

Multilingualism and education in the Caribbean Netherlands. A community based approach to a sustainable language education policy. The case study of St. Eustatius.

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This contribution aims to provide an example of a best practice in community based research that was carried out to develop a sustainable language education policy in the multilingual community of St. Eustatius, one of the islands of the Dutch Caribbean.

In 2012 the authors of this chapter were approached by policy makers in the European Netherlands and in the Caribbean Netherlands to come up with a workable way out of the longstanding deadlock in discussions on language and education on the northeastern Caribbean island of Sint Eustatius (popularly referred to as Statia). The final advice of the research team was presented and accepted in 2014 and implementation was started in 2015. The final report led to an educational policy recommendation that aims at maximum competence in both English and Dutch for learners in primary and secondary education. In this chapter you will not find a detailed overview of steps in the transition process or of best classroom practices for the realization of bilingual education. The focus of this chapter instead is on the community based methodology adopted by the researchers which involved all levels of educational, advisory and governmental stakeholders, as well as on the results achieved through this methodology which fostered a high degree of consensus and a broad mobilization of community support for inclusive educational practices in a small island community such as Statia.

This chapter is an adapted and abbreviated version of the final report of the research group and of an earlier publication of the work in 2014 (Mijts, Kester, Lozano-Cosme & Faraclas, 2014).

Introduction

The language situation in the Dutch Caribbean is complex and often considered problematic. The majority of the inhabitants speak a local language as their mother tongue: Papiamentu in case of the Leeward islands (Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao) and a local variety of Caribbean English in case of the Windward islands (Saba, St. Eustatius, St. Martin). Yet, up until the beginning of this century the only officially recognized language was Dutch, dominating the administrative and educational systems.

A teacher: "When we teach in Dutch at the secondary school, we are teaching to the walls." '9 out of every 10 students who go on to Holland for studies each year fail and have to come back and their families have to reimburse their scholarships.'

Debates regarding language rights and language of instruction at the primary and secondary levels have been raging for decades in the Caribbean in general, and in the Dutch Caribbean in particular. Most of the students in Sint Eustatius (and in most of the rest of the Dutch Caribbean) find themselves in a situation at school where Dutch is used as the language of instruction, even though the overwhelming majority of them almost never encounter written or spoken Dutch outside of the

classroom. The use of Dutch as a language of instruction has effectively limited the numbers of Dutch Caribbean students who manage to succeed at school to the small minority whose parents are willing and able to speak Dutch at home, whose families are willing and able to pay for special tutoring in Dutch after school; and/or who have very exceptional levels of capacity and motivation for learning. The rest of the students are left behind.

In order to help find solutions to this problem, our research group was approached toward the end of 2012 by the educational authorities in both Sint Eustatius and the European Netherlands to study the question. We accepted the challenge, well aware of the fact that, despite our best intentions, when linguists and specialists in language education have gotten involved in such controversies in the past, our input has more often than not proved to be very polarizing and, in the final analysis, counterproductive. In order to avoid making a bad situation worse, we adopted a community based approach that would actively involve all of the stakeholders in the education system on the island in the process of identifying, analyzing, and finding

solutions to the problem at hand. We also decided to complement this approach with a multi-pronged set of research strategies including: 1) a language attitude and use survey of a representative sample of all of the stakeholders; 2) a narrative proficiency test to gauge students' levels of productive competence in Dutch and English; 3) in depth interviews with members of all stakeholder groups; 4) numerous classroom observations at all levels in all of the schools on the island; and 5) a review of the scientific literature about societies who face similar challenges regarding language of instruction as those found on Sint Eustatius.

In this chapter, we will present the results of this year-long study, which were finalized, accepted, and presented to the stakeholders in January of 2014. First, we will discuss the socio-historical and educational context in which the study took place. Next, we will review a selection of the statistical results of the survey on language attitudes and use. This will be followed by a report on the findings from the narrative proficiency tests. Finally, we will analyze the data gathered from the interviews and class observations. It appears that the community based multi-strategy approach adopted in this study has made it possible to recast the debate around language in education in more scientifically grounded and less polemical terms, thereby facilitating a process of community mobilization to better meet the educational needs of Statian students.

