results suggest that the programs are equally effective in achieving grammatical accuracy and obtaining general text scores, but a DUB program seems more effective in achieving lexical complexity and fluency.



## INTRODUCTION

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About 20 years ago, Long (2000) wrote his seminal paper on the differences between Focus on Form, Focus on Forms, and Focus on Meaning. In this article, he pointed at the lack of a widely accepted linguistic theory to form the foundation of communicative language teaching. At that time, generativism (Chomsky, 2009) was still the most commonly known and accepted theoretical linguistic framework, favoring a focus on grammar, even within a communicative approach. As a result, language instruction still predominantly focused on language as an object rather than a medium of communication. In the last decade or so, usage based linguistic theories with its basic tenets of learning through use and exposure have found their way into the field of applied linguistics (cf. Tyler & Ortega, 2018). Rather than a focus on forms, focus on form and meaning have become more and more important theoretically.

Against this backdrop, it needs to be pointed out that most foreign language (FL) teaching in secondary schools continues to be predominantly explicit and structure-based (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 154); language teaching practices in the Netherlands are no exception (West & Verspoor, 2016). Although most FL course books used in Dutch schools claim to follow a communicative design inspired by the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and aim to develop communicative competence as advocated by different CLT proponents like Halliday (1970), Hymes (1972) and Widdowson (1978), a different picture emerges when observing classroom practices. The gradual acquisition of selected structural and lexical items constitutes the backbone of these course books, which often adopt an explicit and deductive approach to grammar, emphasize lexical and grammatical accuracy and impose the use of the L1 as the language of instruction (Popma, 1997; Hermans-Nymark, 2006; Dönszelman, 2019).

But during the last two decades, other language teaching approaches – more in line with usage-based theoretical perspectives on language learning and often labeled DUB approaches – have been introduced in a number of Dutch secondary schools. The major tenets of a DUB approach are in line with a Focus on Form approach, but in addition, they include frequent and repeated exposure to meaningful and comprehensible input containing full chunks of language, active use of the FL, an implicit and inductive approach to grammar and a focus on productive skills in the classroom (Rousse Malpat et al., 2022).

Dutch teachers are not eager to adopt such approaches. Even though they acknowledge that DUB approaches and a focus on oral production may help the learners in developing listening and speaking skills, they worry that they may do less well on reading (especially for the final exam) and writing skills (Rousse Malpat & Verspoor, 2012; West & Verspoor, 2016). Therefore, several studies have been conducted to compare the long-term effects of the more traditional SB teaching program to those of a DUB-

inspired teaching program on all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The aim of this particular study is to compare the students' writing skills in the two programs after six years of instruction, building on Rousse Malpat's work (Rousse-Malpat, 2019).

## LITERATURE

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### **STRUCTURE-BASED VERSUS DYNAMIC USAGE BASED INSTRUCTION**

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In line with generativist linguistic theory, an SB approach sees the foreign language as a system of structurally related elements that encode meaning. Language learning within an SB approach is inherently rule-driven (Lightbown & Spada, 2013) and the development of FL proficiency benefits from learning to apply grammatical, morphological and phonological rules and focusing on accuracy. The structural elements of different subsystems are usually presented from simple to complex, making language structure an essential backbone of SB course books.

In line with usage-based theory, a DUB approach (cf. Verspoor, 2017) views language as a complex dynamic system that itself consists of different interacting sub-systems like the lexicon, syntax and morphology. The language system is complex and dynamic in the sense that it is connected to other systems in its environment, like for instance the general cognitive system and the affective system, and that its subsystems (e.g., lexicon, syntax, phonology) are not modular but interact. Furthermore, language as a complex system is dynamic in the sense that it evolves with a changing environment and changing input patterns. Second language development is the result of a dynamic interplay between internal resources like general aptitude, degree of motivation, eagerness to learn, and attention as well as external resources, including the degree of exposure or the effectiveness of an instructional approach (de Bot & Larsen-Freeman, 2011). Language thus emerges through use and in interaction with different sub-systems that themselves foster change over time.

Key elements in language learning from a DUB perspective are repetitive exposure to meaningful input and authentic language use (Langacker, 2000; Tomasello, 2003; Ellis, 2008a). When sufficiently exposed to the target language for regularities to become noticed, the learner comes to use distributional information to bootstrap knowledge, resulting in language acquisition (Onnis, 2012). Linguistic units are learned as they are "heard and used frequently and therefore entrenched, which is the result of habit formation, routinization and automatization" (Verspoor and Schmitt, 2013, p. 354).

A fundamental difference between SB and DUB perspectives is the type of instruction it assumes to be needed for language learning. Operationalizing an SB perspective into a teaching program typically results in an explicit approach with a focus on

perspective into a teaching program typically results in an explicit approach with a focus on understanding language structure and producing accurate language. Operationalizing a DUB perspective into a teaching program, on the other hand, usually involves an implicit approach to morphosyntax and an emphasis on exposure and active use of the FL and fluency in language production.

One of the language domains that has been strongly associated with SB instruction is writing. The distance between the writer and the reader in both time and space implies the absence of feedback from the reader and therefore necessitates the creation of coherent and understandable texts. FL writers generally spend a great deal of time on the three cognitive sub-processes involved in writing: planning, formulation and revision (cf. Hayes & Flower, 1980). Indeed, both Fayol (1997) and Barbier (1997) have shown that the process of writing is much slower than the process of speaking, and it has been argued that especially in the area of accuracy in French FL writing, implicit knowledge might not be sufficient: “in order to ensure accuracy in the low-level aspects of the text, writers also use their explicit knowledge, especially in the case of writing in L2 French” (Gunnarson, 2012, p. 249).

Based on these opinions, it is reasonable to assume that writing skills are more likely to be affected than other skills in a paradigm shift from SB explicit approaches to DUB implicit approaches. However, this has not been supported by a number of recent longitudinal classroom studies conducted in Dutch secondary schools with free response data.

## RECENT CLASSROOM RESEARCH

In a classroom study comparing explicit instruction and implicit instruction, Andringa et al. (2011), who present an excellent overview of the explicit-implicit debate, tested eighty-one 12-18-year-old learners of L2 Dutch on their use of explicit knowledge in a free written response task and found that after four months of L2 Dutch instruction in which exposure was controlled for, there was no advantage of explicit instruction over implicit instruction on a free writing response task.

In a three-year longitudinal classroom study in the first three years of a Dutch high school (with participants aged 12-15), Rouse-Malpat (2019) conducted a large cohort study with 229 students examining the development of speaking and writing proficiency of French as a FL in several Dutch schools using the same teaching programs as in the present study: one structure-based and the other dynamic usage-based. After three years, the DUB learners outperformed the SB learners in both skills, which may have been due to the large difference in FL exposure. In one SB group, though, the teacher spoke L2 French for the greater part, and in Rouse-Malpat (2019) this group was compared to a DUB group of learners with the same scholastic aptitude level on writing skills. The SB group and DUB group scored the same on holistic scores, but the

DUB wrote significantly longer texts, suggesting a greater ease in language production. The DUB group also wrote longer sentences, suggesting a higher overall complexity, and used significantly more advanced morphological forms. A previous study by Rouse Malpat and Verspoor (2012) showed that the SB groups outperformed the DUB group in terms of accuracy after one year, but this difference disappeared after two years, most probably because DUB learners need more time to discern the morphological patterns.

The classroom study by Piggott et al. (2020) involved 416 Dutch learners of English as a foreign language and investigated the effectiveness of a two-year program with explicit grammar instruction and a program without explicit grammar instruction. All 416 students used the same coursebooks, but in the implicit condition, the grammar explanations were removed, and the time left was used for more listening and reading tasks from the book. The study showed that the effectiveness of the program was associated with different aspects of language performance: while the explicit group performed better on accuracy measures in general, the implicitly taught group performed better on complexity and fluency measures. Holistic ratings showed no difference for vocabulary, but the explicit group outperformed the implicit group in relation to the grammar ratings that the experts provided.

To summarize, most CLT programs in the Netherlands are still inspired by SB views, and teachers tend to favor explicit instruction on morphosyntax and accuracy, using the L1 as the language of instruction. This reminds us of a Focus on Forms approach. Yet, several longitudinal studies in the Netherlands with free response data have shown that accuracy can also be achieved with implicit, high exposure approaches.

## **THIS STUDY**

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The current study (part of a larger study in which all four language skills are examined) explores the effect of two teaching programs for French as a FL, the same as those in Rouse-Malpat (2019), but rather than comparing the results after three years of instruction, the current study focuses on the writing results after 6 years of instruction. The research question underlying this study is as follows:

*Is a DUB program (without explicit attention to forms) as effective as an SB program (with a great deal of explicit attention to forms) in achieving accuracy and in developing the writing skills of Dutch VWO (pre-university education) students in a 6-year teaching program?*

Our expectation, based on the long-term studies mentioned above, is that with enough exposure to and active use of the FL, a DUB approach might work as well as an SB approach in developing writing skills, not only on overall scores but also on morphological accuracy.

# METHOD

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## PARTICIPANTS

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The 56 learners in the current study are from two different cohorts: one group started in 2010 and graduated in 2016 and the other started in 2011 and graduated in 2017. All participants started at the age of 12 as true beginners and they left school at the age of 17-18. They were tested in their final year on their writing skills. The SB group consisted of 24 learners (5 male; 19 female). The DUB group consisted of 32 learners (6 male; 26 female). Their first language was Dutch, and all learners were enrolled in Dutch VWO (pre-university education), which is the highest secondary educational level in the Netherlands. During the first three years, French was compulsory, and students had different teachers, while in the last three years French was optional, and all students had the same teacher.

## TEACHING PROGRAMS

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In both the SB and DUB programs, students had two 50-minute lessons per week in the first three years, in which French is compulsory for all students, and three 50-minute lessons per week in the last three years, in which French is optional. The amount of total classroom instruction time can thus be estimated at 450 hours.

For the SB-program, two similar course books were used: “Grandes Lignes” (Bakker et al., 2005) in the first three years, and “Libre Service” (Breek et al., 2003) in the final three years. In these textbooks, which are widely used in the Netherlands, there was a focus on reading, writing and listening activities (one third of the average course book), but a substantial amount of time (again one third of the average course-book) was spent on the acquisition of grammatical and lexical knowledge through explicit rules and word lists to be memorized. As target language use with these kinds of activities is considered to reduce the students’ comprehension and henceforth make learning less effective (Van Compernelle, 2015), the use of the FL was limited because much time - via L1-medium instruction - was spent on explaining grammar, on teaching reading and listening strategies and on testing reading and listening comprehension.

For the DUB program, two complementary communicative, DUB-inspired methods were used. In the first three years, the Accelerative Integrated Methodology (AIM; Maxwell, 2001) was used. AIM is a story-based program in which teacher scripts are used for controlled, oral input activities at the beginning of each lesson and meaningful use of the foreign language takes place during different activities in small groups that follow. A focus on oral skills precedes the development of written skills and in the first six months students are exposed to spoken language only. After six months, written text is introduced. Classroom activities focus on meaning and repetition without explicit

grammar instruction. Key to the AIM method is target language use and the use of gestures (including gestures for some grammatical features such as gender) to enhance multimodal learning and to facilitate meaningful use of the FL (See Arnott, 2011, for more details about AIM). In the final three years, an extended version of AIM, labeled AIM extended (AIME), was used as the AIM materials are only available for the first three years of secondary education. This extension of AIM provides authentic input through online sources (short videos and texts from the internet) and more controlled input through FL magazines (texts only) amongst others to facilitate a large amount of exposure to the language, followed by lesson activities with a main focus on speaking.

## GENERAL WRITING INSTRUCTION IN BOTH PROGRAMS

In the SB program writing instruction was in line with a Focus on Forms approach. It focused on the teaching of grammar through closed type<sup>5</sup> and translation tasks<sup>6</sup> around communicative themes and writing skills were mainly tested by the same kinds of tasks. As tense use is known to be one of the most difficult aspects of French as a FL (Klein et al., 1995), explicit tense use instruction is an important part of writing instruction. Students in the SB program were never engaged in any type of extended writing until the final year, when they were usually invited to write a formal letter, which was assessed on the basis of language accuracy and other aspects of writing like formality conventions, and punctuation.

In the DUB program writing instruction was most in line with a Focus on Form approach. It started after the first six months of FL instruction and focused on guided writing tasks like story retelling and story extension on the basis of known stories and later on continued with free narratives. In the last three years writing instruction consisted mainly of argumentative writing tasks. Writing activities were usually done in class and peer-assistance was used as a means to develop linguistic awareness. The tests were assessed on both content and language proficiency.

## TESTING WRITING SKILLS AFTER SIX YEARS

To control for topic effects, the same 30-hour program was used during the final two years in both teaching programs to introduce seven academic topics such as Migrants, Tattoos, Abortion, etc. (see Appendix B for an example of the materials used in the respective exams). During 6 to 7 lessons, a topic was introduced through a video-documentary in French with various exercises entailing repeated exposure to the

<sup>5</sup> Closed-type exercises, in which students have to select from a distinct set of pre-defined responses, often appear in SB programs and focus on one specific grammatical rule, for instance the right tense (*Hier il ...son depart (a annoncé/annonçait)*)

<sup>6</sup> Translation tasks are often used in an SB program and focus on syntax and on differences between the L1 and the L2 (He gives me all his money=*Il me donne tout son argent*).

language used. Free response writing assignments were given to the students to enable them to practice for the assignment used in the current study.

## TESTING PROCEDURE

The writing test for both cohorts took place in Year 6. The teacher selected four topics for students to prepare and during the test, students were offered two of those topics and they were asked to write an essay of a minimum of 200 words on one of these topics within 50 minutes (See Appendix C for an example of such a writing exam). The students wrote the essay in the computer lab at their school and handed them in digitally. Supportive tools (e.g., spelling- and grammar checker) were not turned off during the test, but they were hardly used given the time restrictions (the teacher was able to monitor all screens by using specialized software). The anonymized essays from both cohorts were assessed at the same time through holistic ratings by expert teachers, machine-mediated morphosyntactic profiling and by means of analytical Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency (CAF) measures (see below).

## HOLISTIC RATINGS BY EXPERT TEACHERS

To rate the texts holistically, the same method was used as in Verspoor et al. (2012). A group of 9 French teachers were asked to rank 10 texts in terms of general proficiency in several rounds until consensus was reached. These texts were used as benchmarks and rubrics were created to describe the benchmarked texts (see Appendix A). After this five-hour session, the nine raters were divided into three groups of three raters each. The texts were divided in 4 batches of 12 and a final batch of 8. To avoid bias, the raters were randomly divided into new groups with each new batch of essays. Agreement among the raters was high. In SPSS (version 27), the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (two way random, consistency with a 95% confidence interval) on the ratings produced by three groups of three independent raters was  $r=0.893$  ( $p<.001$ ).

## MACHINE-MEDIATED MORPHOSYNTACTIC PROFILING

Direkt Profil (DP) is one of the few corpus tools available for FL French and was developed at the University of Lund in Sweden (Granfeldt et al., 2006)<sup>7</sup>. In total, the software bases its analyses on 142 different analytic text measures in profiling the morphosyntactic content of any (learner) text including subject-verb agreement, tense use, number of conjunctions, etc. Three different algorithms (Granfeldt et al., 2006) produce a profile based on the six morphosyntactic stages of development, from

<sup>7</sup> As there were no funds for further development and the computer language used for the program was outdated, the software had to be removed from the server for security reasons and is no longer available online since 2021.

beginner to native speaker, identified and defined by Bartning and Schlyter (2004) and the results were validated by Granfeldt and Ågren (2014).

## **ANALYTICAL TEXT MEASURES**

To support the holistic and overall DP judgments mentioned above analytically, a number of text measures was used. Different broad CAF measures that showed almost linear change across proficiency levels from beginner up to intermediate proficiency levels (CEFR level B1) in English (cf. Verspoor et al. 2012) were chosen to support the findings of human-mediated and machine-mediated ratings. As coherence and cohesion already played an important role in the holistic judgments (see Appendix A) and the writing samples were too short to provide useful data, this text measure was not included in the analysis.

For complexity Tense Use, Guiraud Index and Sentence Length were chosen. For Tense Use, the relative use of tenses other than the Present Tense was seen as a measure of verb phrase complexity (Granfeldt & Ågren, 2014). Tense Use was computed on a 10-point scale ranging from 0 (only Present Tense) to 10 (only other tenses), where a score of 6 implied that 6 out of 10 tenses were tenses other than the present tense. The Guiraud Index was chosen as measure of lexical diversity for texts containing more than 200 words (Van Hout & Vermeer, 2007).

Although Biber et al. (2011) claim that phrasal complexity (i.e., the use of different modifiers in a noun phrase) is a better indicator of writing proficiency than clausal complexity, average sentence length (full sentence, including coordinate and subordinate clauses) was taken as the third complexity measure (Norris & Ortega, 2009; Oh, 2006; Yoon, 2017). The data investigated by Biber et al. (2011) consists of research articles, written by proficient (academic) writers, while the participants in the Rouse-Malpat (2019) study were beginners (CEFR level A1-A2) and the participants in this study had an intermediate level (CEFR level B1). Consequently, the language investigated in both studies can be considered as conversational French and sentence length is an appropriate measure for examining the linguistic quality of writings.

Accuracy measures were Subject-Verb Agreement (SVA) and Determiner-Noun Agreement (DNA) as they are expected to contribute significantly to accuracy in FL French (Ågren et al., 2012). Both SVA and DNA were calculated on a scale ranging from 0 (no agreement) to 10 (100% agreement). Finally, text length, operationalized as the total number of tokens in the text, was taken as a fluency measure. Direct Profil provided information on tense use and accuracy. Vocabprofilers (Cobb, 2018) was used to calculate the Guiraud Index, average sentence length and text length.



## STATISTICAL DESIGN

Holistic ratings, morphosyntactic profiling scores, and CAF measures were inserted in SPSS (Version 27) and after assumptions of normal distribution and homogeneity of variance were checked, Independent Samples t-tests were conducted ( $p < .05$ ) on all variables.

There were no outliers in the holistic and morpho syntactic profiling scores: the scores of participants for each teaching program were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ( $p > .05$ ), and there was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ( $p > .05$ ). The mean score and the Standard Deviation were computed, and the effect size was calculated, using Cohen's  $d$  (Cohen, 1988).

As to the CAF measures, there were minor outliers in the data. For most measures, the scores were normally distributed as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ( $p > .05$ ) and there was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ( $p > .05$ ). For Average Sentence Length (ASL), there were only minor violations in the SB group (one outlier and no normal distribution). Hence, a non-parametric test was not assumed necessary for analyzing these data and we decided to use only the regular parametric test.

For text length, however, there were outliers in both groups (one higher and three lower) and both assumptions of normal distribution and homogeneity of variance were violated. Therefore, after having observed symmetry between the shape of distribution of both groups, we used the Mann-Whitney U test for analyzing scores on text length.

For the interpretation of effect sizes of both holistic and analytical measures Plonsky and Oswald's (2014) SLA field-specific benchmarks were used: small ( $d = 0.4$ ), medium ( $d = 0.7$ ), and large ( $d = 1.0$ ).

## RESULTS

The holistic scores by expert teachers and the level of writing proficiency provided by a computer program for morphosyntactic analyses of written FL French are summarized in table 10.

**TABLE 10** Overview of holistic scores by expert teachers and morphosyntactic profiling

	SB program N=24	DUB program N=32	Cohen's <i>d</i>	Significance (2-tailed)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
Holistic scores by expert teachers (scores 1-4)	2.50 (0.95)	2.58 (0.92)	$d = 0.09$	$p = .757$
Morphosyntactic profiling by Direkt Profil (scores 1-6)	4.05 (1.22)	4.25 (1.14)	$d = 0.17$	$p = .534$

Although the DUB learners scored higher on both measures, the differences were not significant and effect sizes were low. Table 11 provides an overview of the results on CAF measures.

**TABLE 11** Overview of CAF measures

	SB program N=24	DUB program N=32	Cohen's <i>d</i>	Significance (2-tailed)
	Mean (SD)	Mean(SD)		
<i>Complexity:</i>				
Guiraud Index	8.97 (1.12)	8.80 (1.00)	$d = 0.16$	$p = .541$
Tense Use Ratio	2.68 (1.93)	2.43 (1.05)	$d = 0.16$	$p = .584$
Average Sentence Length	14.72 (3.73)	17.33 (2.78)	$d = 0.79$	$p = .001^{***}$
<i>Accuracy:</i>				
Subject-Verb Agreement	7.33 (1.63)	7.90 (1.28)	$d = 0.39$	$p = .147$
Determiner-Noun Agreement	9.15 (0.83)	8.83 (0.99)	$d = 0.35$	$p = .213$
<i>Fluency:</i>				
Text Length	293 (75)	356 (128)	$d = 0.60$	$p = .044^*$

\* significant at  $p < .05$

\*\*\* significant at  $p < .001$

The DUB students produced significantly longer and more complex sentences and produced longer texts overall with medium effect sizes (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014). For a better understanding of these results, the first paragraphs of two essays of two students will be given as an example:

- (1) A DUB-student (Respondent 713, total number of words: 770, 17 chunks)  
*Conforme à l'émission, aujourd'hui plus et plus des femmes se font avorter au Chili. Les interventions qu'elles ont subi, ont été clandestine, dangereuse. Souvent, les femmes se font avorter à domicile avec des médicaments vendus sur le marché noir. Ces médicaments causeront peut-être maladies entre les femmes. De plus, les femmes sont en danger et vivent dans la peur, parce qu'avorter est un crime dans son pays. Chaque jour de ses vies, les femmes peuvent être poursuivie par la justice. Dans l'émission on raconte Marie, elle est une de ses femmes qui risque d'aller au prison.*
- (2) An SB student (Respondent 607, total number of words: 243, 13 chunks)  
*Les migrants sont tout le monde. Et tout le monde parle des migrants. J'ai vu une émission des migrants au dérivé. C'était encore un sujet difficile. Dans la documentation j'ai vu plus des migrants désespérées. Les migrants travaillent sur un bateau avec beaucoup de personnes. La même chose que l'animal. Le travail sur le bateau est trop cher pour les migrants. Environ 5000 euros par personne. Plus de migrants est réfugiés. Ils cherchent la sécurité et en particulier : ils cherchent la paix. Parce qu'il y a une situation dangereuse dans leur pays. L'environnement n'est pas paisible.*

These extracts clearly show both significant differences reported in table 11. The DUB student not only outperformed the SB student with regard to the total number of words, but also to the average sentence length. Moreover, the sentences produced by the SB student were predominantly simple (no subordinate clauses) while the sentences of the DUB student were more complex (more subordinate clauses). But the extracts not only show that sentence complexity contributes to a higher perceived quality of the text but also the use of chunks. In the next sub study (see Chapter 6) it appeared that chunk coverage (percentage of words in chunks out of total words) is much higher in the extract of the DUB student (52%) when compared to the extract of the SB student (35%).

