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THE CONTESTED INTRODUCTION OF LINGUISTICS IN THE DUTCH EXAM

A HISTORICAL CURRICULUM STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL SUBJECTS AND ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

MARIA VAN DER AALSVOORT * & SJAAK KROON **

** Radboud University Nijmegen** Tilburg University*

Abstract

In 1991 the CVEN, a committee that was commissioned to develop a new exam program for the school subject of Dutch in upper secondary education in the Netherlands, published a report in which it proposed to the Ministry of Education to include linguistics as an experimental separate component in this exam. Mainly because the Ministry at the time had already decided to start an extensive educational reform dealing with upper secondary education as a whole, this report did not get an immediate follow up. Using the work of CVEN (1988-1991) as a case study, this contribution deals with the question who decides, at what moment, on what grounds and in what societal and educational context, about the content of school subjects and exams. In investigating this question on the basis of historical sources and oral history interviews our focus is on the relationship between the school subject Dutch and the academic discipline Dutch language and literature. In doing so we contribute to the still very limited historiography of Dutch as a school subject and at the same time provide a concrete illustration of the intricate relationships between school subjects and their related academic disciplines.

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Corresponding author: Maria van der Aalsvoort, Graduate School of Teaching, Radboud University, Erasmusplein 1, 6525 HT Nijmegen, The Netherlands, email: m.vanderaalsvoort@docentenacademie.ru.nl

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 1991 the CVEN (Committee Renewal Dutch Exams) that was assigned to design a new exam program for the school subject Dutch in upper secondary education (henceforth: exam program), published a report in which it proposed to the Ministry of Education to include, as an experiment, linguistics as a separate component in the school-organized part of the exam program (CVEN, 1991). Mainly as a consequence of the fact that the Ministry had already decided to start an extensive educational reform dealing with upper secondary education as a whole, the committee's report did not get any immediate follow up. The VOG-N (Subject Development Group Dutch), an advisory committee that was commissioned by the Ministry in 1995 to again develop an exam program for the school subject Dutch in upper secondary education took the CVEN proposal as a starting point and also recommended to include linguistics in the exam (VOG-N, 1995). The Ministry however decided not to include this recommendation in its final report in 1996. In 2004 the Ministry once again decided to reform upper secondary education and in that context also commissioned the development of sample modules for teaching linguistics as a preparation for its introduction as an optional component in the exam. As of 2007 schools are free to include linguistics in the school-organized part of the exam.

The question that emerges from the above is why in 1991 and 1996 it turned out to be impossible to introduce linguistics in the exam, irrespective of the fact that two officially established, representative committees, on the basis of research results and extensive field consultations, recommended so, and why the Ministry in 2006 decided for the development of teaching materials and the introduction of linguistics in the exam without any intervention of any advisory committee. In more general terms the above boils down to the question, who decides, at what moment, on what grounds, and in what societal and educational context, about the content of school subjects and exam programs. In our research project we try to answer this question focusing on three different periods: the work of the CVEN (1988-1991), the work of the VOG-N (1995-1996) and the decision of the Ministry of Education to commission the development of course materials for linguistics (2003-2008). In the present contribution we will limit ourselves to the CVEN period (1988-1991) and discuss the contested introduction of linguistics in the exam program of Dutch.

In order to briefly contextualize our study it is important to refer to a number of historical developments in the Netherlands in the early 1970s. It was a period of revolutionary cultural and societal change in which traditional norms and values were challenged and strong democratization and emancipation movements were emerging. Education was considered a main instrument for empowerment and

reducing inequality. The concept of a makeable society led to a growing influence of individual citizens and institutions on policy making and at the same time a clear increase of governmental bureaucracy (Knippenberg & Van der Ham, 1993). This all had consequences for the field of curriculum development, the school subject of Dutch and the academic discipline of Dutch language and literature. As a reaction on the growing complexity of education, in 1975 a national institute for curriculum development (SLO) was established that was going to play an important role in curriculum matters. In the same period the organizational level of teachers increased by the establishment of new, progressive teacher organizations and these organizations were going to play an important institutional advisory role in curriculum debates. The school subject Dutch meanwhile witnessed a change from a traditional literary-grammatical paradigm to a communicative-instrumental paradigm in which the students' language proficiency got absolute priority (Kroon, 1985; Van de Ven, 1996). This development coincided with the introduction of language skills (*taalbeheersing*) to the content of the academic discipline Dutch language and literature at universities.