A parent: "My son is terrified of going to the secondary school. He is shutting down. He is begging to get out of Statia. His biggest fear is going to secondary school and not being able to express himself in Dutch."

Context

As is the case for all of the territories colonized by the Netherlands in the Caribbean, Dutch has never been a first language for the great majority of the inhabitants of Sint Eustatius. There are many circumstances that contributed to this state of affairs, but one of the main factors was the reluctance of the Dutch to share their language, culture and religion with their non-Dutch descended colonial subjects during their first two centuries of imperial rule. This resulted in the establishment, first by Sephardic traders and plantation owners and then by Latin American Catholic missionaries, of Papiamentu (a Creole language with a lexicon based on Portuguese and Spanish) as the main language spoken in Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao (the ABC Islands or Dutch Leeward Islands), and the establishment

of Creole languages with English-based lexicons by traders and missionaries from the British Isles as the main languages spoken in Sint Maarten, Saba and Sint Eustatius (the SSS Islands or the Dutch Windward Islands).

By the time the Netherlands changed its colonial policies to promote the spread of Dutch language and culture among all of its colonial subjects in the Caribbean at the end of the 18th century, it was too late. Although Dutch has been the official language of instruction and initial literacy in Statia and the rest of the former Netherlands Antilles (which included both the ABC and SSS Islands) for more than a century, the children of these islands have very limited exposure to Dutch outside of the classroom, and most finish their formal education with very limited academic proficiency in Dutch or any other language. Predictably, the educational consequences of these language policies have been disastrous. "

An educational support professional: "Teachers wonder what happens to the students who begin *spelend onderwijs* [playful foreign language learning of Dutch] in Dutch in the lower grades with such enthusiasm, but end up hating Dutch by the time they reach secondary school. Students have very negative attitudes toward Dutch, including those who speak Dutch at home, perhaps because of peer pressure to speak English. Many students just give up when faced with lessons in Dutch. Some refuse to speak Dutch."

The role of Dutch in the formal education system in Statia has been a topic of controversy on the island for decades. At several different junctures, proposals have been made to give English, which is much more widely spoken on Statia than is Dutch, a more prominent place in the classroom. In 2007, a new policy was in fact adopted by the island government to make English the language of instruction in primary school and to maintain Dutch as the language of instruction in secondary school. While the Dutch-only policy was strictly implemented at the secondary level, the introduction of English at the primary level was implemented very unevenly, and the transition from English to Dutch in the final years of primary school and the initial years of secondary school was even less consistently dealt with.

In the midst of this less than optimal situation, it comes as no surprise that there was both a significant increase in the popular demand for change as well a significant escalation in the

intensity of the polemics concerning the language of instruction. It is within this context that our research team was called upon to conduct the study that is the focus of this article.

■ Survey

Methodology

In order to collect quantitative information regarding language use and attitudes toward language and education in Sint Eustatius, we designed a survey which was administered to all of the stakeholders in the educational system on the island. The survey consisted of four parts: 1) a set of general questions designed to investigate attitudes toward language and education; 2) a more specific set of questions concerning opinions about the importance of the Dutch language in different domains; 3) another set of specific questions about the use of various languages in specific settings; and 4) a final series of questions on the demographic characteristics of each respondent. 432 questionnaires were collected from a representative sample of primary and secondary school students, parents, teachers, other education professionals, and the general public.

Questionnaires were distributed among students by the team members in the classrooms. The questionnaires for parents were distributed and collected by the schools. Questionnaires for the general public were available at the office of the Ministry of Education, and teachers filled out their questionnaires during focus group meetings. 432 Questionnaires were filled out and analyzed, 195 from students, 164 from parents, 40 from teachers and 33 from the general public.