As far as accuracy is concerned, the DUB students performed slightly better than SB students when conjugating verbs, but SB students performed slightly better than DUB students when applying agreement rules pertaining to gender and number. In neither of these cases, however, the differences were significant.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

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In the Dutch context, teachers prefer to hold to traditional ideas about FL instruction with a great deal of explicit attention to forms because they fear that students will be less accurate if they do not. Especially for writing, the argument has been that explicit attention to morphosyntax is needed to achieve accuracy (Fayol, 1997; Barbier, 1997; Gunnarson, 2012; Ellis & Wulff, 2015; Hulstijn, 2015). The current study was designed to test this assumption and compared learners on French writing skills in two different FL teaching programs--a structure based (SB) and a dynamic usage-based (DUB) program--after six years of high school instruction in the Netherlands.

In line with Long (2000), the SB program could be considered a Focus on Forms approach with explicit explanations in the L1 on French grammar and relatively little true exposure in the FL, especially in the first three years. The DUB program could be considered a Focus on Form approach with implicit attention to form and a great amount of FL exposure and use.

The most interesting finding was that the SB and DUB groups did not differ much at all in holistic ratings given by a group of experts, in the proficiency level score produced by Direkt Profil, which included many accuracy measures, nor in the two specific accuracy measures focused on a great deal in the SB classes: subject-verb agreement and determiner-noun agreement. With regard to specific CAF measures, the results show a difference between the approaches. The DUB learners produced longer texts, which may be a general indicator for fluency, and longer sentences, which is a general indicator of sentence complexity. In a study on the same students (Chapter 6), we also found differences in chunks. The DUB learners used longer and more lexically based chunks, and therefore relatively more words that could be classified as part of chunks than the students in the SB condition ( $d = 0.73$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This was clearly illustrated by the two examples in the previous section which showed a higher chunk coverage of the DUB student.

When we relate these findings to the literature reviewed, the results of this study clearly align with previous classroom studies conducted in Dutch secondary schools (cf. Andringa et al., 2011; Piggott et al., 2020; Rousse-Malpat et al. 2022) with regard to complexity and fluency. In all studies, the implicit teaching programs appear to be as effective as explicit teaching programs. As for accuracy in writing, Piggott et al. (2020) reported that students in the explicit condition performed better on accuracy measures, while in this study students in the implicit condition performed better on complexity and fluency measures and equally well on accuracy measures. This seems logical as the implicit group in the Piggott et al. (2020) study was tested after two years, while in this study, students were tested after six years, and as Rousse-Malpat and Verspoor

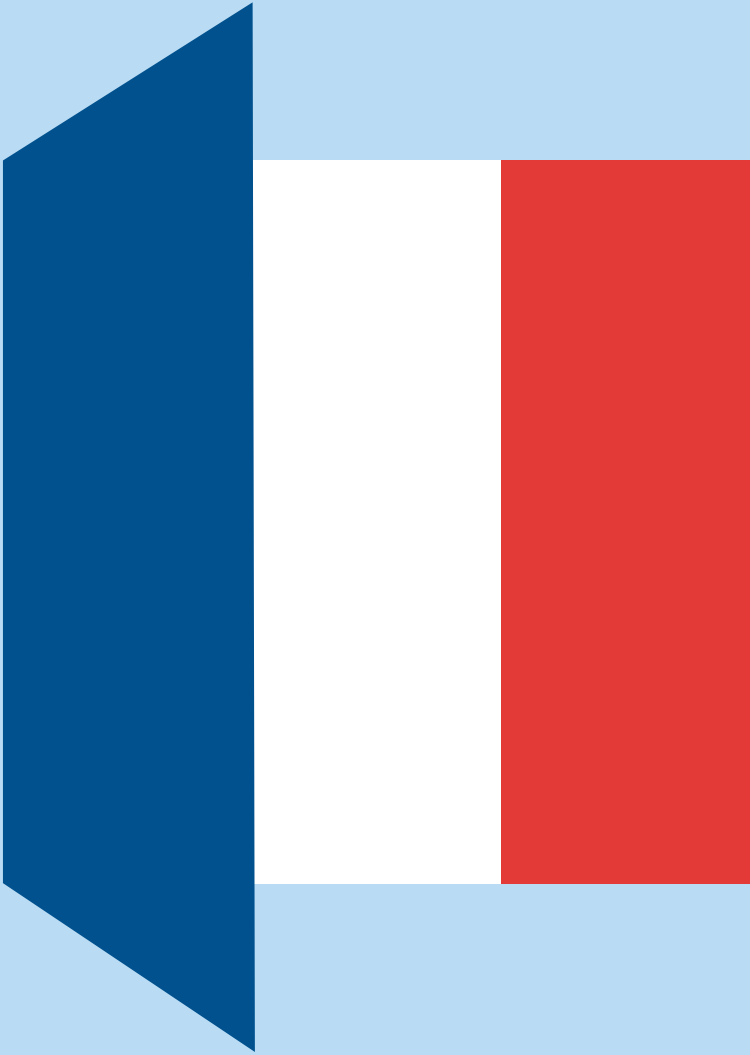
(2012) showed, the implicit learners seem to take longer to internalize the more subtle morphosyntactic patterns.

Of course, the current study has its limitations. Empirical studies usually require full experimental control to allow generalization of findings, but classroom research requires high ecological validity to support teaching practice. Moreover, if this type of classroom research is widely replicated, as advocated by DeKeyser and Botano (2019), this lack of methodological rigor will be compensated as results will become more robust and more relevant for practitioners.

This study also has several strengths: First, although results were only obtained at one point in time (after six years) and development of writing skills cannot be determined over time, its duration was necessary to facilitate a comparison of two teaching programs which differ with regard to the degree of implicitness. Second, this study has a high ecological validity with participants who are not just learning for the sake of the experiment (DeKeyser, 2003), and French as a FL. As the majority of the experiments in this field so far have been conducted with English as a FL, it is important to conduct experiments with other languages as well, especially those where extramural exposure is limited. Indeed, in most existing effect studies on English, there is generally no control over informal learning at home, which makes French in the Netherlands an excellent choice for such a study as there is almost no extramural exposure normally. Despite these strengths, the findings of this explorative study should be interpreted with caution and more long-term and ecologically valid studies are needed to confirm the findings.

The current long-term classroom study suggests that general learning mechanisms like statistical learning are capable of facilitating FL acquisition through FL exposure and active use, if given sufficient time. It seems that a predominantly implicit, DUB FL teaching program might be as effective as a predominantly explicit, SB approach in terms of achieving morphological accuracy and even more effective in achieving complexity and fluency.

As previous studies have speculated that fluency especially may be related to the use of chunks, the next chapter will explore if chunk coverage can be related to either complexity or fluency and whether it should be regarded as a sub-construct or an independent one.



# CHAPTER 6

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## **EXPOSURE AND CHUNKS IN L2 FRENCH WRITING**

*This chapter has been submitted in its current form*

## ABSTRACT

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Chunks--which are preferred ways of expressing certain concepts within speech communities--form a substantial part of a native-like linguistic repertoire and will make an L2 speaker sound more fluent and authentic. From a usage-based perspective, L2 development is primarily driven by L2 exposure, and several studies so far have shown that L2 exposure contributes not only to more complex and fluent language but also to the use of chunks. In this study written texts of 56 French learners enrolled in either a Structure-Based (SB) or a Dynamic Usage-Based (DUB) program were examined after six years of instruction. The DUB students clearly outperformed the SB students in terms of chunk coverage (an overall measure of chunk use) and they used significantly more longer, lexically based chunks.



## INTRODUCTION

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In the previous chapter on writing skills, the SB and DUB groups did not differ much in writing skills after 6 years of instruction. However, the DUB students wrote longer sentences and longer texts, which could be related to fluency. These findings were in line with Piggott et al. (2020) who found that the learners with implicit instruction and more L2 exposure wrote longer sentences and texts. She also examined the number of chunks used in her writers' text and she found that implicitly taught students excelled in outcome measures such as length and formulaic sequences (chunks). Also, in chapter 4 (on reading and listening skills), it was argued that the mastery of chunks can facilitate language processing speed, as chunks are readily available as a result of repeated exposure (Gustafson & Verspoor, 2017), and once automatized, chunks can form shortcuts in processing (Pawley & Syder, 1983; Wray & Perkins, 2000).

The aim of the present paper is to explore the use of chunks in the texts of learners after six years of an SB or DUB program. Taking a usage-based perspective (Ellis & Cadierno, 2009), we expect that the learners' use of chunks will reflect the amount and kind of input they are receiving. We expect the DUB learners to use more chunks overall and the SB students to use a more limited range of chunks. We will also explore the relationship between the use of chunks and syntactic complexity to see if indeed the use of chunks facilitates longer, more complex sentences.

## LITERATURE

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As Sinclair (1991) has pointed out a substantial part of a native speaker's language consists of a wide range of conventionalized expressions (Wray, 2002; Ellis, 2008b) which we will refer to as chunks. Because chunks are so pervasive in a native-like repertoire, they are also a crucial aspect of L2 development. Chunks contribute to fluency and authenticity of L2 use and may also speed up L2 development (Gustafsson & Verspoor, 2017). From a usage-based perspective, L2 development is primarily driven by frequency and salience of structures in the surrounding input (Ellis & Cadierno, 2009), which we will refer to as L2 exposure.

Chunks have been labelled differently throughout the literature, including, but not limited to, "chunks", "formulaic sequences", "conventionalized ways of saying things", and "multiword expressions" (Forsberg, 2010; Myles, 2012; Verspoor et al., 2012; Wray, 2000), all considered form-use-meaning mappings (FUMMs) by Verspoor (2017). According to Wray (2000), chunks are preferred ways of expressing certain concepts within speech communities, resulting in extensive use and they may therefore contribute to fluency and authenticity of L2 use. The following characteristics are repeatedly cited

in relation to chunks: frequency of occurrence; association of words (notably by native speaker norms); and comprehension and production of chunks as a whole (Wray, 2000; Myles, 2012; Forsberg, 2010; Gustafsson & Verspoor, 2017). Our working definition of chunks is that they are frequently used linguistic forms that represent native speakers' preferred ways of expressing a concept, and are generally learned, processed, and produced as whole linguistic items.

It is assumed that especially frequency of exposure drives the entrenchment process, enabling both L1 and L2 learners to consolidate these form-meaning mappings until they are automatized (Ellis, 2003). Once automatized, chunks facilitate short-cuts in processing (Pawley & Syder, 1983; Wray & Perkins, 2000): "It seems that we use prefabricated sequences as a way of minimizing the effects of a mismatch between our potential linguistic capabilities and our actual short-term memory capacity" (Wray & Perkins, 2000, p. 15).

As frequency of exposure is assumed to drive the entrenchment process, it would make sense that learners in teaching programs that use the target language almost exclusively, such as Content Language Integrated Learning, use more chunks in their writings than learners taught on the basis of pedagogical approaches with less authentic exposure (c.f. Gustafsson & Verspoor, 2017; Piggott, 2019). Frequency of exposure has also been related to more fluent and complex language (cf. Rousse-Malpat & Verspoor et al., 2012; Piggott, 2019). In other words, there seems to be a relationship between complexity and fluency measures on the one hand and the use of chunks on the other hand.

L2 studies have shown that chunks are good indicators of proficiency level (Forsberg, 2010; Hou et al., 2018; Verspoor et al., 2012), and that the types of chunks used may change at different stages of development. For example, Verspoor et al. (2012) distinguished between partially schematic chunks, which have slot fillers, and fully fixed chunks, which have to be learned as a whole. Fully fixed chunks occurred relatively more at higher levels of proficiency. Likewise, Hou et al. (2018), who investigated chunk development in 18 Chinese advanced learners of English over a period of 18 months, found that, overall, learners used more fully fixed chunks (in Hou et al. referred to as lexical), especially more collocations.

In terms of French chunk development, Forsberg (2010) analyzed L2 French oral production of native Swedish speakers across four different proficiency levels. These ranged from teenage beginners after one month of French instruction to adult 'very advanced speakers' who had spent at least 4.5 years in France. Each group consisted of 6 participants, whose production was analyzed for chunk use and subsequently compared to French natives. In her study, chunk quantity, category distribution, and frequency were analyzed, and quantity was found to be the most predictive measure of proficiency. L2 proficiency and chunk use are thus clearly linked, and essentially the more chunks are used the more proficient the learner is.

However, as Myles et al. (1998) point out, chunks of prefabricated linguistic constructions are also used and overextended by beginners, such as certain question forms, certain negative forms and certain first-person singular forms. For instance, “*j’aime*” (I like) was used as “*elle j’aime le shopping*” (‘she I like shopping’; likely intended meaning ‘she likes shopping’) (Myles et al., 1998). They argue that learners may initially rely on such constructions to achieve communicative goals, but that they later learn to ‘unpack’ them and can use the components individually in novel utterances. This “unpacking” provides evidence for the emergence of grammar through chunks, in line with current Emergentist and Usage-Based theories (cf. Lewis et al., 1997, p. 211; Ellis, 1997, p. 126; Ellis, 2003; Ellis & Shintani, 2014, p. 71). As a result, it can be suggested that learners use chunks for bootstrapping purposes, meaning that they are capable of internalizing grammatical rules on the basis of these entrenched chunks (Myles et al., 1998). This is further explored by Towell (2014), who suggested that sufficient exposure results in learners’ recognition of surface patterns, from which they can deduct grammatical rules. Consequently, both L1 and L2 learners can acquire grammatical rules without an overt awareness of such rules. This was indeed demonstrated by Perera (2001), who analyzed the use of prefabricated language in four Japanese learners of English between 3 and 5 years old enrolled in an English immersion program. In their early stages of language development, novel utterances were rarely formed without prefabricated chunks, and these chunks enabled the discovery of target language rules (Perera, 2001).

Myles (2012) interpreted the results from Myles et al. (1998) as a demonstration that learners produce forms that may exceed linguistic competences at the time of development, enhancing Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency (CAF) measures in early learner production. This suggests that chunks and CAF measures are interrelated. Also, Piggott (2019) suggested that the use of chunks was related to some complexity measures.

Piggott (2019) examined the difference in writing skills between Focus on Form (FoF) and Focus on Meaning (FoM) instruction in 463 Dutch learners of English during their first two years of secondary school. In the FoF condition, time was spent on explicit grammar in the L1; in the FoM condition, all grammar exercises were deleted, and students spent relatively more time on listening exercises and reading texts, so they had relatively more L2 exposure. At the end of the two years, both approaches were found to be effective, but they had facilitated different language competences. The FoF group showed higher morphological accuracy levels, but the FoM group showed higher complexity and fluency levels in their writing. She speculated that higher complexity and fluency scores in the FoM group were related to the use of chunks as they may have led to increased subordination and coordination. This is very much in line with Myles’ (2012) suggestion that some CAF measures may be influenced by chunk use.

To summarize, findings thus far suggest that the amount of chunk use is related to the amount of exposure a learner has had in the target language, and chunk use

may help learners to be more fluent and complex in their L2. Building on these initial findings, it is important to reach a better understanding of the exact link between learner exposure to the target language and chunk use as well as how chunk use is facilitatory in enhancing L2 fluency and complexity. However, most chunk research has been done on the English language and especially in the Netherlands, so it is difficult to control for extramural exposure. French L2 is interesting because it is a language frequently learned in school settings and in the Netherlands, extramural exposure to French is rare. Also, replicating findings in languages other than English is likely to enhance the validity of chunk theory and its applicability to L2 pedagogy.

## **THIS STUDY**

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This study is based on the study in the previous chapter, in which the written production of 56 French learners enrolled in SB and DUB programs at a Dutch secondary school after six years of instruction was examined. The two groups scored the same when scored holistically, but when looking at various complexity, accuracy, and fluency measures, the DUB students were more complex and fluent than their SB counterparts. Here, the same data are used to examine whether the DUB students use more chunks and, if so, which kinds. In addition, we will investigate to what extent chunk use can be directly related to some CAF measures. Two research questions form the basis of this study:

1. *To what extent do the SB and DUB learners differ in their use of chunks?*
2. *To what extent does chunk use correlate with CAF measures, most notably complexity and fluency?*

Based on the literature, the hypothesis for the first research question is that the DUB students will use relatively more chunks than the SB counterparts. In addition, it is hypothesized that DUB students will be able to use longer chunks than their SB counterparts.

Based on previous findings, the hypothesis for the second research question is that the use of chunks may lead to greater fluency and that certain types of chunks (e.g. partially schematic ones) may lead to greater complexity.

# METHOD

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## PARTICIPANTS

A total of 56 Dutch students (11 male; 45 female) from two cohorts were included. They were enrolled in the same school in the Netherlands and were in their final year of Dutch VWO (pre-university education). All students had had 6 years of French L2 instruction as part of their secondary education, so from approximately 12 to 18 years old. They were taught by the same teacher (first author), who had changed teaching approaches in 2011 for the new incoming first-year high school students.

The first cohort ( $N=24$ ; 5 male and 19 female), which started in 2010 as absolute beginners and graduated in 2016, was taught with an SB approach in the Netherlands in which a great deal of L1 was used to discuss the L2. The second cohort ( $N=32$ ; 6 male and 26 female), which started taking French in 2011 as absolute beginners and graduated in 2017, were taught with a new teaching approach in line with DUB principles in which the goal was to use the L2 only in class.

For the first three years of their L2 French instruction, both groups had two 50-minute lessons per week, followed by three 50-minute lessons per week in the final three years, resulting in a total of 450 instruction hours. As speakers in the Netherlands are rarely exposed to French in their everyday lives, students were unlikely to have had any additional regular exposure to the language outside their respective classes, so extramural exposure was controlled for.

## SB VERSUS DUB INSTRUCTION

The first cohort received French language instruction according to two commonly used textbook methods in the Netherlands: “Grandes Lignes” (Bakker et al., 2005) in lower years, followed by “Libre Service” (Breek et al., 2003) in the final 3 years. As in most Dutch classes, the L1 was used to explain the grammar, to give instructions and to explain activities or strategies. The L2 was used only in specific activities in the textbook (cf. West & Verspoor 2016). Key elements of this program were the acquisition of vocabulary and grammar, accuracy in writing and a comprehension approach for receptive skills. This integrated SB program aimed at developing all skills and activities focused on the acquisition of linguistic knowledge and on the development of all four skills.

The second cohort started in 2011 with a new teaching approach imported from Canada, called the Accelerated Integrated Method (AIM) (Maxwell, 2001; Arnott, 2011). The method is based on stories and from the first day on only the target language is used both by the teacher and learners. Understanding of the language is aided by pictures and iconic gestures. As West and Verspoor (2016) noted, in this program the L2 is used

almost exclusively, and the learners have a great deal of L2 exposure and use. The AIM method has enough materials for the first three years, and the first author designed a follow-up program with similar L2 exposure principles for the final three years. Key elements of this 6-year, DUB program were L2 exposure and active use. This integrated DUB program aimed at developing all skills, but activities focused on oral skills while writing, listening and reading skills were expected to develop implicitly.

## **WRITING INSTRUCTION**

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Even though the overall SB and DUB programs were quite different in terms of L2 exposure, both groups received exactly the same 30-hour intervention program with the same amount of L2 exposure to prepare for their final written exams (the data used for the present study). This included receptive and productive activities on a variety of topics, including abortion, immigration, living for a thousand years, tattoos and stay-at-home fathers (see Appendix B for an example of the materials used to prepare students for the respective exams). Both groups were presented with audio-visual exposure based on these topics during class, with follow-up activities, such as constructing arguments in the target language and guided writing tasks, in which students were prompted with ideas and the necessary vocabulary. The teacher selected the four favorite topics, based on students' votes, to be used during the final exams, facilitating test preparation by students. As the groups came from two different cohorts, they had different favorite topics. During the test, students were offered two topics which were randomly chosen out of the four they had been able to prepare.

In their final year, there were two testing points for writing: one in December (a mock test) and one in April (the final test). We used the December test as it was assumed to have generated more spontaneous language than the April test. During the exam, students were presented with two of the four topics discussed, and self-selected one for their essay in which they were required to write a minimum of 200 words within 50 minutes in the computer lab at the school. (See Appendix C for an example of such an exam). SB students had the choice between 'living for 1000 years' and 'migrants crossing the Mediterranean'; DUB students had the choice between "legalizing abortion in Chili" and "stay at home fathers". The researcher monitored both tests and could ascertain that the students made little to no use of dictionaries.