The above sketched societal developments on the one hand and the developments in the school subject Dutch in The Netherlands on the other do not constitute a unique case. Two surveys of standard language teaching in a number of European countries that have been conducted within the framework of the International Mother Tongue Education Network, clearly show that the communicative turn in the early 1970s is reflected in one way or another in the language curriculum of most of the 17 participating countries (see Herrlitz et al., 1984; Delnoy, Herrlitz & Kroon, 1995).

Against this background, our primary focus in this contribution is on the relationship between the school subject Dutch and its related academic discipline Dutch language and literature. In doing so we provide an illustration of the relationship between school subjects and academic disciplines that is often ignored in curriculum research (see Mickan, 2013) or is mainly touched upon in a more general manner, whereas, concealed or not, it plays an important role in the negotiations about the contents of school subjects, as is already illustrated by previous studies like Goodson (1983) and Stengel (1997), and more recently Young (2008), Young & Muller (2010) and Deng (2013).

In the following, after a short section on methodology, we will first briefly introduce the CVEN. After that we will propose a framework for analyzing the relationship between school subjects and academic disciplines. Against this background we will then analyze the contested introduction of linguistics in the Dutch exam, paying attention to the position and activities of the CVEN as well as the reactions and debates the CVEN and its work gave rise to.

2. METHOD

This contribution reports a historical case study of curriculum change in the school subject Dutch in the period 1988-1991. Its focus is not so much on the micro level of students, teachers and schools and on how teaching and learning takes place in practice but rather on the macro level of curriculum debate and decision making regarding the national exam program for Dutch in upper secondary education. The main characteristic of historical research is its engagement with primary sources, i.e., mainly written sources that came into existence in the period under investigation and that reflect the factual historical developments as well as participants' opinions and perspectives on these developments. In addition to these written sources we also use oral history interviews as a source for describing and interpreting the curriculum change under investigation. Using interviews and triangulating these with written sources, enables us to include the participants' 'voice' and give a more complete and nuanced description than would have been possible on the basis of written sources only (Adler & Leydesdorff, 2013).

The written sources that were used include documents related to the processes of decision making as well as opinion formation, such as agendas, minutes, decisions and reports resulting from curriculum committee meetings, preliminary and final reports of advisory committees, ministerial decisions, minutes of parliamentary debates, memos, letters, e-mails, contributions to the public debate in teacher journals, conference proceedings, newspapers and other written media. All these documents were collected from public archives (mainly the archive of the Ministry of Education), personal archives of curriculum committee members and members of advisory committees, libraries and documentation centers. A main written source for the period under investigation has been the final published report of the CVEN (1991).

Oral sources include structured interviews with the chairpersons and almost all members of the curriculum committees (CVEN and VOG-N), representatives of teacher organizations who were involved in advisory committees and civil servants at the Ministry of Education who over the years were involved in curriculum matters. The interviews were conducted by the first author between 2011 and 2013. A total of 21 key persons were interviewed, ten of them face to face (between 60 and 120 minutes each) and the others by phone or by e-mail (between 15 and 30 minutes). The interview checklist contained a number of issues that emerged from studying written sources. These included historical facts, figures, participants and texts, arguments in favor of and against linguistics, power relationships and interest groups, the relationship between the school subject Dutch and the academic discipline Dutch language and literature, and opinions on language knowledge and language skills as contents of the school subject. The structured approach of the interviews was very helpful to gather actual historical data but at the same time gave the participants ample opportunity to simply tell their story. The interviews provided us with their personal narratives and knowledge and their opinions and inter-

pretations in hindsight and showed how participants make meaning of the historical events they were part of (Shopes, 2013). All interviews were transcribed and presented to the interviewees for their approval, which in all cases was granted. Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in this contribution are taken from these authorized interviews. All citations from Dutch sources are presented in our English translation; original texts in Dutch can be found in Van der Aalsvoort & Kroon (2012).