Birthplace and identity

The majority of the respondents (>50%) in most of the individual categories were born outside Sint Eustatius. Nonetheless, they strongly identify with the island (>70%) and with other Statians (69%) and they are happy to be Statians (75%). The majority of the teachers (>70%) was born outside Sint Eustatius and 45% were born in Holland. Only 15% (N=6) of the teachers were born on the island.

Language use

In the set of questions concerning language use, the participants were able to mark their use of several languages (Statian English, Standard/school English, Dutch, Spanish, other languages) for different conversational partners (mother, father,

An administrator: “The students’ identity is being lost. They need to learn about their own language and culture. How can you be proud of yourself when you don’t know who you are? In Statia, we are always learning about someone else’s language, culture, history. People don’t know who they are. If our youth cannot find themselves or see themselves in their schooling, they will turn to drugs and other escapes from their pain.”

siblings, friends, teachers, classmates, strangers). The analysis of the responses indicates that while Sint Eustatius is a multilingual community, Stavian English (a continuum of varieties) is the most widely used language across all domains by participants from all categories. The use of Dutch is only frequent among students in contact with their teachers and among the teachers themselves (as they were mainly born in Holland). In all other categories the percentages of the use of Dutch are very low, indicating that the majority of the population is only exposed to Dutch in the classroom. Also standard/school English is used by parents and teachers in more formal situations, such as at work or when talking to strangers.

Attitudes toward education in Dutch

The results indicate a strong consensus with respect to the importance of Dutch for the population of Sint Eustatius. All categories agree that Dutch is only important for instrumental purposes, related to education and the job market, as indicated by the high percentages for the following activities: (i) passing tests, (ii) earning money & getting a job, (iii) reading & writing and (iv) raising children. The percentages for the importance of Dutch are slightly higher in the categories of students in primary education and their parents and slightly lower in the categories students in secondary education and their parents, as well as teachers. Dutch is less or not important for integrative functions related to social activities within the community, such as making friends, being liked and talking on the phone.

Most of the participants do not feel strong ties with the Netherlands, but in general they have positive attitudes toward the Dutch language Dutch. The majority of the participants in all categories indicate that they would like to know Dutch better, they express high scores of disagreement with the statement that learning Dutch is a waste of time and they like hearing Dutch spoken. Attitudes toward education in Dutch are positive as well, as the vast majority of participants from all categories think that

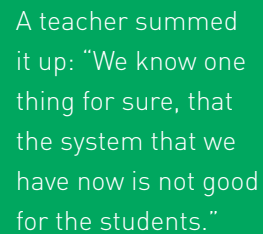
schools in Sint Eustatius should teach the students to read and write in Dutch. The results suggest, however, that the students are not optimally prepared to achieve this goal. As indicated by the results of the survey many students do not like not like Dutch textbooks and parents have trouble helping children with homework in Dutch.

Primary versus secondary education

Statistical analysis indicates that students (as well as their parents) in secondary education, where the use of Dutch as the language of instruction is most systematically and rigorously enforced, express less positive attitudes toward the Dutch language and education in Dutch than do other groups. This contrast suggests that the obligatory use of Dutch at school is having a negative impact on attitudes toward Dutch.

English and bilingualism

Attitudes toward standard/school English are positive, as are attitudes toward education in English, especially among students in secondary education and their parents, who also favor future studies in an English rather than in a Dutch speaking country. In fact most of the participants are advocates of an education system that leads to a high academic competence in both English and Dutch and this view is further supported by their overall positive attitudes toward bilingualism.



A teacher summed it up: "We know one thing for sure, that the system that we have now is not good for the students."

Consensus

In general, the results of the survey indicate that what has been a very polarizing debate over language of instruction on the island over the past decades actually conceals remarkable levels of agreement by all stakeholder groups about what is happening linguistically on the ground at present and about how the education system should be equipping the students linguistically for the future. The statistics on language use clearly indicate that for the great majority of the population, Statian English is a first language and Dutch is a foreign language. The statistics on attitudes reveal that everyone wants students to achieve academic competence in both English and Dutch at school. In other words, nearly everyone agrees on where they are now (A) and where they want to go (B), with the only serious differences of opinion centering on how to get from A to B.