## **MEASURING CHUNKS**

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Even though chunks may be easy to define, they are difficult to operationalize as both relative frequency and association strength play a role, and they are difficult to distinguish. To be able to compare studies, we will follow Piggott (2019) and Hou (2017) (see Table 12 for an overview), who based their studies on Verspoor et al. (2012), which

in turn based the categorization on Moon (1997, pp. 44–47) with two additional chunk types identified in other studies.

Partially schematic chunks include structures and complements, which require slots to be filled. Fully fixed chunks include compounds, particles, collocations, fixed phrases and discourse chunks, which do not have open slots.

**TABLE 12.** Categorization of chunks, adapted from Verspoor et al. (2012, p. 250)

Label	Definition	Examples*
<i>Partially schematic chunks</i>		
Structures	Fixed expression with slot-fillers	j'ai vu une vidéo, trois jours par semaine, Il faut être prudent, il y a des personnes qui disent que
Complements	Verb with a complement (infinitives, gerunds, nominal sentences, or reflexives)	tu veux ....., on a vu que ....., on dit que ....., C'est une bonne idée de ....., je pense que .....
<i>Fully fixed chunks</i>		
Compounds	Fixed combinations of nouns, adjectives, prepositions, or particles	point de vue, tout le monde, espérance de vie, quelque chose, le marché noir, aujourd'hui, quelqu'un
Particles	Verbs or nouns with prepositions or particles, including phrasal verbs	beaucoup de, dans le futur, risque de, loin du, difficile à, aspirent à, à la télévision, lutter contre
Collocations	Collocating nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions and/or pronouns	plusieurs fois, chaque jour, gagnait l'argent, tomber enceinte, commet un crime, a besoin d'argent,
Fixed Phrases	Conventional combinations of words, often idiomatic, usually consisting of more than two words	il y a, autant que possible, tout le temps, c'est une bonne idée, je ne sais pas, je suis contre
Discourse	Any form of chunk with a discourse function	d'une part, par exemple, parce que, tout d'abord

\*The French examples are taken from the present study; the original source used English examples.

To ensure the appropriateness of this chunk categorization for intermediate-level French, first a random sample of 5 SB and 5 DUB essays were selected and coded along the same lines. The operationalization for English revealed to be quite suitable for French.

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## **CODING CHUNKS**

The student L2 French essays written in Word were first cleansed by removing anything personally related to the author (such as names) and messages intended for the teacher. Subsequently, each essay was coded for chunks independently by two raters, the researcher and an MA student who wrote her Master thesis on chunks (Vandendorpe, 2020). All differences in coding were discussed and resolved. Coding was done using a Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) script (see Appendix D and E), previously created by van der Ploeg (2017), as part of Piggott's (2019) research project, with some slight modifications.

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## **QUANTIFYING CHUNKS**

The problem with quantifying chunks is that longer chunks may have a negative effect on the total number of chunks. It is also difficult to count embedded chunks. Gustafsson and Verspoor (2017) considered a variety of ways to measure chunk usage and found that simply counting the number of chunks did not reflect the actual amount of authentic target language use, but "chunk coverage" did. Chunk coverage is operationalized as the number of words occurring in chunks divided by the total number of words in text. Therefore, the current paper will follow Gustafsson and Verspoor (2017) and Hou et al. (2018) in considering chunk coverage a valid measure reflecting chunk language use.

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## **CAF MEASURES**

For English, there are many tools to automatically ascertain complexity, accuracy and fluency measures. For French, such tools are not so readily available, but Granfeldt et al., (2006) developed a tool called Direkt Profil, originally designed to ascertain differences in language use between proficiency levels. The tool provides a great deal of detailed information at various morpho-syntactic levels, but we chose a few specific measures to operationalize complexity and accuracy.

For complexity, we used Tense, Guiraud Index and Sentence Length. Beginners use the present tense almost exclusively but as they become more advanced, other tenses appear (Granfeldt & Ågren, 2014). Tense Use is operationalized as the number of tenses other than the Present Tense. The Guiraud Index has proven to be a reliable measure of lexical complexity for texts containing more than 200 words (Van Hout & Vermeer, 2007). Sentence Length is considered an excellent measure of syntactic complexity (Norris & Ortega, 2009; Oh, 2006; Yoon, 2017). For accuracy, we used Subject-Verb agreement and Determiner-Noun agreement as Ågren et al. (2012) found that these agreement measures contribute significantly to accuracy in French L2. For fluency we used Text Length, following Chenoweth and Hayes (2001). It is operationalized as the total number of tokens in the text, following several authors.



**TABLE 13.** Summary of CAF measures

	Measure	Description
<i>Complexity</i>	Tense use	% of tenses other than the present tense / 10
	Guiraud Index	# types / $\sqrt{\text{# tokens}}$
	Sentence length	# of words in full sentence
<i>Accuracy</i>	Subject-Verb agreement	% of accurate SV forms
	Determiner-Noun agreement	% of accurate DN forms
<i>Fluency</i>	Text length	total # of tokens in a text

## ANALYSIS

Chunk coverage was calculated on an overall level, and for each individual chunk type. Data were inserted in R (R Studio Team, 2018; version 3.6.1) using the “readxl” package (Wickham & Bryan, 2019). Assumptions of normal distribution and homogeneity of variance were checked in R, using packages “pastecs” (Grosjean & Ibanez, 2018) and “car” (Fox & Weisberg, 2019), respectively. Due to a lack of normal distribution, a non-parametric version of an Independent Samples t-test, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test, was used. Cohen’s (1988) *d* was calculated as an effect size measure.

In order to compare how each group used partially schematic and fully fixed chunks, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was performed,  $p < .05$ . Partial eta squared was calculated as a measure of effect size. To see if there were differences in the seven types of chunks, assumptions were checked (Grosjean & Ibanez, 2018; Fox & Weisberg, 2019), and Independent Samples t-tests were conducted,  $p < .05$ . Effect sizes were also calculated, using “rstatix” (Kassambara, 2020) and “coin” (Hothorn et al., 2008), for cases where non-parametric t-tests were required.

After checking assumptions, several Pearson *r* correlation analyses were conducted,  $p < .05$ , in R to explore the relationship between chunk coverage on the one hand and Text Length, Average Sentence Length, Guiraud Index, Determiner-Noun Agreement, and Subject-Verb Agreement on the other hand. For each correlation,  $r^2$  was calculated as an effect size, also in R.

## RESULTS

### CHUNK COVERAGE (RQ1)

Table 14 presents the overall chunk coverage per instructional group, which was calculated by the number of words in chunks, divided by the number of words in the entire text, subsequently multiplied by 100. It demonstrates that SB students ( $M=38.12$ ,  $SD=8.83$ ) showed a lower chunk coverage than DUB students ( $M=44.09$ ,  $SD=7.40$ ) with a large effect size.

**TABLE 14.** Overall chunk coverage by instructional group

	SB	DUB	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Mean	38.12*	44.09*	0.73
SD	8.83	7.40	
Min	19.29	24.61	
Max	51.40	58.46	

\*) significant at  $p<0.05$

Table 15 presents the chunk coverage for each type of chunk per group. As far as partially schematic chunks are concerned, SB students used significantly fewer structures than DUB students ( $p<.001$ ) with a very large effect size (Cohen's  $d = 1.37$ ). There was no effect regarding complements (Cohen's  $d = 0.07$ ,  $p = 0.79$ ).

There were significant differences for three types of fully fixed chunks: DUB students used significantly more compounds ( $M=5.54$ ,  $SD=2.52$ ) than SB students ( $M=2.14$ ,  $SD=1.9$ ). They also used more fixed phrases ( $M=7.75$ ,  $SD=3.89$ ) than SB students ( $M=4.29$ ,  $SD=3.35$ ). On the other hand, SB students produced significantly more collocations ( $M=10.12$ ,  $SD=4.31$ ) than DUB students ( $M=4.1$ ,  $SD=2.63$ ). As for the other two types of fully fixed chunks, particles and discourse, no significant differences were found between the groups.

**TABLE 15.** Differences in chunk coverage per type of chunk*Partially schematic chunks*

Structures	SB	DUB	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Mean	1.54***	5.36***	1.37
SD	2.03	3.37	
Min	0	0	
Max	6.48	13.33	
Complements	SB	DUB	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Mean	6.3	6.56	0.07
SD	3.78	3.56	
Min	0.9	1.18	
Max	16.5	16	

*Fully fixed chunks*

Compounds	SB	DUB	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Mean	2.14***	5.54***	1.52
SD	1.9	2.52	
Min	0	1.48	
Max	6.67	10.93	
Particles	SB	DUB	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Mean	7.09	7.66	0.17
SD	3.28	3.43	
Min	2.65	3.42	
Max	14.5	18.6	
Collocations	SB	DUB	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Mean	10.12***	4.1***	1.69
SD	4.31	2.63	
Min	0	0	
Max	19.9	10.5	

Fixed Phrases	SB	DUB	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Mean	4.29***	7.75***	0.95
SD	3.35	3.89	
Min	0	2.75	
Max	12.5	19.5	

Discourse	SB	DUB	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Mean	6.63	7.13	0.21
SD	2.54	2.12	
Min	2.86	3.5	
Max	12.62	12.89	

\*\*\*) significant at  $p < 0.001$

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHUNKS AND CAF MEASURES (RQ2)

Table 16 shows the CAF measures that were previously used and reported in the previous chapter. The main differences between the groups were found in lexical diversity and average sentence length, taken as signs of syntactic complexity, and text length, considered an indication of fluency,

**TABLE 16.** CAF measures

	SB N=24 <sup>1</sup>	DUB N=32 <sup>1</sup>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	Significance (2-tailed)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
<i>Complexity</i>				
Guiraud Index	7.90 (0.62)	8.35 (0.86)	0.60	$p = .019^*$
Tense Use Ratio	2.12 (1.42)	2.82 (1.44)	0.49	$p = .065$
Average Sentence Length	13.48 (3.22)	16.43 (3.59)	0.87	$p = .002^{**}$
<i>Accuracy</i>				
Subject-Verb Agreement	7.37 (1.49)	7.57 (1.75)	0.12	$p = .841$
Determiner-Noun Agreement	8.66 (0.93)	8.69 (0.91)	0.03	$p = .865$
<i>Fluency</i>				
Text Length	212 (30)	268 (92)	0.82	$p = .003^{**}$

<sup>1</sup> N represents the number of students who completed both tests

\* significant at  $p < .05$

\*\* significant at  $p < .01$

Table 17 presents the correlations between chunk coverage and the CAF measures under consideration. The Pearson  $r$  correlation analyses demonstrate that there were several significant correlations between Chunk Coverage and CAF measures, notably in terms of fluency and complexity measures. Chunk Coverage and Text Length were significantly positively correlated,  $r(54)=0.28$ ,  $p=0.038$ , two-tailed, 95% CI [0.02, 0.50]. Moreover, Average Sentence Length was significantly positively correlated with chunk coverage,  $r(54)=0.27$ ,  $p=0.045$ , two-tailed, 95% CI [0.01, 0.49]. In terms of the other measures, no significant correlations were found. However, in all cases, the effect sizes can be considered rather low (cf. Plonsky & Oswald, 2014).

**TABLE 17.** Chunk coverage and CAF measures correlation coefficients

	Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ )	$p$ -value	Effect size ( $r^2$ )
<i>Complexity</i>			
Chunk Coverage and Guiraud Index	-0.17	0.206	0.03
Chunk Coverage and Average Sentence Length	0.27	0.045*	0.07
<i>Accuracy</i>			
Chunk Coverage and Subject-Verb agreement	0.004	0.979	<0.001
Chunk Coverage and Determiner-Noun agreement	-0.04	0.798	0.002
<i>Fluency</i>			
Chunk Coverage and Text Length	0.28	0.039*	0.08

\* indicates a significant correlation,  $p<.05$

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In general, the amount of L2 exposure may be related to L2 proficiency (Ellis & Cadierno, 2009). Specifically, L2 exposure and level of proficiency may be related to the use of L2 chunks. The latter has been demonstrated by Verspoor et al. (2012), Gustafsson and Verspoor (2017) and Piggott (2019) for English. The current paper examined whether this also held true for French by comparing the written texts of students who had followed a traditional low L2 exposure program and a relatively recent high L2 exposure program.

In the previous chapter, we showed that the programs led to texts that were rated rather similarly in overall proficiency scores based on human ratings. However, on some analytical measures such as Text Length (fluency) and Average Sentence Length and the Guiraud index (complexity) the DUB students performed better. Using the same texts, the current study focused on the use of chunks to see if there were differences in chunk usage. In line with earlier work on chunks (cf. Myles et al., 1998; Piggott, 2019),

the hypothesis was that students in the DUB program would produce relatively more chunks than students in the SB program. Another hypothesis was that the use of chunks may be related to sentence complexity and fluency.

As expected, the DUB students produced relatively more words that could be classified as part of chunks than the students in the SB condition ( $d = 0.73$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These findings suggest that L2 exposure facilitates L2 chunk recognition and use. And as our previous study showed, learners may discover L2 syntactic and morphological patterns on their own through exposure; however, as the data is not longitudinal, we cannot ascertain that it is specifically L2 chunk use that enables learners to deduce and learn the patterns (Myles et al., 1998; Perera, 2001; Towell, 2014).

DUB and SB affects types of chunks differentially. As shown in table 15, the DUB group and the SB group performed equally well in the use of Complements, Particles and Discourse chunks while the SB group performed significantly better in the use of Collocations and the DUB learners performed significantly better in the use of Structures, Compounds, and Fixed Phrases. These three types of chunks showed a highly significant ( $p < .001$ ) difference and very large effect sizes in favor of the DUB program (with a Cohen's  $d$  of 1.37 for Structures, 1.52 for Compounds, and 0.95 for Fixed Phrases). These typically longer, lexically based chunks are more demanding in terms of cognitive effort: language learners need to be exposed to these chunks more often because there is more to remember. Apparently, repeated exposure to and active use of such sequences helps learners to store the sequences as one item in their memory.

The SB approach, with more explicit attention to forms, favored the more 'grammatical' chunks like Complements, Particles and Collocations. These shorter, grammatically based chunks are less demanding in terms of cognitive effort and even in SB programs, students are frequently exposed to these relatively short chunks, due to the predominant role of grammar and verbs.

With regard to Discourse chunks, there are no differences. This may be explained by the special 30-hour writing program in the final two years provided to both groups. The program contained lesson series, preparing students to take part in discussions and to write essays, both of which enhanced students' mastery of discourse chunks, as these chunks are usually considered necessary elements in academic speaking and writing.

Our findings are very much in line with Gustafsson and Verspoor (2017), who compared the use of chunks in a high exposure program with learners enrolled in a Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) program with 15 hours of L2 instruction and regular students with 2 hours of L2 instruction. They also found that the high exposure learners used longer and/or lexically based chunks and that regular students did well on short and/or grammatically based chunks, often encountered in language instruction. They suggest that short, more grammatically based chunks seem to contribute more to L2 accuracy than to general fluency and authenticity and, due to their relative frequency, are easily mastered in early stages of L2 development, even in

SB programs. On the other hand, longer, more lexically based, idiomatic chunks seem to contribute more to L2 fluency and authenticity but need more exposure to be mastered. Our findings are also in line with Piggott (2019), who found that the students who had had relatively more L2 exposure used significantly more chunks overall.

The second aim of this study was to explore the relationship between chunks and different CAF measures. Chunks are thought to be processed and stored as single units, thus reducing cognitive load (Forsberg, 2010). Chunks may compensate for limited L2 automation (Gunnarsson, 2012), allowing learners to produce more language in less time, as retrieval of prefabricated sequences is claimed to be easier than the linguistic encoding required to produce grammatical sentences from its components. Chunks are thus expected to reduce processing efforts (Pawley & Syder, 1983; Wray & Perkins, 2000) and, as a result, may enable fluent production, particularly during cognitively demanding tasks such as L2 writing (Forsberg, 2010). This may, therefore, explain the significant, positive correlation that was attested between chunk coverage and fluency (notably text length). In our study, there was a significant correlation, albeit with a relatively low effect size, and we assume that the use of whole, longer chunks - which can be produced in one go - have contributed somewhat to the total number of words produced. Piggott (2019) used chunk use as a fluency measure, and this seems to be warranted by the present findings.

There is also a significant correlation between chunks and complexity (average sentence length) but with a relatively low effect size. Therefore, we cannot assume that the relationship of chunks and sentence length is a direct one. For example, we would expect sentence length to be affected by the number of clauses, and there were no differences between the groups in complement use (which include dependent clauses) and discourse chunks, which connect especially main clauses. It seems that sentence length correlates strongly with the use of longer, more lexically based chunks. Finally, there was no link between Guiraud, a lexical diversity measure, and chunks. This can be explained by the fact that chunks are often combinations of frequently used words, which themselves will not contribute to diversity.

Because the effect sizes between chunk coverage and the CAF measures were relatively low, the question is if chunks should be considered subcomponents of the traditional CAF triad or be considered a separate proficiency measure in its own right. It is likely that chunks contribute to fluency and longer sentences, but rather indirectly. The argument to treat chunks as a measure in its own right might be that students can write very long texts with very long sentences without many errors, but they may not sound idiomatic at all. This does not necessarily have to be a problem, but if sounding target-like is considered an objective, then the use of native-like chunks should be considered. This would be in line with the proficiency rubric used in Hou et al (2018), as they evaluated Idiomaticity separately from Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency.

To summarize, the present study has shown that DUB students generally produce more chunks after six years in free response tasks and that they attain higher fluency and complexity levels than SB students. These findings align with other studies comparing DUB with SB students (Gustafsson & Verspoor, 2017; Rouse-Malpat, 2019; Piggott, 2019). In these studies, an increase in chunk coverage also appears to correspond with an increase in fluency and complexity levels, which supports the idea that chunks are indicative of proficient language use and that chunk coverage might even be an excellent additional proficiency measure as it reflects idiomaticity and authenticity (cf. Verspoor et al., 2012; Hou et al., 2018). Moreover, if the goal of L2 teaching is to sufficiently prepare learners to become proficient and fluent second language users with an understanding of how language is used authentically, chunk use should be regarded as an L2 proficiency measure in its own right.

The aim of the present study was to examine the effect of exposure on the use of chunks and to explore the relationship between chunks and traditional CAF measures. While the study on writing had found that DUB students attained higher CAF levels, this study found that the same DUB students also attained a higher chunk coverage. This paper has argued that a DUB program is thus more effective in facilitating chunk use, especially longer, lexically based chunks. SB programs with a focus on explicit instruction are equally or more effective in the shorter and more grammatically based chunks.

Secondly, this study has shown that chunks can play an important role in defining the quality of L2 production alongside traditional CAF measures. The longer, more lexically-based chunks can be considered as “preferred ways of saying things” of native speakers and reflect authentic native-like language. Although learning this kind of chunk is cognitively demanding because of the effort that is needed to attain mastery, the use of these chunks, once mastered, offers a reduction of cognitive load because, in the end, these longer chunks are stored and produced automatically as one single linguistic item.

There are two good reasons for chunks to be considered as predictors of L2 proficiency. First, the use of chunks enhances fluency by reducing the cognitive load in L2 production. Second, the use of chunks adds the aspect of authenticity to traditional CAF measures and facilitates the acquisition of a native-like L2 repertoire. Based on the low effect sizes in the correlation between chunks and complexity measures and chunks and fluency measures, we have argued that chunks contribute to complexity and fluency, but not directly. And as writing can be complex and fluent without being idiomatic, we suggest that chunk coverage should be considered an independent proficiency measure.

This study has a number of limitations. First of all, the sample used for this study is relatively small. A second limitation can be found in the nature of the study. Even though there is no question that the amount of L2 exposure was clearly different in the



two educational programs, there were also other aspects that may have contributed to the differences in chunk use.

As this study is based on texts written at the end of a 6-year program, it would be interesting to see at what point in time these longer, lexically based chunks appear alongside the shorter, grammatically based chunks. It would be interesting as well to replicate chunk research, using French as the language of instruction instead of English because in Dutch society the English language can be considered as a second language in the light of the considerable amount of extra-mural exposure. A future study should extend this French chunk corpus to make automated analysis of chunk use and chunk coverage possible and henceforth facilitate chunk research with the French language as the method of analysis used in this study is rather time consuming,

Finally, at a more fundamental level we need to discuss how chunks or idiomaticity fit within the existing CAF paradigm, as they actually overlap with all three dimensions, but for now it seems that a separate category of idiomaticity may be needed to evaluate L2 performance. This will need further study.



# CHAPTER 7

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## **ORAL PROFICIENCY IN L2 FRENCH: “LEARNING TO USE” VERSUS “USING TO LEARN”**

*This chapter has been submitted in its current form*

## ABSTRACT

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This study presents and compares the results of two instructional programs of L2 French in the Netherlands after 6 years of secondary school specifically in speaking skills. The first program, commonly used in the Netherlands can be termed a “weak” version of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and is based on a structure-based (SB) view of language with a great deal of attention to grammatical accuracy, often explained through the medium of the L1. The second program can be considered a “strong” version of CLT that is in line with so-called dynamic usage-based (DUB) principles, in which exposure to and active use of the target language is key, and there is no explicit attention to grammar. Previous sub-studies have shown no differences in reading skills (authors, submitted) nor in writing skills (authors, submitted), not even in accuracy. The results of the present study indicate that a teaching practice based on strong CLT in line with DUB principles is more effective in promoting oral language proficiency in French than the weak CLT approach.