By combining written and oral sources in our study we were able to apply different forms of data triangulation. Following Rock (2001, p. 34) we engaged in “(...) checking everything, getting multiple documentation, getting multiple *kinds* of documentation, so that evidence does not rely on a single voice, so that data can become embedded in their contexts, so that data can be compared.” Applying triangulation contributes to a higher validity and diminishes the risk of false interpretations. We not only triangulated different types of written data and data from different interviews but we also triangulated data from written and oral sources among each other and as such managed to arrive at a reconstruction of the curriculum change under investigation. The descriptive reconstruction that resulted from our analysis of written and oral sources in the next stage of our research functioned as a new secondary source that was subjected to an analysis in which we applied three analytical concepts, i.e., (1) power relationships and curriculum development, (2) the relationship between the school subject and the academic discipline and (3) the relationship between language knowledge and language skills as contents of the school subject. In this contribution the focus will be on the relationship between the school subject Dutch and the academic discipline Dutch language and literature.

It has to be noted here that the first author is a member of the subject community of teachers, teacher trainers and researchers of the school subject Dutch. This no doubt facilitated getting access to the field and establishing rapport with the actors under investigation. Being a member of a subject community can on the other hand also easily lead to a certain bias that can distort the researcher’s perspective and interpretation. In the period under investigation however, the first author was employed outside the field of education and she was therefore not involved in any way in the developments under investigation.

3. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CVEN

The CVEN was established by the Ministry of Education in 1988 in response to discussions and concerns regarding the quality of the teaching of Dutch, students’ declining Dutch language proficiency, and the Education Inspectorate’s position that the exam for Dutch in upper secondary education needed to be renewed (CVEN, 1991).

The CVEN represented all domains of the school subject Dutch, i.e., language skills, reflection on language structure and use, and literature. The committee con-

sisted of three teachers, representing the teacher associations VLLT (Association of Teachers of Living Languages) and VON (Association for the Teaching of Dutch) and a teacher trainer, representing VULON (Association for University Teacher Training). Toine Braet (University of Leiden) and Ton Hendrix (National Institute for Test Development) were appointed as the committee's chairman and secretary. The CVEN was assigned to take as a starting point the outcomes of a national educational needs analysis (De Glopper & Van Schooten, 1990), to follow the Ministry's guidelines for formulating exam programs, and the attainment targets for lower secondary education. In its work the committee could ask for the opinion of experts (CVEN, 1991, pp. 183-184). According to the CVEN (1991, p. 9) its most important task was "to define the knowledge and skills in the field of Dutch language and literature in a much more specific way than was found advisable before." So far the subject-matter content to be tested in the national exams had only been described in general and succinct terms. In the early 1980s the Netherlands had neither a compulsory national curriculum nor a detailed prescriptive exam program. Also content-wise the school-organized part of the exam as well as the central exam were relatively free. Especially in upper secondary education language skills in those days were hardly considered as something to be tested separately from the intellectual and literary content that was at the heart of the exam.

The CVEN was given three years to propose a new exam program for Dutch and to establish consensus for this new program in the field of education. To reach these aims the CVEN informed the schools and other parties involved, obtained preliminary advice from university specialists in the field of Dutch language and literature, organized two teacher consultations, invited 84 heads of Dutch departments to complete a questionnaire, and asked the National Institute for Test Development, the National Institute for Curriculum Development and associations of teachers and teacher trainers to comment upon preliminary versions of its proposal. Chairman Braet consulted as many parties in the field as possible, but establishing total consensus turned out to be impossible. The subject community's involvement in the CVEN's work was very intensive as, for example, shows from an editorial in *Moer*, the journal of the teacher association VON:

"A wide range of responses shows that we are dealing with a hot item here. The developments are closely monitored. Everyone has his or her own perspective. But in the end the complete field will have to work with the new exam program. Necessarily one will have to find a compromise. For the progressives among us the proposals will not go far enough, will leave too little room for innovation. For the conservatives the proposals will go much too far. Why not leave everything as it is and enjoy the freedom that each school has at the moment? Whatever choices the committee will make, they will never be good. Hopefully the CVEN formulates its proposals in such a way that a certain margin remains for differences in emphasis." (Editor Moer, 1991, p. 2)

Establishing a new exam for Dutch necessarily leads to making changes in the curriculum that is expected to lead the students to successfully participate in this exam. As we will show below however changing the contents of a school subject is not an easy thing to do. This is partly due to the relationship that exists between

school subjects and their related academic disciplines – in this case between the school subject Dutch and the academic discipline Dutch language and literature.

4. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOL SUBJECTS AND ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

School subjects are by their nature often considered as a given. In reality however, they are the result of a continuous process of discussion and negotiation, in particular historical and social contexts and spaces. School subjects change over time but this does not happen automatically. Change is put in motion by actors. It is discussed, negotiated and contested at all kinds of levels and with all sorts of arguments by those involved – politicians, teachers, curriculum specialists, scholars, teacher trainers, to name a few groups. School subjects therefore are, as Goodson (1983, p. 3) put it “(...) not monolithic entities but shifting amalgamations of sub-groups and traditions” and “in order to understand how subjects change over time [...] we need to understand how subject groups take up and promote new ideas and opportunities.”

Among the (overt and covert) arguments that play a role in these negotiation processes, are the participants’ perspectives on the relationship between the school subject and its related academic discipline. This relationship can be considered from three different theoretical perspectives: an epistemological perspective, a historical perspective and a perspective of power relations.

In her analysis of possible relationships between school subjects and academic disciplines from an *epistemological perspective*, Stengel (1997) discusses three theoretical possibilities for defining the relationship between academic disciplines and school subjects. At the one extreme, academic disciplines and school subjects are essentially “continuous”, i.e., the school subject is simply derived from the academic discipline, organized like the discipline and with the same name as the discipline. At the other extreme, academic disciplines and school subjects are basically “discontinuous”, i.e., the school subject is totally separate from the academic discipline, motivated by the needs of individual students or by societal or economic needs, using contents from a variety of (non-academic) sources. A third possibility is that academic disciplines and school subjects are considered as “different but related” (Stengel, 1997, p. 587). Within this latter position Stengel distinguishes three perspectives: the academic discipline defines the school subject, the school subject defines the academic discipline, or the relation between the two is dialectic.

Considering the academic discipline as defining the school subject, according to Stengel, is probably the dominant ‘folk theory’ of the relation between school subject and academic discipline. In its crudest form the transmission from the academic discipline to the school subject is basically hierarchical and unidirectional since the contents of the school subject are directly transmitted from the dominant academic discipline to the school subject without any interference or influence on the

side of the latter. The school subject is considered a “watered down” version of the academic discipline. In a more sophisticated version of this position the school subject is seen as “a pedagogical and personal revision of the logical and non-personal knowledge of the formal discipline” (Stengel, 1997, p. 589). Teachers therefore “need to transform their previously learned subject-matter knowledge (the discipline) into pedagogical content knowledge (the school subject)” (Stengel, 1997, p. 589). From a theoretical perspective it is also possible to consider the school subject as defining the academic discipline. Such a view is basically child-centered and argues that students “must be left to discover the wisdom of past human history through exploration” in a curriculum that is “experience, not traditional, academic subject matter” (Stengel, 1997, p.590).

Finally, academic disciplines and school subjects can be considered as related in a dialectic way. In this view it is considered necessary to lead students to the knowledge that the expert already has, while at the same time considering the experience of the student as “the *sine qua non* of any coming to know” (Stengel, 1997, p. 590). Building on Dewey (1916), Stengel (1997, p. 591) states that the role of the teacher is “guiding students’ development in the direction of that which is conveyed in the traditions of the disciplines.” Within this dialectic relationship the school subject incorporates academic subject knowledge, but at the same time starts from the principle that knowledge can only be constructed through human experience. The disciplinary roots of school subjects are still acknowledged, but the hegemony of academic disciplines is no longer decisive for curriculum development.