■ Narrative Proficiency test

In order to obtain a general idea of the productive competence of students in Sint Eustatius in both English and Dutch during and after the transition that is made from English as the main language of instruction in the first four years of primary school to Dutch as the main language of instruction in secondary school, a Narrative Proficiency test was designed by our research team, using the Tanzanian language proficiency research of Birgit Brock-Utne and Zubeida Desai as an example (Brock-Utne & Desai, 2010).

The test was administered to 177 students aged 10 to 15 in the final two years of primary and the first years of secondary education. In the test, students were asked to write a story based on a series of 6 images that represented a chronological storyline that could be narrated using only basic vocabulary items. One randomly selected half of each participating class was asked to write the story in English first, then in Dutch, while the other half of the class was asked to write the story in Dutch first, then in English. The images and storyline were designed so that a story could be told based on them using only high frequency words (including the nouns 'woman', 'thief', 'purse' and the verbs 'walk', 'steal', 'run') and minimally complex sentence structures. The research team is of the opinion that the available data on language tests are too strongly tied to the Dutch educational system and that these data do not provide sufficient insight into the adequateness of language proficiency of the students, given the consensus that Dutch is a foreign language in Statia, and not a second language or mother tongue for most of the population. (Figure 1)

The main goals of the narrative proficiency test were to find out (1) what happens to the language proficiency in English during the transitional phase and (2) to what extent does the proficiency in Dutch after the transitional phase match the proficiency in English. In this way we can describe the actual competencies of Statian pupils in writing and in expressing themselves using the consecutive languages of instruction of the Statian educational system *before, during and after* the transitional period. For the description of the actual competencies, we look at the story: correctness of the storyline, link between the storyline and the images, degree of detail in storyline; the sentence: sentence/phrase length, sentence complexity (simple sentences, coordination or subordination, use of tenses, use of modal auxiliaries, coherence of VP/NP, SVO-order), signs of direct speech; and the

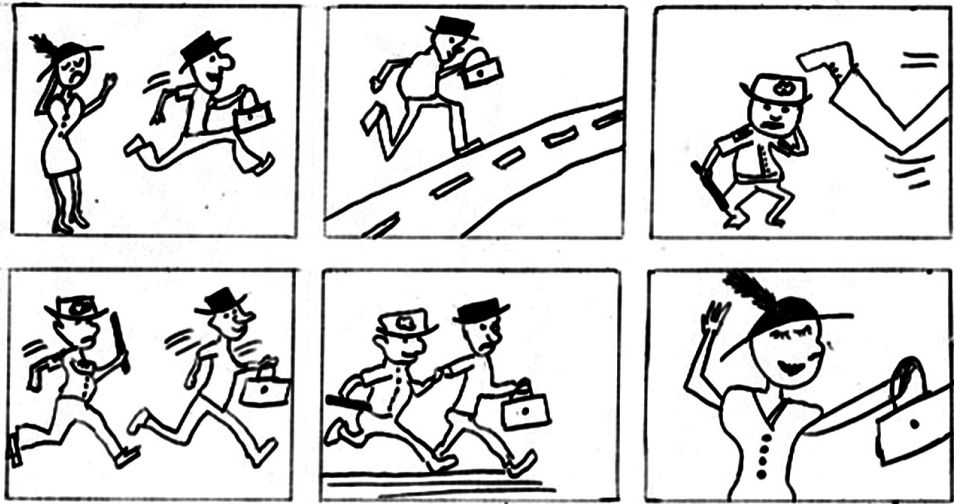


Figure 1

vocabulary: adequacy of vocabulary used, diversity of vocabulary used (possible use of synonyms), use of pronouns; and spelling (including punctuation). Apart from that, the research team observed the students' behaviour during the administration of the tests. The test was distributed among all pupils in all *groep 7* and *groep 8* classes of all 4 primary schools; all students in all of the three *Schakelklas* sections (the transitional year between English primary education and Dutch secondary education) at the secondary school; and first, second and third year students at the secondary school. In total, 177 tests were administered.