## INTRODUCTION

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This article presents and compares the results of two instructional programs of L2 French in the Netherlands after 6 years of secondary school and focusses on speaking skills. According to the distinctions made by Howatt (1984), the programs instantiate weak and strong versions of CLT. In our view, the “weak” version is based on a structure-based (SB) view of language with a great deal of attention to grammatical accuracy, often explained through the medium of the first language (L1). The “strong” program is in line with so-called dynamic usage-based (DUB) principles, in which exposure to and active use of the target language is key, and no explicit attention is paid to grammar. Teachers in the Netherlands believe grammar instruction is necessary to prepare for final central exams consisting of reading and writing tests, but two of our previous studies (reported in chapter 4 and 5) have shown that there were few differences in reading and writing skills after six years of instruction, not even in accuracy. In fact, the DUB learners wrote longer texts, more complex sentences and used more formulaic sequences. On the whole, SB teachers spend a great deal of time on grammar, usually explained in the L1, and very little time on developing speaking skills, mainly because they want to prepare their students for the central exam, which is a reading comprehension test (Author dissertation). In the DUB approach, the focus is on using the language in speaking. So far, though we do not know how SB and DUB learners compare in speaking skills after six years of instruction, and the current paper will try to provide empirical evidence that a “strong” CLT program is indeed warranted to promote the development of speaking skills. Before discussing the actual study, we discuss the underlying linguistic theories of the SB and DUB approaches and the dearth of long-term classroom studies that test speaking skills with free response data.

## LITERATURE

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### **WEAK VERSUS STRONG COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING**

From the mid-1970s onwards, a more cognitive-oriented approach to foreign language teaching has become the new standard in language teaching in many parts of the world (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach addressed the functional and communicative potential of language. It was not only an answer to the growing need of focusing on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures, as advocated by British scholars like Candlin (1976) and Widdowson (1972), but was also seen as an answer to the need for a necessary tool for communication and intercultural awareness in an emerging European Union, where the Council of Europe (2001) placed language teaching high on its agenda by mentioning

linguistic diversity as an important objective for communication and intercultural awareness (European parliament, 2022)

However, in the late 1990's, Long (2000) already pointed out that CLT coursebooks still struggled with “the thorny issue of grammar in the communicative classroom” (p. 35) and in an extensive review of theoretically and empirically driven innovations to the teaching of grammar, Pawlak (2021) concludes that there is still a lack of long-term, classroom-based research to ascertain if they actually help learners employ the grammar structures successfully in communication. To this day, foreign language teaching practice at secondary level mostly continues to build on coursebooks, which consistently use the label “communicative” in their approach and claim to follow CLT principles but do contain a strong language focus section in each chapter, explicitly using drills to familiarize learners with grammatical structures (cf., Ellis, 2009; Gómez-Rodríguez, 2010; Burns & Hill, 2013). That is not to say that current foreign language teaching approaches do not also focus on communicative skills and practices, but the question is what their main focus is. Howatt (1984) characterizes CLT practices as broadly falling in one of two categories:

*The “weak” version stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching. Efforts are made to ensure the communicative activities relate to the purpose of the course as specified in the syllabus, hence the importance of proposals to include semantic as well as purely structural features in a syllabus design. The “strong” version of communicative teaching advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself. If the former could be described as “learning to use” English, the latter entails “using English to learn it” (p. 279).*

This view is supported by Waters (2012) who, after reviewing CLT approaches and methods since 1995, found evidence of increased advocacy of the “communicating to learn” orientation at the theoretical SLA research level, while at the level of classroom practice the “learning to communicate” orientation had come to dominate. Thus, on one end of this continuum, structural control is necessary to develop communicative competence, and on the other end using language is necessary to develop language knowledge. This dichotomy is also reflected in linguistic theories. Although there is rarely a one-on-one relation in the sense of teaching practices directly following from linguistic theories of second language development (Long, 2000), it can be said that a weak CLT approach builds mostly on generative or structural theories, in which structure (syntax), which is separate from semantics and other subsystems, drives the

language system. In usage-based linguistic theories, language use and experience drive the system and there is no separate role for syntax as all subsystems (form, use, and meaning) interact dynamically (Schmid, 2017; Verspoor, 2017). Usage based theory is thus reflected most in strong CLT practices. However, both theories have in common that exposure is the main driver of language development (cf. Piske & Young, 2008).

## LEARNING TO USE APPROACH IN THE NETHERLANDS

Lightbown and Spada (2013) point out that approaches with a strong SB component remain widespread among foreign language teaching practices all over the world. Specifically focusing on a Dutch context, Graus and Coppen (2016) investigated student and teacher beliefs in the Netherlands regarding the role that grammar and grammar instruction should play in the second language classroom and found that participants (both teachers and students) considered explicit, systematic, and isolated grammar instruction a necessary condition not only for linguistic correctness but also for advanced communicative competence. West and Verspoor (2016) examined L2 teaching practices in the Netherlands through classroom observations and found an explicit focus on grammar, a frequent use of the L1 (mother tongue) as a medium to teach (about) the L2, the use of translation, learning vocabulary with translation equivalents and an emphasis on written language to be the main characteristics. Popma (1997) and Hermans-Nymark (2006) concluded that commonly used CLT coursebooks in the Netherlands generally reflect a SB design: The graded acquisition of selected structural and lexical items is seen as necessary instruments for successful communication and constitute the backbone of the coursebooks, which often adopt an explicit and deductive approach to grammar, emphasizing lexical and grammatical accuracy. Unfortunately, the L1 is used as the language of instruction. To summarize, in the Dutch context, a “weak” version of CLT is still prevalent with little L2 exposure.

Based on the findings outlined above, it can be said that the SB approach remains most popular among L2 teachers in the Netherlands, even for English, but concerns have been raised that current foreign language teaching practices have largely proven unable to produce fluent speakers (Hermans-Nymark, 2006), especially for French and German, which are not generally encountered outside the classroom in the Netherlands and have very limited out-of-class exposure. Moreover, French has seen a significant decrease in instruction time in terms of lessons per week since the last educational reform dating from 1992. This may seem counterintuitive given that target language use is seen as critical by most teachers and researchers alike (Dönszelman, 2019).

## USING TO LEARN APPROACH IN THE NETHERLANDS

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To enable more target language use in the classroom, a small number of schools in the Netherlands have introduced a “strong” version of CLT in which students are “using the language to learn”, an approach in line with DUB theory. DUB theory is based on a combination of complex dynamic systems theory and usage based linguistic theory (Verspoor, 2017). Both complex dynamic systems theory (Larsen-Freeman, 2007) and usage-based theories have gained ground over the last few decades in the realm of SLA (cf. Cadierno & Eskildson, 2015), mostly via first language acquisition (Tomasello, 2003). They have been combined to give rise to DUB theory to emphasize the individual developmental trajectories that show fluctuations and variability throughout the language development trajectory (Verspoor, 2017).

Even though DUB theory had not been established when CLT approaches emerged in the 1970’s, its principles are very much in line with strong versions of communicative approaches that focus on meaning or form (Long, 2000) and are lexically based (Lewis, 1993; Verspoor & Winitz, 1997). As in Krashen’s theory (Krashen, 1982; Krashen & Terrell, 1983), the foundation of DUB theories of second language development lies in repeated exposure to meaningful and contextualized language in mostly implicit instructional designs. But where Krashen’s main focus (Krashen, 1992) is on the quality of the input (comprehensibility), DUB theories also focus on input frequency, a more quantitative aspect, and on associative learning, reflective of learners using simple learning processes to statistically generalize over masses of input data (Ellis & Wulff, 2015), as well as on output and practice. From a DUB perspective, language exposure consists of language items that have a form and meaning, referred to as “constructions” in much of the usage-based literature (cf. Ellis, 2008c). Schmid (2020), in his unified model, stresses the fact that pragmatic context (usually multimodal) is essential for entrenchment and conventionalization of constructions to occur.

To stress the role of contextualized use, Verspoor (2017) suggests calling conventionalized word sequences “form use meaning mappings” (FUMMs). FUMMs result from a social and pragmatic process of conventionalization of language items and are activated and entrenched in the mind as a function of their (repeated) use (Verspoor, 2017). Both entrenchment and conventionalization are thus dynamic processes shaped by repeated use and exposure (Schmid, 2017). From a pedagogical perspective, language input can be enhanced in such a way that FUMMs are frequently and saliently available to learners.

To illustrate the difference between an SB and a DUB approach, we will take one sentence from a short French narrative (with idiomatic English translation) as an example.



(1) *Il était une fois une maman cochonne qui avait trois petits cochons.*

Once upon a time there was a mama pig who had three little pigs.

From a SB perspective, the sentence in example 1 could be deconstructed and broken down into major constituents and analyzed further from the syntactic to the morphological level, focusing on gender, agreement, and tense. Implicit to such an approach is the consideration that a speaker builds up such a sentence by applying grammatical rules while producing it and that, over time and as second language proficiency increases, this process becomes (more) automatic. Even though SB views do not deny the existence of meaning and language use, the focus is first and foremost on grammatical form, with meaning and use added as separate components and at a later stage. Example 2 below illustrates this deconstructing process.

(2) *Il* (Subject-pronoun)

*était* (predicator-third person singular-past tense)

*une fois* (adverbial-noun phrase)

*une maman cochonne* [*qui / avait / trois petits cochons*]

(Subject Attribute-noun phrase modified by a relative clause)

A usage-based view does not deny that sentences consist of major constituents that can themselves be broken down and analyzed, nor that there are regularities in language, but usage-based approaches emphasize that such categories are superimposed at the analytical level by linguists and, for learners, they do not necessarily have any psychological reality. The premise underlying usage-based approaches to language learning, instead, is that a speaker uses sequences of sounds (forms) that have been used and that have been encountered in similar contexts (use) with a similar meaning (meaning) (Schmid, 2020) and are learned by association. The form-function combinations that have been used most frequently, and are thus most salient for learners, are the ones that are typically learned first, that become entrenched in the mind, and are eventually produced automatically. Some of these sequences are rather fixed (as in chunks or other multi-word sequences) but others have open slots, and the construction can form a template for new-to-be-acquired sequences and constructions (as in verb-argument constructions). Example 3 illustrates form-use-meaning combinations.

(3) *Il était une fois* (a fixed phrase that is used to introduce a fairy tale)

*une maman cochonne* (a being)

*qui avait* (expressing some possession)

*trois petits cochons.* (some beings)

Departing from this foundation, DUB theories thus view language as a complex and dynamic system where form, use and meaning are integrated and continually interact and give rise to new utterances.

## **PREVIOUS ECOLOGICALLY VALID AND LONG-TERM CLASSROOM RESEARCH**

DeKeyser and Botano (2019) qualify the number of articles reporting on classroom experiments as “...distressingly small from the point of view of practitioners eager for research findings that can unambiguously inform their classroom teaching...” (p. 4) and the number of long-term studies as even smaller. In recent years, conscious efforts have been made to set-up and conduct studies that improve the ecological validity of this line of work: they implement long-term effect studies reflective of the fact that educational programs usually last a number of years and use free response measures to avoid bias in measuring effects.

Two ecologically valid experiments within the Focus on Form (FonF) versus Focus on Forms (FonFs) debate show how important meaning-making is in language learning. Shintani (2013) compared the effects of FonF and FonFS instruction on vocabulary acquisition. The learners in the FonF condition performed better in some respects. A detailed examination of classroom discourse indicated that the FonF condition provided opportunities for richer and more meaningful interaction in which the learners had to use their problem-solving skills more so than in the FonFs condition where meanings were given. Shintani (2015) examined children’s incidental grammar acquisition of two grammatical features—plural *-s* and copula *be*—in FonF and FonFs instruction. Children in the FonFs classroom acquired neither structure but children in the FonF classroom were able to use the plural *-s*. She reasoned that there had been a functional need to attend to plural *-s* (but not copula *be*) in the FonF discourse.

Several long-term classroom studies have recently been conducted in the Dutch secondary school context. A classroom study by Piggott et al. (2020), for instance, involving 416 Dutch learners of L2 English, investigated the effectiveness of a two-year intervention with explicit grammar instruction versus an intervention without such explicit grammar instruction but with more authentic target exposure instead. The study involved two cohorts of learners, taught by the same teachers and on the basis of the same traditional SB-inspired textbook. However, in the implicit condition (i.e., the strong CLT approach), the pages focusing on and explaining grammatical features and structures were torn out and the teachers as part of this condition were instructed to avoid all explicit grammar instruction. As the teachers could thus not spend time explaining grammar, they typically spent more time on the reading and listening exercises in the book and, consequently, on providing more target language exposure. The results showed that the effectiveness of the intervention method was

directly associated with different aspects of language performance: after one year, the strong CLT group outperformed the weak CLT group on language accuracy measures, but this difference disappeared in the second year. From the very start, the strong CLT group was more effective in terms of oral complexity and fluency measures.

In another, three-year longitudinal classroom study (with participants aged 12-15), comparing an SB and a DUB program, Rouse-Malpat et al. (2022) conducted a large cohort study specifically targeting the development of oral and writing proficiency of French as a foreign language at several Dutch secondary schools. The DUB program was found to be more effective than its SB counterpart in both speaking and writing. The studies constitute longitudinal (2-3 years) investigations, use free response measures, and are conducted in existing classrooms, making them reliable and highly suitable in comparing the instructional effectiveness of different teaching programs.

As far as we know, there has not been a study so far to compare speaking skills in SB and DUB learners after the full six years of pre-university secondary language instruction. Based on the findings by Rouse-Malpat et al. (2022) and on the fact that DUB approaches focus on developing speaking skills, it is to be expected that DUB-taught students outperform their explicitly SB taught peers, but this prediction has never been empirically tested up until now.

## THIS STUDY

The aim of this study is to compare oral proficiency skills after six years of instruction in two conditions. The first group received a so-called “weak” CLT version using an SB teaching approach. The second group received a “strong” CLT version on the basis of a DUB approach. This study seeks to answer the following research question:

*How do the weak CLT (SB) and strong CLT (DUB) groups compare in terms of their L2 French oral proficiency after six years of instruction?*

Based on earlier findings that a “strong” version of CLT is effective in L2 productive skills as assessed in previous classroom research, we expected that the DUB learners would outperform their SB peers especially in overall oral proficiency as well as in the listening comprehension sub-component of the SOPA test, but it will be interesting to see if there are differences in the sub-components as, for example, vocabulary and grammar were more focused on in the SB method than fluency and listening comprehension.

## METHOD

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### **PARTICIPANTS**

In the first three years of Dutch pre-university education (as the highest form of Dutch secondary school education), French L2 is compulsory. At age 15, students opt whether or not to continue with the subject in the final three years and prepare for the final exams in the sixth year. In order to measure effectiveness after the full six years of instruction, this study focused on students who opted to continue with French at a school based on the North of the Netherlands; it included 133 students (36 male; 97 female). 55 students were instructed in the SB program and 78 in the DUB program. The students' first language was Dutch, and all learners received instruction at the same educational level: pre-university education. All students started their six years of instruction at the age of 12 in 2009-2013 and completed their final exams at the age of 18 in 2015-2019. At the age of 12, all participants presumably had the same high scholastic aptitude as reflected by a score obtained by the Dutch national curriculum test (The CITO-test) at the end of primary education. Students with dyslexia were excluded from the current study.

### **THE SB TEACHING PROGRAM**

For the participants in the SB condition, commonly used CLT coursebooks were used: "Grandes Lignes" (Bakker et al., 2005) for the first three years and "Libre Service" (Breek et al., 2003) for the final three years. In Dutch education, this type of course book aims to promote mostly grammatical and lexical development. That is why, in this condition, a substantial amount of time was spent on the acquisition of grammatical and lexical knowledge, through explicit rules being offered and word lists having to be memorized, reminding us very much of a focus on forms approach (Long, 2000). Furthermore, there was a focus on reading, writing and listening activities. The target language in general was limited because much time was spent on explaining grammar, on teaching reading and listening strategies, and on testing reading and listening comprehension.

### **THE DUB TEACHING PROGRAM**

For the participants in the DUB condition, two complementary CLT-based methods with a strong "using to learn" component were used. In the first three years, the accelerative integrated methodology (AIM; Maxwell, 2001) was used. This story-based program focuses on meaningful use and repetition of language input in the absence of any explicit grammar instruction, reminding us of focus on form approach (Long, 2000). The method is based on workbooks with various stories, starting with fairy tales early on and moving to short narratives about travelling, school, friends and family at a later

stage. Classroom management talk and the story scripts make use of so-called L2 pared-down language, which comprises the use of clear visuals and a gesture to accompany each word; teachers read out scripted lessons making frequent use of meaningful chunks as they do, with the learners sitting in a circle around the teacher. Learners repeat the chunks and gestures, usually in a chorus format. As the first few lines of the very first story that is presented to year 1 students illustrate, the story provides a great deal of built-in repetition and chunks of language with similar patterns (*Voici* 5 times, *cochon(s)* 4 times, *il + verbe* 7 times):

- (4) *Voici l'histoire des trois petits cochons*, (This is the story of the three little pigs)  
*Voici le premier petit cochon*. (This is the first little pig)  
*Il joue de la guitare et il est gentil*. (He plays the guitar and is very sweet.)  
*Voici le deuxième petit cochon*. (This is the second little pig)  
*Il travaille un peu et il aime la musique*. (He works a little and he likes music)  
*Voici le troisième petit cochon*. (This is the third little pig)  
*Il danse et chante et il est fantastique*. (He dances and sings and he is fantastic)  
*Voici le loup. Il est méchant*. (This is the wolf. He is mean).

In the final three years, an extended version of AIM, labeled “AIME” (AIM extended) was used. AIME was built on authentic input, with homework assignments using online learning systems and authentic target language magazines, among other resources, to facilitate ample exposure to the language. Lesson activities were based on the (media) content to which learners had been exposed, with a main focus on oral and written skills to facilitate the development of language use.

## INSTRUCTION TIME

For all participants in both conditions, the total amount of instruction time was kept constant: two 50-minute lessons per week in the first three years and three 50-minute lessons per week in the final three years. In addition, students completed homework assignments, providing an additional 110 hours of input (roughly 20 minutes of homework per 50-minute class). Whereas the amount of homework was the same for both groups, the type of input and exercises that they did at home were different: the SB-taught students mainly practiced the grammatical rules presented in class at home and were asked to complete (additional) reading comprehension exercises. The DUB-taught students, by contrast, were asked to listen to French media and read authentic French magazines without completing reading comprehension questions or grammar drills. As exposure to French outside the classroom was minimal to non-existent in the Netherlands, the total amount of instruction time can be estimated at 730 hours.

## **PREPARATION FOR THE ORAL PROFICIENCY TEST**

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To make sure the students in both conditions would be able to talk about similar topics as part of the SOPA test procedure (see below), a 30-hour intervention was designed in which the learners had an equal amount of L2 exposure and speaking practice. Seven academic topics dealing with migrants, tattoos, abortion, etc. were selected because participants were thought to have an opinion on these topics and be able to talk about them. During a series of 6 to 7 lessons, each topic was introduced using a video-documentary of two minutes on average. This introduction was followed by listening - and reading exercises, which entailed repeated exposure to the language used in the video-documentary, prompting the learners to focus on the vocabulary needed to speak about the topic later on. Gradually, exercises became more productive: learners were encouraged to think of arguments for and against a given view related to the topic under discussion and to use these arguments as part of several guided tasks, making sure all students were able to understand and produce content on these topics. Finally, free response tasks such as a debate, a press conference and a discussion were organized to aid students in producing language spontaneously during the final oral proficiency test.

## **THE TESTING INSTRUMENT**

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To assess free response oral skills the student oral proficiency assessment (SOPA) protocol was used (Rhodes 1996). The rubrics (See Appendix F) distinguish nine levels of proficiency in four subscales: oral fluency (how fluently do the learners express their ideas), grammar (how accurate are the learners), vocabulary (how varied and appropriate is their use of words and phrases) and listening comprehension (how well do the learners understand the questions and instructions).

The SOPA tasks were originally designed for younger children (10-12) going from very easy, controlled tasks to more open, creative language use tasks. The first task consists of naming different objects and animals, a second task involves managing objects, animals and persons in a farmhouse or a dollhouse and a third, free-response task invites students to talk about themes presented by pictures. As the participants in the present study were older students (17-18 years old) enrolled in pre-university education, new tasks had to be developed that were more appropriate for the age-group and in line with their proficiency levels. Moreover, the tasks had to be aligned with the topics that the students had dealt with in class.

The adapted test (see Appendix G) used in the current study was as follows: First, the interviewer asked personal questions to both students simultaneously (Task 1). Then Student A and B alternately presented one of the subjects in one minute and were asked informative questions (Task 2 and 3). These tasks were intended to make the students feel at ease as the questions could easily be prepared in advance. The fourth task consisted of academic questions in which the students were invited to give their opinion on their

own subject and on the subject of the other student. This final task could not be prepared in advance and the proficiency ratings were based mainly on the students' performance during this task.