A very successful description of the storyboard is the following text by a 10 year old girl from group 7 in primary education who says that at home she speaks English, Dutch, Spanish and French:

“One day a woman was walking down the road with her purse. Then out of the blue a thief came and stole the woman’s purse. He ran down the road away from the woman. But when he was running he ran past a policeman on duty. The police man saw him and started to chase the thief. Finally the policeman caught the robber he arrested him and made him give back the purse to the woman. She thanked the policeman and slapped the thief and everyone but the thief live happy ever after. The thief spent 15 years in prison.”

It is clear that this girl has developed a very strong language proficiency in English that allows her to create a lively and pleasant story with detail and imagination, including punctuation, adequate vocabulary, grammatical coherence and correct spelling. Unfortunately, such high quality stories were very rare among those written by primary and even secondary school students. The stories written by primary school students in *groep 7* and *groep 8* are generally of poor quality and do not meet the standards set out in the core objectives for primary education. Even compared to many of the stories written by 15 and 16 year old secondary school students, this young girl's performance on the narrative test is exceptionally high. In general, teachers in both primary and secondary schools are acutely aware that there is a gap between the quality of performance of students when they complete their primary education and the quality of performance expected of them when they enter secondary school.

One of the observations made during the analysis of the students' responses is that students who wrote in Dutch tended to switch to English vocabulary, as the work from a 13 year old boy (English and Spanish languages at home) in the first year of secondary education shows.

Dutch

Een vrouw was aan te lopen en een dief pakt haar tas en rent weg. En police officer heeft hem gen gezien en rent achter hem until he catch and gave her the lady her bag back.

English

A Lady was walking and a thief and stole her bag while he was running a police officer saw him and run after him until he catch the thief and return the bag to the lady.

The response of a 14 year old boy in secondary education shows even more issues, mixing Dutch and English, omitting punctuation and showing a clear lack of knowledge of spelling conventions in both Dutch and English.

English

the woman bag got stolen en the teaf went runing en de cop saw him runing en ?? ran after him en he kot him en den give de women back her bag.

Dutch

de vrouwvrouw heeft stoken en the teaf went runing en de sop saw him
runing en ran after him en he kost en ?????den give de women back her tas

The full report (Faraclas, Kester & Mijts, 2014) of this research project includes many similar or even more alarming examples of students' struggle with both languages.

A teacher: "I see so much creativity in Statian children when they arrive at school, but as the years go on, the lights begin to dim. By the time the students get to secondary school, for all but a few, the lights have gone out. Materials at present are based on the European Netherlands. There is no relevance to Statia. Students can't see themselves in the materials. Adolescents are trying to find themselves, but they can't find themselves in the materials. Even the English exam is in Dutch."

A high percentage of students show serious deficiencies in writing skills, often in both languages. The students' work contains many spelling mistakes and often there is no or limited use of punctuation. Many students struggle with vocabulary issues and grammatical issues (including word order and verb forms). Sometimes there are striking differences between the English and Dutch storyline.

While administering the tests, students at all levels demonstrated a collective negative attitude toward Dutch, and students who were expected to write their first story in Dutch postponed the task or started to act out instead of attending to it. Generally, students performed better writing in English than in Dutch, although some students managed to produce high quality stories in both languages. Stories written by students in the last two years of primary school seldom met the standards set for the core objectives of primary education, even though these students performed much better when they wrote in English than when they wrote in Dutch. After primary school, the development of written language proficiency in English appeared to come to a standstill. The written language proficiency for Dutch improved during and after the transition to Dutch as the language of instruction at the end of primary school, but in general proficiency in English remained better than in Dutch, even at the secondary level. After several years of secondary education,

written proficiency in both Dutch and English was in most instances still well below all of the core targets set for primary education in Holland.

These results demonstrate that the present system is not equipping the majority of the students with adequate levels of competence in either Dutch or English. As students' progress through the final years of primary education and the first few years of secondary education, they fall further and further behind the European standard for both languages and they develop negative attitudes toward using Dutch in school.