As the SOPA tasks had been validated for use with children aged 10-12 (Thompson et al., 2003), we conducted a pilot study with 26 students to validate our new tasks. The independent ratings of two raters were used to establish interrater agreement. The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (single measures) on the ratings of both raters was .767 which suggests a high interrater agreement. Then a new protocol was devised to obtain full rater agreement for each learner. The oral proficiency of each of the 26 students was rated again based on the videos. If the scores were the same, those scores were used. If not, the raters independently watched the video again and scored it again. Remaining differences were discussed until full agreement was reached. In two cases that full agreement was not reached, the average was taken as the final score. These new scores obtained served for further analyses. The four rating scales in the rubric, which represent four interdependent dimensions of oral proficiency were examined by calculating Cronbach's Alpha (which ranged from .904 to .958 when compared with the overall scores). The performances were further compared with other scores, such as reading, writing and overall class grades. Both internal and external comparisons suggested a high reliability of the four dimensions.

From the group of 26 students, the performances of six students (two with lower, two with medium and two with higher scores) were selected as benchmarks for the remainder of the study. To remain consistent over the years, raters were first trained extensively on these benchmarks before the new oral exams took place.

## **THE TESTING PROCEDURE**

After the students' work on the academic subjects was finished, four topics were selected for the final oral exams and students were asked to form pairs for the test and divide the four topics amongst themselves. Thus, each student had two topics to prepare for the test. Just prior to test administration, the teacher randomly chose one of these two topics to be used during the test for each student.

The strict rating procedure devised in the pilot study was followed: Rater 1 was a French teacher at the same school, whom the students knew. Rater 2 was the group teacher (the same for all students included in this study), who interviewed the students. Rater 1 scored the performance during the exam. Rater 2 scored the exams independently a few hours later, based on the video recordings. If the scores were the same, those scores were used. If not, both raters independently watched the video again and scored it again. Remaining differences were discussed until full agreement was reached. In a few cases that full agreement was not reached, the average was taken as the final score.

## DESIGN AND ANALYSIS

The SB and DUB groups formed the independent predictor variables in the current investigation. To assess oral proficiency, the four subscales on the SOPA rating scale (oral fluency, grammar, vocabulary and listening comprehension) were considered as continuous outcome variables. As a result, each participant received four scores and a total score, which was the sum of all four individual scores. The total scores as well as the scores on the four aspects of speaking were subsequently analyzed as five dependent variables using a series of independent sample t-tests. All scores were inserted into SPSS (version 27) and t-test assumptions were checked. A boxplot showed that only data on the vocabulary aspect rendered outliers in both groups. The data for the total score showed a normal distribution but, upon close inspection, the data for all four aspects individually did not. Finally, all data, except those for the oral fluency subtest, met the homogeneity of variance assumption. Based on the results of these assumption checks, a regular independent samples t-test (with the confidence interval set at 95%,  $p < .05$ ) was conducted to analyze the total score but, for all four scores on subscales, a non-parametric Mann Whitney U test was used instead. In all cases, effect sizes were calculated using the Cohen's  $d$  statistic (Cohen, 1988); see Lenhard & Lenhard, 2016 for more details on this statistic as a measure of effect size). Following the guidelines proposed by Plonsky and Oswald (2014), a measure of  $d > 0.8$  constitutes a large effect size.

## RESULTS

Table 18 below presents the overall total scores on the SOPA test as a measure of L2 French oral proficiency. As can be seen, a higher mean was obtained by the DUB as compared to the SB-taught group. As all assumptions were met pertaining to the overall scores, a parametric Independent Samples T-test was used to compare these mean scores, yielding a significant result ( $t(131) = 11.3$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with a very large effect size  $d = 2.05$ . (Cohen, 1988). Table 18 provides details of this analysis.

**TABLE 18.** Overall French l2 oral proficiency, split per teaching programs

Total score on the SOPA test (max. score 36)	
	Mean (SD)
SB program (N = 55)	18.2 (4.1)
DUB program (N = 78)	26.5 (4.0)
Cohen's $d$	$d = 2.05$
Significance (2-tailed)	$p < .001$



With regard to the analysis of scores on the four sub-facets of oral proficiency, some assumptions were violated, and a non-parametric test was necessary for the analysis of these scores. A visual inspection of the distributions of scores on all four aspects revealed a similar score shape for both groups. Henceforth a Mann-Whitney *U* test was selected but, as the scores were not normally distributed, median scores had to be used for comparing both groups following Field (2013). As can be seen in Table 19, all median scores were found to be higher for DUB students than for SB students.

**TABLE 19.** Scores on four aspects of oral proficiency compared between two groups

	Fluency	Grammar	Vocabulary	Listening
	Median (Mean / SD)	Median (Mean / SD)	Median (Mean / SD)	Median (Mean / SD)
SB program (N=55)	5.0 (4.8 / 1.2)	5.0 (4.6 / 1.1)	4.0 (4.5 / 1.1)	4.0 (4.2 / 1.2)
DUB program (N=73)	7.0 (6.9 / 0.9)	6.0 (6.3 / 1.2)	7.0 (6.5 / 1.2)	7.0 (6.9 / 1.1)
Mann Whitney <i>U</i>	3673	3322	3533	3749
Stand. score <i>z</i>	8.2	6.5	7.5	8.5
Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>d</i> = 2.01	<i>d</i> = 1.31	<i>d</i> = 1.71	<i>d</i> = 2.21
Asymptotic Sign. (2-tailed)	<i>p</i> < .001	<i>p</i> < .001	<i>p</i> < .001	<i>p</i> = .000

Subsequent Mann Whitney *U* tests revealed these differences to be significant for all of the four subtests of the SOPA measure, yielding substantial effect sizes as well (Cohen, 1988) ranging from *d* = 1.31 to *d* = 2.21 on all four aspects of speaking.

In short, on the basis of the SOPA scores of oral French L2 proficiency, the DUB-taught students significantly outperformed the SB-taught students, not only on the total score but also on the sub-scores, albeit with some subtle differences in effect sizes.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to present long-term classroom research where students are learning to achieve communicative ability rather than “just learning for the sake of the experiment” (DeKeyser, 2003; page 337) in developing their L2 French. We specifically targeted the development of oral L2 French proficiency and compared two groups of students after six years of CLT instruction—one taught by means of an SB-inspired program and the other on the basis of a DUB program, which can be viewed as a weak versus strong format of the CLT approach, respectively. The students in the SB program received explicit grammar and vocabulary teaching with minimal authentic L2 exposure. This program is commonly adopted in secondary schools in the Netherlands. The students in the DUB program, on the other hand, were part of a program that

focused on L2 use, frequency of exposure and repetition, very much in line with the stronger version of a CLT program, and the L2 was spoken almost exclusively.

To avoid bias, a valid and reliable test for assessing oral proficiency had to be used. An existing instrument, the Student Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA) was chosen as an appropriate test for this study, but as the SOPA was originally intended for use with younger children, it was adapted, and more academic tasks were developed and validated. To prepare for the final oral proficiency test (SOPA), the students in both teaching programs received the same number of instructional hours on seven academic topics. The activities included videos, listening exercises, vocabulary exercises, writing activities and speaking activities, all of which aimed at a mastery of language items necessary to talk about the topics.

In line with expectations based on Rouse-Malpat et al (2021), we found that the strong CLT approach was more effective in oral skill development than its weaker counterpart after six years of instruction. DUB students obtained SOPA scores that were significantly higher than those of SB students with a large effect size even though there were some subtle differences in effect sizes on the sub-components of the SOPA test.

In light of DUB theory and common assumptions of strong versions of CLT, including focus on form approaches, these findings are not surprising. Language is first of all learned through exposure and active use, which includes problem solving skills and parsing sentences within a natural discourse, as suggested by Shintani (2013, 2015). Within the DUB L2 teaching program, homework- and classroom activities reflect both key elements. Homework activities through controlled online learning systems provide a massive amount of exposure to the L2, leaving time for classroom activities that mostly target productive skills. In addition, the strict application of the “French only” rule during all classroom activities adds a great deal of extra L2 practice and exposure. Such a program is likely to be more effective than an SB-oriented L2 teaching program, which more prominently focuses on meta-linguistic issues and typically makes use of the L1 as the language of instruction. Rather than emphasizing exposure to authentic language, the weak CLT approach tends to focus on language structure, accuracy and reading and listening strategies, with less time being available for authentic and meaningful L2 use.

The SOPA results indicated that the DUB students performed better on all four sub-components. However, there were subtle differences in effect sizes between Oral Fluency and Listening Comprehension (very large effect sizes) on the one hand, and Vocabulary and Grammar (large effect sizes) on the other hand. We would like to speculate on the reasons for these minor differences.

Oral fluency and listening comprehension can be characterized as two more general, skill-based dimensions of oral proficiency, and are likely to benefit more from the enormous amount of exposure to and use of the L2, as is common in a DUB approach: input frequency and repeated use lead to the entrenchment and conventionalization of FUMMs (Rouse-Malpat & Verspoor, 2018), which implies that more language is

readily available for the L2 learner and the amount of attention needed for cognitive processes involved in speaking and listening on the part of the L2 learner is strongly reduced. This process of consolidation, schematization and automatization of FUMMs is likely to translate into sped up production and comprehension of oral language, which is henceforth perceived as more general proficiency. This is also in line with the results from chapter 6 (chunks in writing) which indicated that in their writing the DUB learners used more chunks than SB learners. Vocabulary and Grammar, by contrast, can be characterized as two more specific, knowledge-based dimensions of oral proficiency, and an SB approach might provide L2 learners with such lexical and grammatical knowledge. The absence of temporal aspects in the descriptors of these two dimensions might lead to relatively smaller differences.

Our findings thus provide empirical support for a strong version of CLT and are in line with several other longitudinal classroom studies. After two years of language instruction with or without explicit attention to grammar, Piggott (2019) showed that the implicit group outperformed the explicit group, especially in terms of fluency. Rouse-Malpat et al. (2021) found that the DUB group in their study outperformed the SB group on oral skills after three years.

The implications for L2 instructional effectiveness research are that it is important to conduct longitudinal studies with free response data to gain insights into the effectiveness of different teaching pedagogies as over time effects may change. For example, Piggott et al. (2020), in her two-year study on L2 English, showed differences in fluency and accuracy in favor of the strong CLT group in the first year, but these leveled off in the second year, perhaps because of the extramural English exposure in the Netherlands. In contrast, Rouse-Malpat and Verspoor (2012) in their study on L2 French showed that their SB-taught group was more accurate in terms of several morphological areas than the DUB group after one year, but this difference disappeared after the second year, presumably because of the extra exposure after two years in the program. Following Shintani (2013, 2015), it would also be interesting to see to what extent the actual classroom discourse contributes to the process of learning the L2.

The implications for L2 pedagogy are that target language exposure and use is important for speaking skills to develop. Teachers should try to maximize target language exposure, especially when extramural exposure to the target language is limited. However, speaking and using a foreign language in a classroom is not easy, especially with absolute beginners. Therefore, a DUB method such as AIM may be a good solution as it allows for carefully structured and repeated input, complemented with gestures, visuals and drills to make the FUMMs comprehensible (cf. Rouse-Malpat et al., 2022) and with time allow learners to distill the regular patterns in language implicitly (Shintani, 2015). For intermediate students, the input and exposure can become more complex and challenging, as evidenced by the need for an extended program used in the current study; but here too, extensive L2 exposure can be ensured

through homework assignments, leaving the limited amount of instruction time for students to maximally engage in meaningful usage events, providing them with ample opportunities to practice the target language, with an occasional focus on form where needed.

At the same time, Piggott (2019) has shown that a commonly employed SB textbook may also be used in such a way that there is substantially more emphasis on language exposure. By removing the explicit grammar components of course books, teachers can spend more available time on the speaking, reading and listening exercises and in doing so use the L2 meaningfully. Also, the TBLT paradigm would lend itself very well to much more exposure by means of pre-tasks and a focus on form, rather than forms. For example, R. Ellis (2009), has emphasized the importance of social interaction, usage-based learning, and implicit or incidental acquisition.





# CHAPTER 8

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## **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In the first section of this chapter the results of the four individual studies will be summarized. These results convincingly show that a Dynamic Usage-Based (DUB) program is more effective than a Structure-Based (SB) program in the development of oral skills, listening (chapter 4) and speaking (chapter 7), without a detrimental effect on written skills, reading (chapter 4) and writing (chapter 5 and 6). These results provide a clear answer to the central research question of this thesis in that a DUB program appears to be more effective in developing oral skills than an SB program and equally effective in developing written skills as an SB program. These findings inevitably lead to the question why this DUB program is more effective.

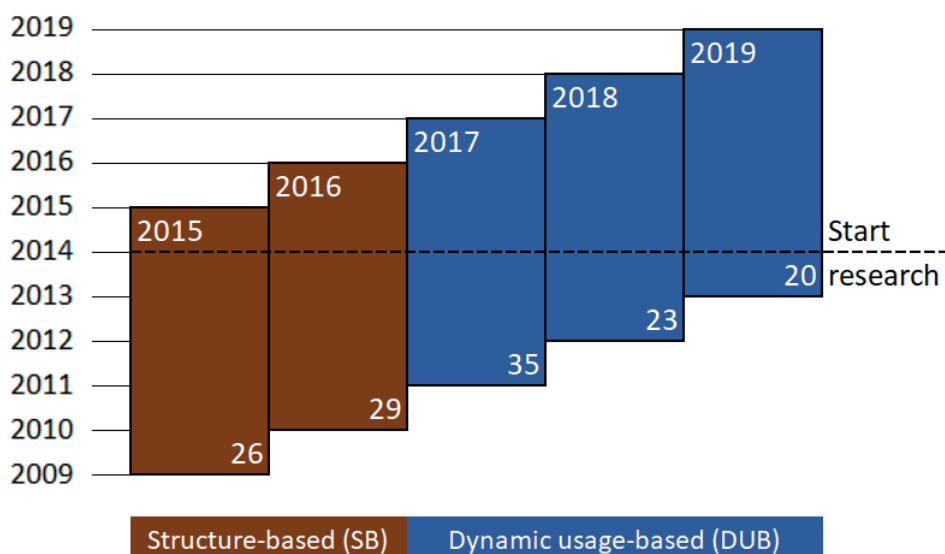
The second and final section of this chapter will then propose an answer to this question, discuss implications for effective foreign language teaching practice based on recent research and the results of this study, describe the limitations of this study and propose future directions.



## SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The aim of the current dissertation was to compare how L2 French differentially develops as a function of a weak version of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), realized by means of an SB approach and a strong version of CLT on the basis of a DUB approach. We targeted all four language skills-- reading, writing, listening, and speaking—following a six-year instruction period. The study and data collection were situated in a pre-university program for French at a secondary school in the North of the Netherlands, and spanned five years, testing students in their final year of secondary school in different cohorts. The SB group consisted of 55 students divided over two cohorts: 26 students started secondary school in 2009 and sat their exam in 2015, and 29 students started secondary school in 2010 and sat their exam in 2016). The DUB group, by contrast, comprised 78 students divided over three cohorts: 35 students started secondary school in 2011 and sat their exam in 2017, 23 students started secondary school in 2012 and sat the exam in 2018, and a final batch of 20 students started their secondary school trajectory in 2013 and finished by sitting their exam in 2019. All students were absolute beginners when they started learning French in their first year of secondary school. Figure 1 below visually presents these different cohorts.

**FIGURE 1.** Distribution of participants in research groups and cohorts



## **STUDY 1: READING AND LISTENING AFTER 6 YEARS**

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In the final three years of the SB program, a massive amount of reading instruction and practice was implemented in the classroom and at home. In contrast, the DUB program students practised their listening and reading skills at home and kept focusing on the development of oral skills in the classroom.

As far as reading skills are concerned, the SB program students spent about 32% of class time (125 hours) on the development of reading skills, as opposed to the DUB program students, for whom this ratio was approximately 17% of class time (65 hours) spent on reading skills. The nature and type of the reading activities, too, differed substantially (explicated in chapter 4).

In the final year of their studies, the 55 SB and 78 DUB learners were compared on their final reading exam and on the final (Cito) listening exam. The assumption was that SB students would match their DUB-taught peers in reading skills in their final two years as they had been preparing a great deal for the central reading exam, but as far as listening skills was concerned, we assumed that the DUB students would continue to outperform their SB peers. The results were in line with our expectations in that the SB and DUB learners had comparative reading comprehension scores, but the DUB learners obtained significantly higher listening comprehension scores, with large effect sizes.

## **STUDY 2: WRITING SKILLS AFTER 6 YEARS**

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An explicit focus on grammar has for years been assumed to be needed for writing skills to develop, partially motivated by early findings in SLA research, which showed that explicit instruction is more effective in foreign language acquisition in the realm of written skills (Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada & Tomita, 2010), and is even considered essential to achieve accuracy in advanced writing (Gunnarsson, 2012). The aim of the second study was to test these claims as the study set out to compare SB students (N=24) to DUB students (N=32) in their written skills mastery in their pre-university program for French, operationalized on the basis of their writing products. The texts that the students produced were assessed with three types of measures: holistically by means of expert ratings on the basis of Complexity, Accuracy, Fluency, Idiomaticity and Coherence (CAFIC) descriptors, they were analyzed automatically with Direkt Profil software, which examined 141 text measures. Finally, they were analyzed analytically on several text measures such as text length, sentence length and lexical diversity.

Holistic scores of expert teachers and morphosyntactic profiles that emerged on the basis of the software (Direkt Profil), showed that there were no significant differences between the texts of SB and DUB students, not even in terms of accuracy. However, the DUB students wrote longer sentences and more words per text, which were taken as an index of greater sentence complexity and fluency measures on the part of the DUB students.

### STUDY 3: CHUNKS IN WRITING AFTER SIX YEARS

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In Study 2 it was found that the DUB students scored significantly higher on both sentence complexity (average sentence length) and fluency (word count) than their SB counterparts and the hypothesis was that this might have been due to the use of multi-word sequences, operationalized as chunks (for a definition of chunks see Table 12 reported in Chapter 6)

The third study examined the written production of 56 French learners enrolled in either SB ( $N=24$ ) or DUB ( $N=32$ ) language classes. These 56 French learners wrote two essays in the final year, one in December and one in April. The December test was used for this study as this test had a smaller relative weight in the final grade when compared to the April test and students were expected to produce more spontaneous language.

The DUB students outperformed the SB students in terms of chunk coverage (an overall measure of chunk use) and they used significantly more chunks that were longer and lexically based. SB students, however, more often made use of shorter, grammatically based chunks, which can easily be explained by this program's focus on grammar, providing massive exposure to such grammatical chunks. However, no strong correlation was found between chunk coverage, complexity and fluency measures, so chunks seem to represent a separate construct, probably related to idiomaticity or authenticity. Overall, this study supports the DUB notion that high exposure and a high degree of input repetition is helpful in the acquisition of chunks, especially longer lexically based chunks.

### STUDY 4: SPEAKING SKILLS AFTER SIX YEARS

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The final study concerns speaking skills. In the SB program speaking activities were limited to short practice rounds, mostly by reproducing specific sentences and dialogues and the program focused more on the acquisition of (lexical and grammatical) knowledge and on receptive skills. The DUB program, in contrast, focused throughout on speaking skills and the learners were asked to communicate in French from the first day of French class in year 1. Early on, students mainly repeated and imitated parts of the story in playful drills, but as the students' linguistic repertoire and their confidence in using that repertoire grew, they were invited to improvise with this repertoire and extend it further as part of the DUB approach.

Students were tested with an adapted version of the Student Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA), details of which are provided in chapter 7 and appendices F and G. The hypothesis underlying this study was that the DUB students would outperform the SB students in oral proficiency. As expected, DUB students scored significantly higher than SB students on all oral proficiency measures.

## OVERALL RESULTS

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To summarize, the combined studies reported in this dissertation convincingly show that the DUB approach can prepare students adequately for their final exams in terms of reading and writing skills: SB and DUB-taught students score equally well on their final reading and writing exams, but the DUB students outperformed their SB-taught peers in several domains: sentence complexity, fluency, and chunk coverage. Moreover, as expected, the DUB students outscored the SB students in both speaking and listening. In other words, the DUB program enabled learners to pass their exams while also allowing them to develop true communicative competence in the target foreign language. This contradicts the claim that the development of writing skills, and accuracy in particular, necessitates explicit instruction on grammar, which was first motivated by SLA research (Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada & Tomita, 2010) and was soon widely adopted by L2 teachers. Apparently, an implicit approach to the teaching of grammar is as effective as an explicit approach to develop writing skills after six years. It has the added value that without time spent on explicit grammar, there is ample time to promote spoken fluency skills.

This difference in effectiveness, reported above, can be explained by further examining two major differences between the programs which may be held responsible. One relates to the introduction of linguistic forms and cognitive competition and the other relates to the frequency of repetition, in turn leading to entrenchment. In the next section these two differences will be discussed.

## DISCUSSION: DIFFERENCES IN PROCESSING

### SEQUENCING SKILLS TO AVOID COGNITIVE COMPETITION

Any attempt to explain differences between L2 teaching programs has to consider the distinction made by Long (2000) pertaining to meaning and form. This distinction is helpful in explaining why the DUB program might be more effective than the SB program in the development of oral skills. Indeed, learning activities usually involve the acquisition of linguistic items which have a phonological form, an orthographic form and a meaning. Ultimately, in any approach, forms have to be paired with meaning. This so-called “form-use-meaning-mapping” (FUMM) enables learners to use the foreign language and can either be done fully implicitly without any attention to forms (focus on meaning), fully explicitly with a predominant attention to forms (focus on forms) or inductively on the basis of a learner-adapted, incidental focus on certain forms (focus on form). The introduction of the phonological and the orthographic form is done differently in DUB and SB approaches and may affect cognitive competition.

In an SB approach, both phonological and orthographic forms are introduced simultaneously from the start. Each chapter in a coursebook typically starts with a text or a dialogue that students are expected to read and listen to. Although teachers usually have students focus on the phonological form first by just listening to the text or the dialogue, the orthographic forms are introduced shortly afterwards, leaving little time for the (phonological) form-meaning mapping to become entrenched in the mind. Also, from the beginning, L1 equivalents are introduced to provide meaning in addition to contextual information.

In the final three years, the focus on grammatical and orthographic accuracy increases significantly, as this is generally expected to be necessary for students to learn to write. Each chapter in the SB coursebooks under investigation in this study explicitly focuses on grammatical and orthographic accuracy. At the same time, the amount of input through texts increases as this is generally expected to be necessary for students to prepare for the final reading exams and form-use-meaning mappings are activated more frequently. As part of an SB approach, in short, FUMMs are acquired mainly explicitly with a predominant attention to forms.

In a DUB approach, students are initially fully and exclusively immersed in oral communication as the teacher does activities using a detailed script which aims at repeatedly activating form-use-meaning mappings. From the beginning, gestures are introduced to provide associative meaning in addition to contextual information. The input is highly controlled in the first three years using teacher scripts. Moreover, written text is not introduced until the second semester, after six months, so that the phonological form has had time to become sufficiently entrenched in the mind.

In the final three years of this DUB approach, students themselves choose videos and texts to work with in online learning system systems. In videos, both phonological and orthographic forms are introduced simultaneously and paired with their meaning. In texts, only the orthographic forms are paired with their meaning. Although there is more focus on the written form at this stage, grammatical and orthographic accuracy are still expected to develop implicitly. Learning activities in class focus on discussing content to improve oral fluency. In this approach, FUMMs are acquired inductively with a learner-adapted, incidental focus on certain forms.

Three differences between these approaches seem to make the SB approach cognitively more demanding than the DUB approach. First, the simultaneous introduction of oral and written forms in an SB approach is likely to make the process of pairing forms and meaning more demanding, while, in the DUB approach, students can focus on one form at a time. After having successfully entrenched the phonological form-use-meaning mapping through many repetitions, students can focus on pairing the orthographic form with the phonological form and its meaning.

Secondly, the use of L1 equivalents makes the process of pairing forms and meaning even more complex, as even more forms are introduced in the activation process: Besides the phonological and the orthographic form in the L2, both phonological and orthographic forms of the L1 equivalent are used in the activation process, adding to the demanding nature of the entrenchment process. In a DUB approach, the L1 equivalents are replaced by meaningful gestures, which, if paired with foreign language production, are known to stimulate both the right and left side of the brain, facilitating the brain in internalizing meaning from the language (Asher, 1981). Furthermore, using gestures in the classroom invites students to use more intelligences (kinesthetic – students gesture themselves, visual – students see the teacher and their peers gesturing) in addition to the traditional cognitive intelligence which, according to Gardner (1987), is known to empower foreign language learning. As a result, foreign language learning is assumed to be cognitively less demanding.

Thirdly, the strong focus on grammatical and orthographic accuracy in the SB approach puts a heavy cognitive burden on students for three reasons: grammatical accuracy requires a certain amount of metalinguistic awareness; orthographic accuracy requires even more cognitive effort during the form-meaning pairing; and a heavy focus on accuracy entails more anxiety, which is known to impede cognitive processes. These three reasons are expected to contribute even more to the cognitively demanding nature of the process of form-use-meaning mapping. As the L2 under investigation is French, in which the phoneme-grapheme transparency is rather low as compared to many other languages and more effort is needed to pair phonological and orthographic forms, this becomes even more pronounced.

When looking at different text measures in writing, the results of this study show that a DUB approach is more effective than an SB approach with regard to fluency

and complexity and equally effective pertaining to accuracy. In light of the way the approaches differ regarding the process of form-use-meaning mapping, these results do not come as a surprise. Indeed, an SB approach is cognitively more demanding than a DUB approach, preventing SB students to develop fluency and complexity as effectively as DUB students.

This section has tried to explain the effectiveness of a DUB program regarding the development of fluency and complexity over an SB program in terms of competition, but this leaves the question of the effect of the programs on accuracy. An SB program focuses on written skills (See chapter 4 on reading skills and chapter 5 on writing skills), and SB students receive a great deal of explicit instruction on accuracy. In contrast, DUB students do not receive a great deal of feedback on morphological accuracy to reduce anxiety and facilitate speaking (See chapter 8 on speaking). Yet, both programs appear to be equally effective in facilitating accuracy. This might be explained by the learning process with a much higher degree of repetition, facilitating entrenchment and automatization, and the nature of L2 exposure, which is more authentic in the DUB condition. This will be discussed in the next section.

## **ENTRENCHMENT AND AUTOMATIZATION**

The main difference between the programs is that DUB students are predominantly exposed to oral and meaningful, rather authentic French, while SB students are predominantly exposed to written textbook French, which is usually less meaningful and less authentic. Vandeweerd and Keijzer (2018) compared input from L2 French textbooks with input from an oral corpus and concluded that the relative amount and the frequency of authentic input in the oral corpus was significantly higher than in the textbook corpus. In chapter 6 it was argued that frequency of exposure to authentic language in a DUB program favors L2 development, as DUB students were found to outperform SB students with regard to producing longer, lexically based chunks. These prefabricated sequences are consolidated in the learner's brain by input repetition and by output repetition. According to Wray and Perkins (2000), they contribute to minimizing the effects of a limited memory as these sequences allow short-cuts in processing: A five-word prefabricated sequence is treated as one linguistic item (Gustafsson & Verspoor, 2017) and will be equally demanding to retain as one single word if this sequence's form-meaning mapping is deeply entrenched and consolidated in the learner's brain by repeated exposure and use.

In a DUB approach, repeated exposure to and use of authentic language are extremely important, which means that form-use-meaning mappings of individual words and larger prefabricated sequences have a greater chance of being consolidated in the learner's brain to a degree that automatization is reached. In an SB approach, only the shorter, more grammatically based chunks may be expected to reach this level of automatization.

Cognitive psychologists have demonstrated that repeated practice in spaced sequences is beneficial for strengthening the memory representation of a word or a prefabricated sequence (cf. Pavlik & Anderson, 2005) and that these linguistic items or sequences are better recalled if the repetition is spaced: when the exposure to and the use of these items and sequences occur with time lapses in between, the learning process was found to be more effective (for an excellent overview of relevant literature, see Serrano, 2012). By nature, a DUB approach with built in repetition of sequences over several weeks is favorable to spaced learning and will lead to a high degree of automatization, while an SB approach usually has thematically and grammatically organized chapters and repetition of language sequences is not really built in. Input repetition in coursebooks is thus too limited to facilitate the process of automatization.



## CONCLUSION

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If we think about communication as an essential tool for the council of Europe to facilitate interaction, mobility and mutual understanding between European citizens (Puppink, 2012), the primary concern of foreign language teaching in the European Union should be the effective development of oral skills as the nature of these skills (for the time being) prevents the use of machine tools. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014, p. 105), the communicative approach to language teaching must be considered as a paradigm shift for which the world was ready at that time. It was an important methodological innovation worldwide, but specifically in Europe, as it provided the tools for the goals set by the council for a growing European community. However, when looking at current structure-based L2 teaching practice in the Netherlands, this communicative approach needs an essential change for oral skills to play the important role assigned to them by the Council of Europe, especially when considering L2's like French and German for which not much out-of-class exposure is available. Indeed, they lack the enormous amount of extramural exposure that L2 English has in the Netherlands. A DUB approach to foreign language teaching may be considered to be a response to the Council's invitation to support this essential tool for communication in many languages in the European Union.

## PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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This study has confirmed that a strong version of CLT in which “using to learn” is the approach is to be preferred over a weak version of CLT in which “learning to use” is the approach in the development of all skills. As many applied linguists have proclaimed, L2 exposure and active use are of essence in learning an L2, and this view is now thoroughly supported by dynamic usage-based linguistic theory. We believe a DUB approach is likely to facilitate the process of foreign language learning because it is cognitively less demanding than an SB approach and with its emphasis on frequency of exposure of whole utterances in the target language, the (potential) degree of entrenchment is high. The current study specifically compared a more traditional SB approach to one specific DUB-inspired teaching method, AIM and AIME, but DUB principles could easily be applied to other methods, for instance as exemplified in CLIL and immersion programs. Moreover, Task Based Language programs would lend themselves perfectly, as long as the focus is not on morphological form only but form as Long (2000) intended it with emphasis on words, collocations, pragmatic patterns, and we will assume pronunciation, intonation.

To develop a DUB inspired foreign language program the following should be kept in mind:

- (1) Maximal target language exposure, meaningful use within a meaningful context and practice of whole phrases, chunks, and sentences (FUMMs) should be considered as the main conditions for success in all language skills.
- (2) Much research from a DUB perspective has shown that trial and error is part and parcel of L2 development, so teachers should refrain from providing corrective feedback for all errors, as this may also cause anxiety with L2 learners. An L2 program with abundant L2 exposure (through the teacher, through peers and through texts and videos) is likely to provide enough correct and repeated input to adequately facilitate language development.
- (3) An L2 teaching program can make use of (traditional) coursebooks with some adaptations: They should be supplemented with rich, meaningful and comprehensible oral input, preferably multi-modal, with a high degree of repetition built in over time. Assignments should engage students affectively and cognitively and provide abundant opportunities for students to actively use the L2 for communication.
- (4) Attention to form or forms should always be combined with attention to meaning. The acquisition of most morpho-syntactic features of an L2 can reach a sufficient level naturally and implicitly. A focus on accuracy is likely to impede language acquisition because it may enhance anxiety with L2 learners. (If the method includes explicit attention to specific grammar and thematic vocabulary, the pages can be skipped as in Piggott's (2019) experiment).

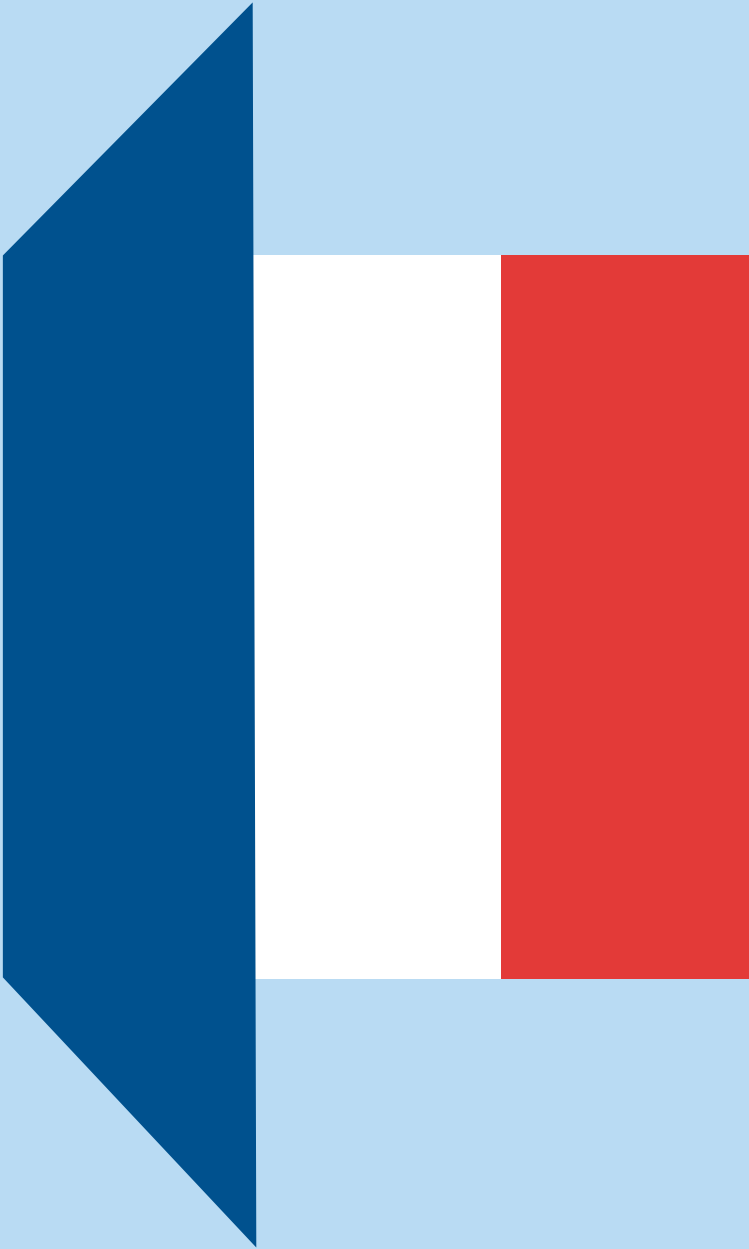
## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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Although the results of this study show that a DUB approach is more effective than a more traditional SB approach in developing listening and speaking skills and equally effective in reading and writing skills, several limitations need to be considered. As classrooms are dynamic environments involving numerous psychological and social processes, long-term classroom research usually involves many variables which cannot be controlled for. Henceforth, experimental control, which is a prerequisite for generalization of the findings, is impossible with this kind of research. Secondly, although this study is uniquely longitudinal in the sense that it investigates the effects of a 6-year program, similar studies are needed with similar results to overcome the scientific problem reported above. Both the nature of this research and the lack of replication should limit the scope of this study and caution the reader to generalize any of these findings.

However, although generalization of this study's findings might not be possible due to the lack of experimental control, this study's ecological validity is extremely high, as

it investigates real programs in a real school with real students, using widely used tests that are part of the curriculum and not a simple intervention designed solely for the sake of the experiment. Ecological validity and experimental control thus seem to be incompatible by nature in long-term classroom research. Although generalizability is indeed not possible, pedagogical implications can still be well defined by practitioners and policymakers, who can interpret the findings against the backdrop of their own situations and determine what is relevant and meaningful to them (see also Spada, 2019). In the light of this “particularizability”, coined by Clarke (1994), the relevance of this study cannot be denied for practitioners and policymakers who might be inspired to reconsider current practice in foreign language teaching, as well as for researchers who might be inspired to replicate this study or to investigate foreign language teaching in the same direction.



**References**

**Appendices**

**List of abbreviations**

**List of tables and figures**

**Nederlandse samenvatting**

**Groningen dissertations in  
linguistics (GRODIL)**

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## APPENDIX A

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### Rubric based on benchmarked texts for the assessment of writing skills

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#### Level 4 (high):

- Good use of complex subordinate clauses
  - Choice of words is varied and good
  - Not many mistakes that might annoy
  - Message is clear
  - Good collocations
  - Text is well structured. Good use of connecting words
  - Good syntax
  - Many correct sentences.
- 

#### Level 3:

- Longer, complex sentences are used but short ones as well.
  - Tense use predominantly correct
  - Verbs are often well conjugated
  - Message is mostly clear. Sometimes re-reading is needed.
  - Word use is varied and mostly correct
  - Sometimes a lack of coherence necessitates re-reading and analysis
  - Grammatical errors occur but do not annoy.
- 

#### Level 2:

- Basic vocabulary
  - Errors in tense use are frequent
  - Numerous grammatical errors occur
  - Verbs are often conjugated poorly or not at all
  - Syntax is not very good. Requires rereading the text again.
  - Text is not always coherent.
- 

#### Level 1 (low):

- A lot of grammatical errors
  - Longer sentences are not coherent and often not quite clear.
  - No text coherence. Re-reading is needed for comprehension.
  - Few verbs used
  - Hardly any correct sentence
  - Choice of words is poor and regularly causes a lack of comprehension.
  - Numerous errors in verb use (conjugation and tenses)
  - "Dutch syntax"
-

## APPENDIX B

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### **EXAMPLE OF THE MATERIALS USED TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR EXAMS IN SPEAKING AND WRITING**

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During the final two years the same amount of instruction time (30 hours in both conditions) was used to introduce different academic topics like migrants, tattoos, and abortion. During 6-7 lessons, a topic was introduced using a video-documentary of two minutes on average. This introduction was followed by listening and reading exercises, which entailed repeated exposure to the language used in the video-documentary prompting the learner to focus on the vocabulary needed to speak and write about the topic later on. Gradually, exercises became more productive: learners were encouraged to think of arguments for and against a given view related to the topic under discussion and to use these arguments in speaking and writing as part of several guided tasks, making sure all students were able to understand and produce content on these topics. Finally, free response tasks like a debate, a press conference and a discussion were organized to enable students to produce language spontaneously during the final oral proficiency test.

This appendix contains the combined teacher's guide and student's activities of one of the subjects used in the studies on speaking and writing skills (chapters 5-7).

## Le Chili et l'avortement

### Fiche pédagogique © Gomarus College, W. Gombert

#### Activité 1 : Mise en route

Précisez aux apprenants qu'il n'y aura pas de son pour cette activité. Montrer le reportage jusqu'à l'intervention de la gynécologue incluse (environ 1'10).

En petits groupes. *Notez ce que vous voyez. Quelles images vous aident à comprendre le sujet du reportage ? Quel est le sujet du reportage d'après vous ?*

Encourager tous les apprenants à prendre la parole et à faire des hypothèses.

#### Pistes de corrections / Corrigés :

Il y a une femme cachée et une femme médecin. Le reportage est sur une femme qui est malade. Elle a une maladie grave alors elle se cache. La femme médecin lui explique sa maladie.

#### Activité 2 : Faire des définitions

Apporter des dictionnaires. En petits groupes. *Faites l'activité 2 : Formulez des définitions pour les mots. Circuler dans les groupes pour apporter aide et correction.*

#### Pistes de corrections / Corrigés :

Un crime : C'est un acte qui peut être puni par la loi.

Avorter : C'est l'action d'arrêter une grossesse avant la naissance.

Un gynécologue : C'est un médecin spécialiste des femmes.

La clandestinité : C'est le secret dans lequel on fait un action.

La grossesse : C'est le moment où une femme attend un enfant.

L'avortement thérapeutique : C'est l'arrêt d'une grossesse pour des raisons médicales.

#### Activité 3 :

Inviter les apprenants à lire l'activité et proposer une recherche de vocabulaire. Montrer le reportage avec le son jusqu'à la fin du témoignage de Maria.

*Faites l'activité 3 : regardez le reportage. Cochez les mots entendus et utilisez-les pour formuler le sujet de la séquence et en décrire l'atmosphère.*

Mise en commun orale, laisser les apprenants se mettre d'accord sur le sujet du reportage.

#### Pistes de corrections / Corrigés :

**Mots entendus :** La peur / Un crime / Avorter / La prison / En danger / Un docteur / Un gynécologue / La justice / Dénoncer.

**Le sujet du reportage :** On parle de Maria, une chilienne qui a avorté, c'est un crime au Chili. Depuis, elle a peur et risque la prison. Elle est en danger.

**L'atmosphère du reportage :** On sent une tension et l'inquiétude de Maria.

#### Activité 4 :

Montrer la première partie du reportage avec le son cette fois, mais sans les sous-titres.

*Faites l'activité 4 : choisissez les informations correctes pour présenter Maria, la jeune femme du reportage.*

#### Pistes de corrections / Corrigés :

Maria est chilienne.

Elle a avorté.

Elle risque d'aller en prison.

Elle vit dans la peur.

Elle a fait quelque chose d'illégal au Chili.

Elle est en danger.



**Activité 5 :**

Indiquer aux apprenants qu'ils devront justifier les réponses fausses à l'aide du commentaire. Inviter les groupes à lire l'activité et lever les éventuelles difficultés lexicales. Montrer le reportage en entier avec le son.

*Faites l'activité 5 : dites si les affirmations sont vraies ou fausses.*

Montrer le reportage une nouvelle fois en entier avec le son pour permettre aux apprenants de vérifier et/ou modifier leurs réponses.

Mise en commun orale : noter les réponses correctes au tableau. Laisser les apprenants se mettre d'accord et justifier leurs propositions oralement.

**Pistes de corrections / Corrigés :**

**Vrai :** 4 ; 5 ; 6 ; 8 ; 9.

**Faux :**

1. « Pendant deux ans encore, Maria risque la prison. »
2. « L'intervention qu'elle a subie a été clandestine, dangereuse. Elle l'a conduite droit aux urgences. »
3. « Il lui a dit qu'il comptait me dénoncer. »
7. « ... des patientes qui voudraient interrompre leur grossesse, très souvent pour des cas de malformations. »
10. « 7 personnes sur 10 restent opposées à l'avortement libre. »

**Activité 6 :**

Montrer le reportage en entier avec le son deux fois de suite.

*Faites l'activité 6 : retrouvez qui a donné les informations suivantes. Comparez vos réponses avec votre voisin(e).*

Mise en commun : recueillir les réponses des apprenants oralement et les noter au tableau.

**Pistes de corrections / Corrigés :**

**Maria :** L'avortement a eu lieu en 2011. / La justice peut encore poursuivre Maria.

**La gynécologue :** Les femmes sont obligées de garder un enfant qui a une malformation. / La seule aide possible pour ces femmes, est une aide psychologique pour supporter la situation.

**Le journaliste :** Chaque année 120 000 femmes se font avorter. / Les avortements se font souvent à domicile, avec des médicaments vendus sur le marché noir. / La gynécologue défend le droit à l'avortement. / Michelle Bachelet, la candidate socialiste à la présidentielle veut légaliser l'avortement thérapeutique. / Au Chili, 7 personnes sur 10 sont opposées à l'avortement.

**Activité 7 :**

Proposer au groupe de faire l'activité sans regarder de nouveau le reportage.

*Faites l'activité 7 : retrouvez les verbes du commentaire qui correspondent aux définitions suivantes.*

Mise en commun orale : le groupe choisit deux apprenants, l'un donne lit une définition et l'autre donne sa réponse.