The negative attitude toward expressing oneself in Dutch should be of major concern to all of the stakeholders in the educational system in Sint Eustatius. Besides making it extremely difficult to remedy students' grossly insufficient skills in Dutch, it condemns the majority of students to failure in the present system, which currently insists on the use of Dutch as the language of instruction and assessment in all classes in secondary school, as well as in many classes at the primary level.

An Educational Support Professional: "Not letting the children have their home language as their language of instruction is considered by people from the United Nations as a form of child abuse."

Classroom observations and focus group interviews

With the goal of attaining a qualitative understanding of the lived experiences of the people of Sint Eustatius in relation to the language of instruction used in the schools on the island, our research team conducted 19 observations of regularly scheduled classes at all levels of primary and secondary education and 49 focus group interview meetings, including 9 meetings with groups of teachers, 12 meetings with individuals and groups involved with educational management, 22 meetings with groups involved in activities associated with the educational system (youth and family services, etc.), 5 meetings with groups of students, and 1 general meeting with parents.

A teacher: "The students are being taught in Chinese. Everything is being taught to tests that have nothing to do with the students' reality."

The classroom observations revealed that students and teachers at all levels perform better when English is taught as a first language and used as the general language of instruction and when Dutch is taught as a foreign language and not used as the general language of instruction. We observed that while students enjoy learning Dutch when it is taught in an informal and playful way as a foreign language in the early years of primary school, their enthusiasm for learning Dutch diminishes as the transition is made to Dutch as the main language of instruction at the end of primary school, and evaporates when Dutch becomes the main language of instruction in secondary school. In early primary classrooms, we witnessed uniformly high levels of class participation among all students in classes where English is used as the main language of instruction and Dutch is taught as a foreign language. But in later primary and secondary classes where Dutch is taught as a first or second language and used as the language of instruction, we almost invariably observed a 'core/periphery effect' whereby a few students, most of whom have some significant exposure to Dutch outside of school, constitute an active 'core' that actively participates and interacts with the teacher, while the majority of the students retreat into the non-participating 'periphery' of the class.

A teacher: "The negative attitudes toward Dutch increase as the students go on in secondary school." "There is a big difference between the enthusiasm for Dutch before and now. The enthusiasm has gone way down.

During a class in primary school (Primary School Class Observation 1 (Dutch lesson in Dutch)), the team observed the following: the European Netherlander teacher tried to teach the class in Dutch as much as possible, but was obliged to use English often. A Core-Periphery effect was evident: A small core group of students actively participated in Dutch and sat together close to the teacher. The others were sitting farther away from the teacher, not participating, and needing special instructions in English. Some were silent and acting shy and others were acting out and resented the teacher's efforts to discipline

them. The main part of the lesson was a dictation, with the students writing out vocabulary words that they had studied in Dutch. Most students could not interact in Dutch, but a few could do so very well. Students spoke Stavian English with each other and tried to explain things in Stavian English to each other, but the teacher would not let them.

All of the Stakeholders in the focus group meetings and interviews agreed that the goal of language education in Statian schools should be academic proficiency in both English and Dutch. There was general agreement that Dutch is neither a first nor a second language for the overwhelming majority of students on the island. Most interviewees agreed that in Sint Eustatius, the best way to get to academic proficiency in Dutch is to go via academic proficiency in English. One teacher said: “We want children to love Dutch, ... but this means that Dutch cannot be used as the language of instruction.” All of the stakeholders also agreed that the present system of Dutch-only education at the secondary level was not working, and was yielding grossly inadequate results in both Dutch and English proficiency. Finally all of those who commented during the interviews on the attitudes of students and parents toward Dutch had observed a disturbing increase in negative feelings toward the Dutch language, especially at the secondary level. All of these results were confirmed during the course of our classroom observations.