**Pistes de corrections / Corrigés :**

1. Commettre un crime.
2. Risquer de.
3. Dénoncer.
4. Avorter.
5. Légaliser.

**Activité 8 – Compréhension écrite : on fait l'analyse du texte.**

Pour commencer, regardez de nouveau le reportage. On travaille dans les groupes. Les élèves doivent comprendre le texte entier. Ils peuvent noter les traductions en néerlandais à droite du texte. Soit les élèves utilisent les dictionnaires FN, soit ils n'utilisent que le Robert (1 exemplaire pour chaque groupe). C'est à l'enseignant de choisir.



### Activité 9 – Compréhension orale : Textes à trous

Mettez le premier texte à trous sur le tbi, après le deuxième, après le troisième. Finalement, on corrige tous les trois textes et on note les bonnes réponses. Ce n'est pas nécessaire d'avoir une bonne orthographe : On peut faire des fautes d'orthographe et compter un point en même temps : Pourvu qu'on connaisse le bon mot.

### Activité 10 Expression écrite : Essai (>50 mots) 45 minutes

**Sujet : Est-ce que tu es pour ou contre un avortement quand la grossesse n'est pas voulue.**

Regardez d'abord le reportage vidéo pour s'inspirer. Ensuite, tout le monde écrit un petit essai dans le groupe sur une feuille spéciale. 2 ou 3 personnes sont pour, 2 ou 3 personnes sont contre. On a 25 minutes maximum. Quand on a fini, on demande au groupe de chercher des fautes et de les corriger (20 minutes).

On laisse les feuilles dans le dossier du groupe. On en a besoin pour activité 12.

**[Si on veut, on peut faire un nouvel essai à la maison (Word !!) d'au moins 150 mots comme Activité Pratique (AP-EE6) = 2 points]**

### Activité 11 – Compréhension orale : Textes à trous 2

**(Répétition de l'activité 8 : les élèves doivent cacher les premières réponses et faire l'exercice une deuxième fois pour pouvoir constater le progrès. On compare les points)**

Mettez le premier texte à trous sur le tbi, après le deuxième, après le troisième. Finalement, on corrige tous les trois textes.

### Activité 12 – Expression orale : Débat

Dans chaque groupe on fait un débat entre les personnes qui sont « pour » et les personnes qui sont « contre ». Regardez d'abord le reportage vidéo pour s'inspirer. Lisez ensuite tous les petits essais du groupe (activité 10). Puis notez les arguments principaux à l'aide de mots clés. Enfin, commencez le débat.

### Activité 13 – Visionnement du reportage vidéo

Pour conclure, on regarde encore une fois la vidéo.

## Avortement au chili

Feuille d'activités

### Activité 1. Notez ce que vous voyez.

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### Activité 2. Formulez les définitions :

Un crime =

Avorter =

Un gynécologue =

La clandestinité =

La grossesse =

### Activité 3. Regardez le reportage. Cochez les mots entendus et utilisez-les pour formuler le sujet de la séquence et en décrire l'atmosphère.

<input type="checkbox"/> La peur	<input type="checkbox"/> La mère	<input type="checkbox"/> En danger	<input type="checkbox"/> Aider
<input type="checkbox"/> La terreur	<input type="checkbox"/> Avorter	<input type="checkbox"/> Un docteur	<input type="checkbox"/> La police
<input type="checkbox"/> Un assassinat	<input type="checkbox"/> Abandonner	<input type="checkbox"/> Un hôpital	<input type="checkbox"/> La justice
<input type="checkbox"/> Un crime	<input type="checkbox"/> La prison	<input type="checkbox"/> Un gynécologue	<input type="checkbox"/> Dénoncer

Le sujet du reportage : \_\_\_\_\_

---

L'atmosphère du reportage : \_\_\_\_\_

---

### Activité 4. Regardez le début du reportage. Choisissez les informations correctes pour présenter Maria, la jeune femme du reportage.

**Maria...**


- est chilienne.    est médecin.  
 a eu un enfant.    voudrait avoir un enfant.    a avorté.  
 est allée en prison.    risque d'aller en prison.  
 vit la situation tranquillement.    vit dans la peur.  
 a fait quelque chose d'illégal au Chili.    a fait quelque chose d'autorisé au Chili.  
 est en danger.    est en sécurité.

**Activité 5. Regardez le reportage. Dites si les affirmations sont vraies ou fausses.**

	Vrai	Faux
1. Maria risque la prison pendant encore 10 ans.		
2. Pour son avortement, elle a subi une intervention qui s'est bien passée.		
3. Le médecin qui l'a reçue l'a protégée.		
4. Son avortement a eu lieu en 2011.		
5. Au Chili, 120 000 femmes chaque année se font avorter dans la clandestinité.		
6. La gynécologue est l'une des rares en faveur de l'avortement.		
7. Les femmes qui la consultent veulent avorter pour de nombreuses raisons.		
8. Même si on détecte une malformation de l'enfant, la grossesse doit être continuée.		
9. Il y a un espoir de voir l'avortement thérapeutique légalisé bientôt au Chili.		
10. Au Chili, 7 personnes sur 10 sont favorables à la légalisation de l'avortement.		

**Activité 6. Regardez le reportage deux fois. Retrouvez qui a donné les informations suivantes.**

*Maria (M) – La gynécologue (G) – La journaliste (J)*

	Qui ?
L'avortement a eu lieu en 2011.	M G J
La justice peut encore poursuivre Maria.	M G J
Chaque année 120 000 femmes se font avorter.	M G J
Les avortements se font souvent à domicile, avec des médicaments vendus sur le marché noir.	M G J
La gynécologue défend le droit à l'avortement.	M G J
Les femmes sont obligées de garder un enfant qui a une malformation.	M G J
La seule aide possible pour ces femmes, est une aide psychologique pour supporter la situation.	M G J
Michelle Bachelet, la candidate socialiste à la présidentielle veut légaliser l'avortement thérapeutique.	M G J
Au Chili, 7 personnes sur 10 sont opposées à l'avortement.	M G J

**Activité 7. Retrouvez les verbes du commentaire qui correspondent aux définitions suivantes.**

- Faire une action contraire à la loi : \_\_\_\_\_
- Être exposé à une situation embarrassante ou dangereuse : \_\_\_\_\_
- Dire à la justice le crime de quelqu'un : \_\_\_\_\_
- Arrêter une grossesse : \_\_\_\_\_
- Rendre légal : \_\_\_\_\_

**Activité 8. Analyse du texte**

## Transcription : le Chili et l'avortement

Traductions :

### Voix off

Au Chili, certains secrets sont très lourds à porter. Depuis trois ans, Maria vit dans la peur. Elle a commis un crime dans son pays, celui d'avorter. Pendant deux ans encore, jusqu'à la prescription de son crime, Maria risque la prison. L'intervention qu'elle a subie a été clandestine, dangereuse. Elle l'a conduite droit aux urgences.

### Maria

Mon docteur, mon gynécologue, m'a dit qu'il avait parlé avec le médecin qui m'avait reçue. Il lui a dit qu'il comptait me dénoncer. Au tout début, j'ai eu peur, très peur. Je me suis sentie en danger. Cette peur est tout le temps présente, chaque jour de ma vie. Mon avortement a eu lieu en 2011 et encore aujourd'hui, je peux être poursuivie par la justice.

### Voix off

Chaque année, comme elle, dans la clandestinité, 120 000 femmes se font avorter au Chili. Souvent à domicile, avec des médicaments vendus sur le marché noir. Cette gynécologue est l'une des rares à défendre le droit à l'avortement. Elle reçoit chaque jour des patientes qui voudraient interrompre leur grossesse, très souvent pour des cas de malformations.

### Docteur Andrea Schilling, gynécologue

Obliger une femme à mener à terme une grossesse lorsque l'enfant présente une malformation et qu'il va mourir quelques heures après l'accouchement, c'est une torture. Regardez : on peut détecter des problèmes cérébraux lors du premier contrôle, dès les premières secondes. Et dans ce cas, la seule chose que l'on peut offrir à une femme et à sa famille pendant la grossesse, c'est une aide psychologique pour qu'elle supporte cette situation : vivre en sachant qu'elle porte un enfant qui va mourir juste après la naissance.

### Voix off

Légaliser l'avortement thérapeutique, Michelle Bachelet, candidate socialiste à la présidentielle de dimanche, en a fait l'une de ses promesses de campagne. Au Chili, 7 personnes sur 10 restent opposées à un avortement libre.

**Activité 9 : Textes à trous 1**

	Texte à trous 1		Texte à trous 2		Texte à trous 3
1		2		3	
4		5		6	
7		8		9	
10		11		12	
13		14		15	
16		17		18	
19		20		21	
22		23		24	

**Activité 10 Expression écrite**

***Est-ce que tu es pour ou contre un avortement quand la grossesse n'est pas voulue ?***



**Activité 12 : Textes à trous 2**

	Texte à trous 1		Texte à trous 2		Texte à trous 3
1		2		3	
4		5		6	
7		8		9	
10		11		12	
13		14		15	
16		17		18	
19		20		21	
22		23		24	

**Activité 13 : Expression orale : les arguments principaux pour ou contre :**


## Texte à trous 1 – avortement au Chili

### Voix off

- 1 Au Chili, certains secrets sont très lourds à [REDACTED]. Depuis trois ans, Maria vit dans la peur. Elle a commis un crime dans son pays, celui d'avorter. Pendant deux ans encore, jusqu'à la prescription de son crime, Maria risque la prison. L'intervention  
4 qu'elle a subie a été clandestine, [REDACTED]. Elle l'a conduite droit aux urgences.

### Maria

- Mon docteur, mon gynécologue, m'a dit qu'il avait parlé avec le médecin qui m'avait reçue. Il lui a dit qu'il comptait me dénoncer. Au tout début, j'ai eu peur,  
7 très peur. Je me suis sentie en danger. Cette [REDACTED] est tout le temps présente, chaque jour de ma vie. Mon avortement a eu lieu en 2011 et encore aujourd'hui, je peux être poursuivie par la justice.

### Voix off

- 10 Chaque année, comme elle, dans la clandestinité, 120 000 [REDACTED] se font avorter au Chili. Souvent à domicile, avec des médicaments vendus sur le marché noir. Cette gynécologue est l'une des rares à défendre le droit à l'avortement. Elle reçoit  
13 chaque jour des patientes qui voudraient interrompre leur grossesse, très [REDACTED] pour des cas de malformations.

### Docteur Andrea Schilling, gynécologue

- Obliger une femme à mener à terme une grossesse lorsque l'enfant présente une malformation et qu'il va mourir [REDACTED] heures après l'accouchement, c'est une torture. Regardez : on peut détecter des problèmes cérébraux lors du premier  
16 contrôle, dès les premières secondes. Et dans ce cas, la seule chose que l'on peut offrir à une femme et à sa [REDACTED] pendant la grossesse, c'est une aide  
19 psychologique pour qu'elle supporte cette situation : vivre en sachant qu'elle porte un enfant qui va mourir juste après la naissance.

### Voix off

- 22 Légaliser l'avortement thérapeutique, Michelle Bachelet, candidate [REDACTED] à la présidentielle de dimanche, en a fait l'une de ses promesses de campagne. Au Chili, 7 personnes sur 10 restent opposées à un avortement libre.





## Texte à trous 2 – avortement au Chili

### Voix off

2 Au Chili, certains secrets sont très lourds à porter. Depuis trois ans, Maria vit dans la peur. Elle a commis un [ ] dans son pays, celui d'avorter. Pendant deux ans encore, jusqu'à la prescription de son crime, Maria risque la prison. L'intervention qu'elle a subie a été clandestine, dangereuse. Elle l'a conduite droit aux urgences.

### Maria

5 Mon docteur, mon gynécologue, m'a dit qu'il [ ] parlé avec le médecin qui m'avait reçue. Il lui a dit qu'il comptait me dénoncer. Au tout début, j'ai eu peur, très peur. Je me suis sentie en danger. Cette peur est tout le temps présente, chaque jour de ma vie. Mon avortement a eu lieu en 2011 et encore [ ], je peux être poursuivie par la justice.

### Voix off

11 Chaque année, comme elle, dans la clandestinité, 120 000 femmes se font avorter au Chili. Souvent à domicile, avec des médicaments vendus sur le [ ] noir. Cette gynécologue est l'une des rares à défendre le droit à l'avortement. Elle reçoit chaque jour des patientes qui voudraient interrompre leur grossesse, très souvent  
14 [ ] des cas de malformations.

### Docteur Andrea Schilling, gynécologue

Obliger une femme à mener à terme une grossesse lorsque l'enfant présente une malformation et qu'il va mourir quelques heures après l'accouchement, c'est une  
17 torture. Regardez : on peut détecter des [ ] cérébraux lors du premier contrôle, dès les premières secondes. Et dans ce cas, la seule chose que l'on peut offrir à une femme et à sa famille pendant la grossesse, c'est une aide  
20 psychologique pour qu'elle supporte cette [ ] : vivre en sachant qu'elle porte un enfant qui va mourir juste après la naissance.

### Voix off

23 Légaliser l'avortement thérapeutique, Michelle Bachelet, candidate socialiste à la présidentielle de [ ], en a fait l'une de ses promesses de campagne. Au Chili, 7 personnes sur 10 restent opposées à un avortement libre.

### Texte à trous 3 – avortement au Chili

#### Voix off

- Au Chili, certains secrets sont très lourds à porter. Depuis trois ans, Maria vit dans la peur. Elle a commis un crime dans son pays, celui d'avorter. Pendant deux ans encore, jusqu'à la prescription de son crime, Maria risque la [REDACTED]. L'intervention qu'elle a subie a été clandestine, dangereuse. Elle l'a conduite droit aux urgences.

#### Maria

- Mon docteur, mon gynécologue, m'a dit qu'il avait parlé avec le médecin qui m'avait reçue. Il lui a dit qu'il [REDACTED] me dénoncer. Au tout début, j'ai eu peur, très peur. Je me suis sentie en danger. Cette peur est tout le temps présente, chaque jour de ma vie. Mon avortement a eu lieu en 2011 et encore aujourd'hui, je peux être poursuivie par la [REDACTED].

#### Voix off

- Chaque année, comme elle, dans la clandestinité, 120 000 femmes se font avorter au Chili. Souvent à domicile, avec des médicaments vendus sur le marché noir.
- 12 Cette gynécologue est l'une des rares à [REDACTED] le droit à l'avortement. Elle reçoit chaque jour des patientes qui voudraient interrompre leur grossesse, très souvent pour des cas de malformations.

#### Docteur Andrea Schilling, gynécologue

- 15 Obliger une femme à mener à terme une grossesse lorsque [REDACTED] présente une malformation et qu'il va mourir quelques heures après l'accouchement, c'est une torture. Regardez : on peut détecter des problèmes cérébraux lors du premier
- 18 contrôle, dès les premières secondes. Et dans ce cas, la seule [REDACTED] que l'on peut offrir à une femme et à sa famille pendant la grossesse, c'est une aide psychologique pour qu'elle supporte cette situation : vivre en sachant qu'elle
- 21 porte un enfant qui va mourir juste [REDACTED] la naissance.

#### Voix off

- Légaliser l'avortement thérapeutique, Michelle Bachelet, candidate socialiste à la présidentielle de dimanche, en a fait l'une de ses promesses de campagne. Au
- 24 Chili, 7 [REDACTED] sur 10 restent opposées à un avortement libre.

## Texte à trous – avortement au Chili – solutions

1 Au Chili, certains secrets sont très lourds à porter. Depuis trois ans, Maria vit dans  
 2 la peur. Elle a commis un crime dans son pays, celui d'avorter. Pendant deux ans  
 3 encore, jusqu'à la prescription de son crime, Maria risque la prison. L'intervention  
 4 qu'elle a subie a été clandestine, dangereuse. Elle l'a conduite droit aux urgences.

**Maria**

5 Mon docteur, mon gynécologue, m'a dit qu'il avait parlé avec le médecin qui  
 6 m'avait reçue. Il lui a dit qu'il comptait me dénoncer. Au tout début, j'ai eu peur,  
 7 très peur. Je me suis sentie en danger. Cette peur est tout le temps présente,  
 8 chaque jour de ma vie. Mon avortement a eu lieu en 2011 et encore aujourd'hui,  
 9 je peux être poursuivie par la justice.

**Voix off**

10 Chaque année, comme elle, dans la clandestinité, 120 000 femmes se font avorter  
 11 au Chili. Souvent à domicile, avec des médicaments vendus sur le marché noir.  
 12 Cette gynécologue est l'une des rares à défendre le droit à l'avortement. Elle reçoit  
 13 chaque jour des patientes qui voudraient interrompre leur grossesse, très souvent  
 14 pour des cas de malformations.

**Docteur Andrea Schilling, gynécologue**

15 Obliger une femme à mener à terme une grossesse lorsque l'enfant présente une  
 16 malformation et qu'il va mourir quelques heures après l'accouchement, c'est une  
 17 torture. Regardez : on peut détecter des problèmes cérébraux lors du premier  
 18 contrôle, dès les premières secondes. Et dans ce cas, la seule chose que l'on peut  
 19 offrir à une femme et à sa famille pendant la grossesse, c'est une aide  
 20 psychologique pour qu'elle supporte cette situation : vivre en sachant qu'elle  
 21 porte un enfant qui va mourir juste après la naissance.

**Voix off**

22 Légaliser l'avortement thérapeutique, Michelle Bachelet, candidate socialiste à la  
 23 présidentielle de dimanche, en a fait l'une de ses promesses de campagne. Au  
 24 Chili, 7 personnes sur 10 restent opposées à un avortement libre.

# APPENDIX C

## EXAMPLE OF A WRITING EXAM

### ÉPREUVE D'EXPRESSION ÉCRITE 5 - VWO-6 Période 12

Sujet: Avortement au Chili

Durée: 50 minutes

Date: décembre 2016


#### Tâche:

Vous avez vu une émission à la télévision sur l'avortement au Chili.

Vous écrivez un article d'au moins 200 mots pour le magazine "Ça va". Votre article comprend trois parties:

1. *D'abord vous racontez ce que vous avez vu dans la vidéo.*
2. *Ensuite vous donnez votre opinion sur le sujet.*
3. *Finalement imaginez le futur : Quelle sera la situation en 2066 selon toi ?*

#### Instruction pratique:

- À la première ligne vous écrivez le titre de l'article, la date, ton nom et ta classe.
- Utilisez fonte **Calibri, 14 points**.
- Espacement des lignes: **3** (bouton:  )
- Quand l'article est fini, téléchargez le fichier dans Dropbox.
- Après, imprimez l'article et donnez la feuille à ton enseignant.

#### Beoordeling:

- Zorg daarom voor een goed lopende en samenhangende tekst.
- In een essay geeft je je mening over een bepaald onderwerp. Je moet dus argumenten noemen.
- Probeer zoveel mogelijk te schrijven maar gebruik **minimaal 200** woorden. Als je meer woorden gebruikt, levert dat een bonus op voor je cijfer maar forceer het niet want dan kan het tegen je gaan werken doordat de kwaliteit minder wordt.
- **Gebruik zo weinig mogelijk de directe rede, dat wil zeggen tekst tussen aanhalingstekens. Dus, in plaats van: Hij zei: "Ik ben het niet met je eens", kun je beter schrijven: Hij zei dat hij het niet eens was met mij.**

## APPENDIX D

---

### VBA SCRIPT USED TO AUTOMATICALLY IDENTIFY CHUNKS. ADAPTED FROM VAN DER PLOEG (2017)

---

```

Option Explicit On
Public ObjExcel As Object
Public sResponse As String
Public chunkSoort As String
Public ChunkForm As String

'Adds selected text to excel by pressing alt+m (added shortcut). After pressing alt+m
the categories and form are presented. Clicking OK the chunk is added to excel.
Sub AddChunkToExcel()

    Dim Laatste_rij As Long

    Dim iCount As Long

    Laatste_rij = ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("teller").Range("a1").Value

    iCount = 0
    Application.ScreenUpdating = False
    With Selection

        sResponse = Selection.Text

        UserForm1.Show

        .HomeKey Unit:=wdStory
        With .Find
            .ClearFormatting
            .MatchWholeWord = True
            .MatchCase = False
            .IgnorePunct = True
            .Text = sResponse

            Do While .Execute
                iCount = iCount + 1
                Selection.Font.ColorIndex = wdDarkRed
                Selection.Font.Italic = True
                Selection.MoveRight
            Loop
        End With

        MsgBox sResponse & " komt " & iCount & " keer voor"
    End With
    Application.ScreenUpdating = True

    ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("Blad1").Range("A" & Laatste_rij).Value =
sResponse
    ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("Blad1").Range("B" & Laatste_rij).Value = iCount
    ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("Blad1").Range("C" & Laatste_rij).Value =
ActiveDocument.Name
    ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("Blad1").Range("D" & Laatste_rij).Value =
chunkSoort
    ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("Blad1").Range("E" & Laatste_rij).Value =
ChunkForm

```

```

ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Save

End Sub
' Opens the excel from word by pressing alt+o (added shortcut). This way the
connection between excel and word is established.
Sub OpenChunkExcel()

    Dim Index As String
    Dim scanWoorden As Boolean

    ' MOD-1 Update directory folder path to current directory
    Index = ThisDocument.Path & "\Chunks_Zoeklijst.xlsm"
    Set ObjExcel = CreateObject("Excel.Application")
    ObjExcel.Visible = True
    ObjExcel.workbooks.Open(Index)

    scanWoorden = MsgBox("If you want to search for previously made chunks, choose
Yes, if you only want to add new ones, choose No.", vbYesNo + vbQuestion, "Empty
Sheet")

    If scanWoorden = vbYes Then
        ChunkScanner()
    Else
        End If

End Sub

' Closes the excel by pressing alt+c (added shortcut).
Sub CloseChunkExcel()

    ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Save
    ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Close

End Sub

' Scans for known chunks in the word file and makes them yellow by pressing alt+s
(added shortcut).
Sub ChunkScanner()

    Dim Scan_i As Integer
    ' MOD-3 Change variable name Chunk_laatste_rij => ChunkLastRow
    Dim ChunkLastRow As Integer
    Dim sResponse As String
    Dim Scan_chunk As String
    Dim ChunkSort As String
    Dim ChunkForm As Boolean
    ' MOD-5 Verify that the value is not processed twice
    Dim Chunks As Collection
    Set Chunks = New Collection
    Dim iCount As Long
    Dim Laatste_rij As Long
    Dim myrange As Range

    ChunkLastRow = ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("teller").Range("a1").Value - 1
    Laatste_rij = ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("teller").Range("a1").Value

    ' MOD-2 Translation
    MsgBox("Chunk last row = " & ChunkLastRow)

    Scan_i = 2
    Application.ScreenUpdating = False

```

```

Do Until Scan_i > ChunkLastRow

    iCount = 0
    Scan_chunk = ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("Blad1").Cells(Scan_i, 1).Value
    'MOD-4 Retrieve values type and form
    ChunkSort = ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("Blad1").Cells(Scan_i, 4).Value
    ChunkForm = ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("Blad1").Cells(Scan_i, 5).Value

    Set myrange = ActiveDocument.Content
    myrange.Find.Execute FindText:=Scan_chunk, Forward:=True, MatchWholeWord:=True
    If (myrange.Find.Found = True And Contains(Chunks, Scan_chunk) = False) Then
        myrange.Select

        With Selection

            sResponse = Selection.Text

            .HomeKey Unit:=wdStory
            With .Find
                .ClearFormatting
                .MatchWholeWord = True
                .MatchPhrase = True
                .MatchCase = False
                .IgnorePunct = True
                .Text = sResponse

                Do While .Execute
                    iCount = iCount + 1
                    Selection.Font.ColorIndex = wdDarkYellow
                    Selection.Font.Italic = True
                    Selection.MoveRight
                Loop
            End With
        End With

        ' MOD-5 Mark chunk as processed
        Chunks.Add(Scan_chunk)

        If iCount > 0 Then
            ' MOD-4 Add registered chunks found in excel
            ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("Blad1").Range("A" &
            Laatste_rij).Value = Scan_chunk
            ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("Blad1").Range("B" &
            Laatste_rij).Value = iCount
            ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("Blad1").Range("C" &
            Laatste_rij).Value = ActiveDocument.Name
            ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("Blad1").Range("D" &
            Laatste_rij).Value = ChunkSort
            ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("Blad1").Range("E" &
            Laatste_rij).Value = ChunkForm
            Laatste_rij = Laatste_rij + 1
        End If
    End If

    Scan_i = Scan_i + 1

Loop

```

```

ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Save

MsgBox("The data has been scanned, marked and added to the excel file.")
Application.ScreenUpdating = True
ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Save

End Sub

' MOD-6 Verify table contains value
Public Function Contains(col As Collection, key As Variant) As Boolean
    Dim obj As Variant
    Dim j As Integer

    On Error GoTo err
    Contains = False
    For j = 1 To col.Count
        If col(j) = key Then
            Contains = True
            Exit For
        End If
    Next
    Exit Function
err:

    Contains = False
End Function

' Counts the words in the text that is selected and adds that number to excel (alt+t,
added shortcut).
Sub CountSelectedWords()

    Dim SelectedWordCount As Integer
    Dim Laatste_rij_WC As Integer

    Laatste_rij_WC = ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("teller").Range("A3").Value
    MsgBox(Laatste_rij_WC)

    SelectedWordCount = Selection.Range.ComputeStatistics(wdStatisticWords)
    MsgBox("The selected text contains: " & SelectedWordCount & " words")

    ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("WordCount").Range("A" & Laatste_rij_WC).Value =
ActiveDocument.Name
    ObjExcel.workbooks(1).Worksheets("WordCount").Range("B" & Laatste_rij_WC).Value =
SelectedWordCount

End Sub

```



## APPENDIX E

---

### EXCEL CODE TO ENABLE COMMUNICATION WITH WORD MACROS. ADAPTED FROM VAN DER PLOEG (2017)

---

```
Private Sub Worksheet_Change(ByVal Target As Range)

    LastCell = Sheets("Blad1").Cells(1, 1).End(xlDown).Row
    'MsgBox ("Last cell: " & LastCell)
    Sheets("teller").Cells(1, 1).Value = LastCell + 1

End Sub

Private Sub Worksheet_Change(ByVal Target As Range)

    LastCell = Sheets("ChunkSoorten").Cells(1, 1).End(xlDown).Row
    'MsgBox ("Last cell: " & LastCell)
    Sheets("teller").Cells(2, 1).Value = LastCell

End Sub

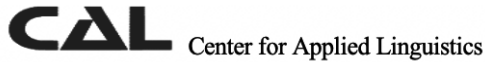
Private Sub Worksheet_Change(ByVal Target As Range)

    LastCell_WordCount = Sheets("WordCount").Cells(1, 1).End(xlDown).Row
    'MsgBox ("Last cell: " & LastCell)
    Sheets("teller").Cells(3, 1).Value = LastCell_WordCount + 1

End Sub
```

# APPENDIX F

## SOPA RATING SCALE



### CAL ORAL PROFICIENCY EXAM AND STUDENT ORAL PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

English Version © 2009 CAL

JR. NOVICE-LOW 1	JR. NOVICE-MID 2	JR. NOVICE-HIGH 3	JR. INTERMEDIATE-LOW 4	JR. INTERMEDIATE-MID 5
<b>Oral Fluency</b>				
-Produces only isolated words (i.e. single-word responses) and/or greetings and polite expressions such as <i>good morning</i> and <i>thank you</i> .	-In addition to isolated words, uses phrases of two or more words, and/or memorized phrases or sentences (e.g., <i>My name is, I don't know</i> ) in predictable topic areas. -May attempt to create sentences but is not successful. - Long pauses are common.	-Uses memorized expressions with reasonable ease. -Shows emerging signs of creating with the language to communicate ideas. -Creates some sentences successfully but cannot sustain sentence-level speech.	-Goes beyond memorized expressions to maintain simple conversations at the sentence level by creating with the language, although in a restrictive and reactive manner. -Handles a limited number of everyday social and academic interactions.	-Maintains simple sentence-level conversations. May initiate talk spontaneously without relying on questions or prompts. -Gives simple descriptions successfully. -May attempt longer, more complex sentences. Few, if any, connectors are used.
<b>Grammar (Speaking)</b>				
-May use greetings and polite expressions accurately. -Lacks an awareness of grammar and syntax.	-Memorized expressions with verbs and other short phrases may be accurate, but inaccuracies are common. -Does not successfully create at sentence level with conjugated verbs.	-Creates some sentences with conjugated verbs, but in other attempts to create sentences, verbs may be lacking or unconjugated. -Other grammatical inaccuracies are present.	-Uses a variety of common verbs in present tense (conjugations may be inaccurate) in sentences. - Other verb tenses/forms may appear in memorized language. The listener may be confused by this speech due to the many grammatical inaccuracies.	-Uses an increasing number and variety of verbs. Verbs are mostly in the present tense although awareness of other tenses (i.e., future or past) may be evident. -Many grammatical inaccuracies may be present.
<b>Vocabulary (Speaking)</b>				
-Uses single words in very specific topic areas in predictable contexts. -May use greetings and polite expressions.	-Uses single words, short phrases, greetings, polite expressions and on a limited number of topics. -Frequent searches for words are common. May use native language or gestures when attempting to create with language.	-Uses vocabulary centering on basic objects, places, and common kinship terms, adequate for minimally elaborating utterances in predictable topic areas. -Use of native language and gestures is common to expand topics.	-Has basic vocabulary for making statements and asking questions to satisfy basic social and academic needs, but not for explaining or elaborating on them. -Use of some native language is common when vocabulary is lacking.	-Has basic vocabulary, permitting discussions of a personal nature and limited academic topics. Serious gaps exist for discussing topics of general interest. -If precise word is lacking may use circumlocution ineffectively. - May resort to native language.
<b>Listening Comprehension</b>				
-Recognizes single, isolated words, greetings and polite expressions.	-Understands predictable questions, statements, and commands in familiar topic areas (with strong contextual support), though at slower than normal rate of speech and/or with repetitions.	-Understands simple questions, statements, and commands in familiar topic areas, and some new sentences with strong contextual support. - May require repetition, slower speech, or rephrasing.	-Understands familiar and new sentence-level questions and commands in a limited number of content areas with strong contextual support for unfamiliar topics -Follows conversation at a fairly normal rate.	-Understands sentence-level speech in new contexts at a normal rate of speech although slow-downs may be necessary for unfamiliar topics. -Carries out commands without prompting.

## RATING SCALE (COPA/SOPA-RS)

JR. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH 6	JR. ADVANCED-LOW 7	JR. ADVANCED-MID 8	JR. ADVANCED-HIGH 9
<p>-Initiates and sustains conversations by using language creatively.</p> <p>-Shows emerging evidence of paragraph-like speech with some connected sentences (e.g. then, so, that, etc.) in descriptions and simple narratives, but has no actual paragraphs with a main idea, organization, and connection.</p>	<p>-Reports facts easily. Can discuss topics of personal interest and some academic topics at the paragraph level to satisfy school and everyday requirements.</p> <p>-Narrates and describes at the paragraph level also, though haltingly at times.</p> <p>-False starts are common.</p>	<p>-Handles with ease and confidence concrete topics of personal and general interest and a number of academic topics.</p> <p>-Narrates and describes smoothly in paragraphs having a main idea, organization, and a variety of sentence connectors.</p> <p>(<i>E.g. first, next, finally, then, when, that, although, but, therefore, so, etc.</i>)</p>	<p>-Handles most social and academic requirements confidently, but may hesitate when responding to complex, formal tasks (Superior level).</p> <p>-Organizes and extends discourse (multiple paragraphs) in an emerging ability to hypothesize on abstract topics (<i>if-then</i>) and support opinions.</p>
<p>-Uses a large variety of verbs well in present tense.</p> <p>- Uses many verbs in the past tenses but lacks control of the past. May use future and other verb forms.</p> <p>-Grammatical inaccuracies may still be present.</p> <p>- Awareness of inaccuracies may be evident.</p>	<p>-Uses present, past, and future tenses.</p> <p>-May effectively self-correct when aware of grammatical inaccuracies.</p> <p>-Structures of native language may be evident (e.g., literal translation).</p>	<p>-Has good control of present, past, and future tenses.</p> <p>-Some inaccuracies may remain, but speech is readily understood by native speakers of the language.</p> <p>*In some cases, may use non-standard varieties of grammar.</p>	<p>-Uses all verb tenses accurately and sometimes uses complex grammatical structures (<i>e.g. if... occurred, then... might also happen</i>)</p> <p>-Some patterns of error may persist, but they do not interfere with communication.</p>
<p>-Has a broad enough vocabulary for discussing simple social and academic topics in generalities but lacks detail.</p> <p>-Sometimes achieves successful circumlocution when precise word is lacking. May use native language occasionally.</p>	<p>-Vocabulary is primarily generic but is adequate for discussing concrete or factual topics of a personal nature, topics of general interest, and academic subjects.</p> <p>-May use circumlocution successfully when specific terms are lacking.</p>	<p>-Has adequate vocabulary for including detail when talking about concrete or factual topics of a personal nature, topics of general interest, and academic subjects.</p> <p>-Uses circumlocution effectively.</p> <p>- Rarely uses native language.</p>	<p>-Uses precise vocabulary for discussing a wide variety of topics related to everyday social and academic situations.</p> <p>-Lack of vocabulary rarely interrupts the flow of speech.</p>
<p>-Understands longer stretches of connected speech on a number of topics at a normal rate of speech.</p> <p>-Seldom has problems comprehending everyday topics. (Can request clarification verbally)</p>	<p>Understands main ideas and many details in connected speech on some academic topics and on topics of personal interest</p>	<p>-Understands main ideas and most details in connected speech on a variety of topics but may be unable to follow complicated speech.</p> <p>-May have difficulty with highly idiomatic speech.</p>	<p>-Understands complex academic discourse and highly idiomatic speech in conversation.</p> <p>-Confusion may occur due to socio-cultural nuances or unfamiliar topics.</p>

# APPENDIX G

## SOPA TEST PROTOCOL

Introduction: Welcome (Dutch)	2'
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Explain the protocol

Any questions?

<b>&gt;&gt; START TEST – START VIDEO &lt;&lt;</b>
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PART 1: Interview student A and B by interviewer (personal questions)	4'
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PART 2A: Presentation of topic by student A (max. 1')	7'
PART 3A: Informative questions to student A	
PART 4A: Discussion with student A	
(Student B can also ask questions and join the discussion)	

PART 2B: Presentation of topic by student B (max. 1')	7'
PART 3B: Informative questions to student B	
PART 4B: Discussion with student B	
(Student A can also ask questions and join the discussion)	

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
FL	Foreign Language
FFL	French as a Foreign Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
AIM	Accelerative Integrated Methodology
AIMe	AIM extended
SB	Structure Based
DUB	Dynamic Usage Based
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
FFI	Form Focused Instruction
TPRS	Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling
FLT	Foreign Language Teaching
PDL	Pared Down Language
FUMM	Form Use Meaning Mapping
CAL	Center for Applied Linguistics
SOPA	Student Oral Proficiency Assessment
ACTFL	American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages
FoF	Focus on Form
FOFs	Focus on Forms
FOM	Focus on Meaning
CAF	Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency
CAFIC	Complexity, Accuracy, Fluency, Idiomaticity and Coherence
DP	Direkt Profil
SVA	Subject Verb Agreement
DNA	Determiner Noun Agreement
ASL	Average Sentence Length

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## SAMENVATTING

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### **Van “leren om te gebruiken” naar “gebruiken om te leren”?**

*Langetermijneffecten van programma's voor Frans waarbij taalstructuur centraal staat versus programma's waarbij taalgebruik centraal staat.*

In 2018 signaleerden docenten Frans verschillende problemen die zij in Nederland in hun lespraktijk ervaren: een aanzienlijke vermindering van de lestijd in de afgelopen twee decennia, de toegenomen concurrentie van andere vreemde talen en andere vakken zoals exacte vakken en economie; de sterke afname van programma's in het hoger onderwijs die Frans vereisen en het toegenomen belang van Engels, Wiskunde en Nederlands in het curriculum van het voortgezet onderwijs als gevolg van hun nieuw verworven status van kernvakken in het curriculum (zie Voogel, 2018).

Hoewel de invloed van deze factoren niet kan worden ontkend, lijkt er meer aan de hand dan alleen deze externe factoren. Ondanks de oorspronkelijke bedoelingen is de praktijk van communicatief taalonderwijs overal ter wereld nog steeds gebaseerd op het aanleren van taalstructuur. Dit is zeker het geval in Nederland, waar docenten sterk afhankelijk lijken te zijn van (op taalstructuur gebaseerde) leerboeken.

Twee decennia van onderzoek naar tweedetaalverwerving hebben echter aangetoond dat een aanpak waarbij het taalgebruik centraal staat ('de taal gebruiken om deze te leren') wel eens effectiever zou kunnen zijn dan een aanpak waarbij de taalstructuur centraal staat ('de taal leren om deze te gebruiken').

Dit proefschrift bestudeerde de effectiviteit van twee onderwijsprogramma's voor het aanleren van Frans als een vreemde taal: een programma dat gebaseerd is op leergangen die in Nederland veel gebruikt worden waarbij de structuur van de taal centraal staat (het SB programma) en een programma dat gebaseerd is op een 'Dynamic Usage-Based'-visie op het leren van een vreemde taal waarbij het gebruik van de taal centraal staat (het DUB programma). Beide programma's hadden een lange looptijd (6 jaar) en alle vaardigheden werden getest om de effectiviteit van beide programma's te vergelijken. Om de ecologische validiteit te vergroten werd in deze studie gebruik gemaakt van toetsen die deel uitmaakten van het bestaande curriculum. Voor lezen en luisteren werden de resultaten op twee eindtoetsen (het centraal schriftelijk eindexamen en de CITO luistertoets), beide ontwikkeld en gevalideerd door het CITO, gebruikt om beide programma's te vergelijken. De productieve vaardigheden (spreken en schrijven) werden getoetst met behulp van vrije-responstoetsen die zijn ontwikkeld en gevalideerd om de productieve vaardigheden objectief te toetsen.

De eerste studie heeft overtuigend aangetoond dat de leesvaardigheid zich in beide programma's even goed ontwikkelt. In het SB-programma is dit duidelijk te danken aan het feit dat de ontwikkeling van leesvaardigheid expliciet wordt nagestreefd:

studenten moeten veel lezen en krijgen veel training in het gebruik van begrips- en examenstrategieën. Studenten in het DUB-programma, die geen expliciete training in leesvaardigheid hebben gehad, presteren echter even goed. Blijkbaar ontwikkelen leesvaardigheden zich impliciet wanneer leerlingen voldoende aan de taal worden blootgesteld, wat in het DUB-programma het geval is. De overvloedige blootstelling aan (mondeling) Frans kan ook verantwoordelijk worden gehouden voor het hogere niveau van de luistervaardigheid die zich beter ontwikkelt in een DUB-programma dan in het SB-programma, dat zich vooral richt op schriftelijke vaardigheden en grammatica.

De tweede studie heeft aangetoond dat de schrijfvaardigheid (zich in beide programma's even goed ontwikkelt). Zowel de holistische beoordeling door ervaren leraren als de beoordeling op analytische tekstmaten lieten geen significante verschillen tussen de groepen zien. Hoewel de verschillen niet significant waren, scoorden DUB-studenten hoger op maten van complexiteit en vloeiendheid. Dit resultaat leidde tot de derde studie waarin het gebruik van chunks in dezelfde teksten werd onderzocht. DUB-leerlingen waren effectiever in het gebruik van langere, lexicale chunks, terwijl ze even goed presteerden als SB-leerlingen met betrekking tot kortere, grammaticale chunks. Dit resultaat suggereert dat een DUB-programma effectiever is met betrekking tot de verwerving van meer authentieke taal.

De vierde studie tenslotte onderzocht de ontwikkeling van mondelinge taalvaardigheid. De scores van DUB-leerlingen waren significant hoger dan die van SB-leerlingen, wat te verwachten was omdat het DUB-programma prioriteit geeft aan de ontwikkeling van deze specifieke vaardigheid.

De resultaten van deze vier studies laten duidelijk zien dat beide programma's even effectief zijn in het ontwikkelen van schriftelijke vaardigheden (lezen en schrijven), maar dat een DUB-programma effectiever is dan een SB-programma in het ontwikkelen van mondelinge vaardigheden (spreken en luisteren). Het niveau van de schriftelijke vaardigheden (lezen en schrijven) blijft hoog genoeg, terwijl het niveau van de mondelinge vaardigheden duidelijk profiteert van frequente blootstelling aan en actief gebruik van de doeltaal (belangrijke uitgangspunten van de DUB-aanpak), wat mogelijk wordt gemaakt door een aanzienlijke vermindering van de tijd die in dit DUB-programma aan de schriftelijke vaardigheden wordt besteed.

Waar de gangbare praktijk van communicatief vreemde taalonderwijs heeft aangetoond dat het moeilijk is voor mondelinge vaardigheden om zich voldoende te ontwikkelen in een programma met een overheersende focus op schriftelijke vaardigheden, heeft deze studie aangetoond dat het mogelijk is voor schriftelijke vaardigheden om zich voldoende te ontwikkelen in een programma met een overheersende focus op mondelinge vaardigheden.



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Wim Gombert is currently a lecturer of L2 Dutch and French proficiency and linguistics at the University of Groningen (Department of European Languages and Cultures). His main research interests focus on the acquisition of French as a foreign language taking a Dynamic Usage-Based perspective.

His interest in effective second language acquisition originated when he taught French and English at a secondary school and he realized that the coursebooks he used in his teaching practice were not effective in developing speaking skills as they focused mainly on an explicit mastery of grammar and reading and writing skills. A search for an approach that was more effective in developing speaking skills led him to the AIM method ([www.aimlanguagelearning.com](http://www.aimlanguagelearning.com)) which was developed in Canada for core French classes to do just that. He introduced this method in the lower classes of a secondary school and developed an extended version of this method for the upper classes. Thanks to a Dudoc-Alfa grant he was able to empirically test the efficacy of the new program.

The dissertation reports and discusses the results of a study into the effectiveness of two 6-year teaching programs for French on reading, writing, listening and speaking. The first program was structure-based taught with commonly used course-books and the second one was dynamic usage-based (with AIM and AIM extended) in which exposure and oral practice was key. The results clearly show that the programs are equally effective in developing reading and writing skills, but a dynamic usage-based program is more effective than a structure-based program in developing speaking and listening skills.

For several years now, Wim Gombert has been active in giving workshops to foreign language teachers interested in implementing a dynamic usage-based teaching program (which can also be implemented for other languages than French), and has created a website ([www.projectfrans.nl](http://www.projectfrans.nl)) with Audrey Rousse-Malpat to give information on the program. This website includes a short video showing classroom activities as well as interviews with teachers and students who actually use this newly developed foreign language teaching program.



ISBN 978-94-6458-702-9

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