Conclusion

The present researchers and all of the stakeholders on Sint Eustatius are acutely aware of the fact that many of the general societal problems facing education on the island cannot be simply addressed by changes in educational policy and approach, and will take many years and major social changes to solve. Along with many stakeholders, we contend nevertheless that some problems, such as those caused by language policies which do not represent best pedagogical practice, can be addressed here and now, with palpable positive results. We focus on what can be done at the level of educational policy, approach, and practice to help all of the stakeholders in the education system on Sint Eustatius to achieve their stated goals, which include high quality education for all (not just for a talented few or for

A parent: “We are hopeful that the language issue will be resolved. This is the last chance that we have to really get it right. For the first time, we are hearing that the decision doesn’t have to be either English or Dutch. The debate has been so bitter and polarized. Now we realize that we can make our children competent in both English and Dutch. We have lived this. We know what’s going on. Most of the consultants who come assume that we don’t know anything. I’ve seen so many consultants and so many reports.”

the few who have access to Dutch outside of school) and high levels of competence in both English and Dutch (not in English only or in Dutch only).

The results of the Attitudes and Use Survey, the Narrative Proficiency Test, and the Interviews and Class Observations clearly show that Dutch is neither a first nor a second language for the great majority of Sint Eustatian students, yet for decades it has been used and taught in the schools as if it were either their first or second language. The Attitudes and Use Survey and the Interviews and Class Observations indicate that although it has been implemented very unevenly, the new language policy for primary education agreed upon in 2007, which has to some degree legitimized the use of English as language of instruction and of initial literacy, seems to have had some positive effects on primary school student, parent and teacher attitudes toward learning in general and on learning Dutch in particular. This is especially true where Dutch is being taught through *spelend onderwijs*, that is, as a foreign, rather than a first or second language (even though the policy itself recommends the teaching of Dutch as a 'strong second language'). These same research modules reveal more negative and disturbing attitudes among students, parents and teachers at the secondary school level, where Dutch remains the official language of instruction. Many stakeholders stated during the interviews that negative attitudes have increased since St. Eustatius became a municipality of the European Netherlands on October 10, 2010. The Literature Survey suggests that if these trends continue, the backlash against Dutch language and all things Dutch on Sint Eustatius could become as acute and intractable as the backlash against English and all things North American on neighboring Puerto Rico (Vélez 2000; Navarro-Rivera 2009; Torres Gonzalez 2002). If the present system is retained, negative attitudes will continue to grow and polarization between the Dutch school system and St. Eustatian society will become stronger, thus having a further negative impact on students' success rates, motivation and attitudes.

The research team realizes that language policy is not a magic bullet that by itself will solve all of the problems in the educational system and the wider society. However, language policy is a powerful tool that can help to solve these problems. Moreover, a change in language policy is something that we have control over and which can be implemented here and now. Based on all of the evidence and these conclusions, we advanced the following language policy option for achieving maximal informal and academic competence in both English and Dutch in the schools of Sint Eustatius:

Standard/school English as the only language of instruction and as the language of initial literacy in the pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools, with attention paid to the transition from Stavian English to Standard/school English during the first years. Dutch should be taught consistently and systematically as a foreign language at all of these levels.

Foreign language instruction in Dutch should follow a strategy of spelend onderwijs at the pre-primary level and during the first years of primary school, to ensure that all students gain a sufficient informal competence in Dutch to allow them to begin to acquire an academic competence in Dutch.

Literacy in English should begin to be taught in the first years of primary school, while literacy in Dutch should not be introduced until a solid foundation has been established in reading and writing English (probably in groep 5 of primary school).

Thereafter, academic competence in Dutch can be further consolidated on the basis of students' academic competence in English. This means that, in general, academic concepts should be taught in English first before they are introduced in Dutch.

In June 2014, the Dutch ministry of education, culture and science, made the decision to adopt the policy option that was presented by the research team and to start the transition to an educational system in Statia with English as the language of instruction and Dutch as a foreign language in September 2014. The current developments in Statia suggest that the community-based approach which we adopted as researchers has created a non-polarized, positive and receptive attitude toward innovation among professionals, teachers and policy-makers alike, as well as among pupils and their parents in the Stavian community.