The existing variation of possible relationships between academic disciplines and school subjects according to Stengel indicates that there is no stable meaning for either the academic discipline or the school subject separately. The meaning of the concepts can change dependent of the assumptions about *the relationship* between them. As a consequence, in curriculum debate it is always about the *way in which these concepts are used as a pair*, not about the concepts in isolation. In Stengel’s (1997, p. 586) words: “Interpreting them together reveals the particular political and moral interests that bind the two concepts together.”

Discussing the relationship between academic disciplines and school subjects from a *historical perspective*, Young (2008) shows that (the borders of) school subjects, as a consequence mainly of the work of educational reformers, over the last decades have been severely blurred and weakened. In this context he refers to the growing number of general, overarching aims that have been attached to school subjects at the expense of specific, disciplinary aims. Following Bernstein (2000), Young (2008, p.97) argues that the weakened borders of school subjects potentially lead to a growing influence of generic knowledge and skills. In order to stop this development he argues that the “classification” of school subjects has to be maintained, and that they have to keep their own specific knowhow.

Just like Stengel (1997), Deng (2013) argues that the vision on the relationship between school subjects and academic disciplines can play an important role in

curriculum debates. Deng argues that this vision can change over time. He observes a diminishing influence of academic disciplines on the curriculum mainly in favor of economic interests and powers. As Deng (2013, p.41) puts it: "The culture of the pedagogic discourse of schools is in retrospective, based on a past narrative of the dominance and significance of disciplines, whereas the management structure is prospective pointing to the new entrepreneurialism and its instrumentalities." The early 21st century, according to Deng, witnesses an increasing pressure on the relationship between school subjects and academic disciplines. School subjects are created or adapted in order to provide students with the competences, knowledge and skills that prepare them for participating in a quickly changing and globalizing society, and academic disciplines are only called for if they are considered immediately relevant in this respect.

Ball (1987) discusses school subjects and the changes occurring in these subjects from a *perspective of power relations* between actors with various social and professional concerns, both from within and outside the subject community. He distinguishes three levels of change on which negotiations and disputes between those actors take place about what is determined as valid knowledge in a school subject, i.e., relations of change, structures of change, and conditions of change. The relations of change refer to the negotiations and power struggles of groups within the subject community, such as teachers, teacher trainers, and scholars. The structures of change refer to the negotiations and power struggles within and between institutions, organizations and persons in the formal sector of educational policy and government, such as teacher organizations, trade unions, and ministries. The conditions of change finally refer to the social, political and economic context in which the change occurs (Ball, 1987, p.19-20). As a consequence, as Goodson (1990, p.299) phrases it, the "curriculum [is] a multifaceted concept, constructed, negotiated and renegotiated at a variety of levels and in a variety of arenas." Also arguing from a power relations perspective, according to Stengel (1997) determining school subjects in dependency of academic disciplines means protecting the vested interests and powers in these disciplines. The plea therefore to epistemologically distinguish school subjects and academic disciplines mainly originates from (radical) educational reformers and from people outside the academic discipline.

As was indicated before, in this contribution we limit ourselves to the contested introduction of linguistics in the exam program for Dutch in the CVEN period (1988-1991). We moreover focus on decision making processes regarding curriculum change at a national level, i.e. the macro level of official committees and governmental institutions, formally involved in establishing a new exam program for Dutch, i.e., in Ball's (1987) terms the "structures of change". In analyzing and interpreting these structures of change, we also pay attention to the "relations of change" as they become visible in for example discussion in the subject community and its journals as well as to the "conditions of change", i.e. the political and educational context in which the establishment of a new exam program took place. Our main focus of analysis here are the different perspectives of the main actors in the

CVEN period on the relationship between the school subject Dutch and the related academic discipline Dutch language and literature and the role these perspectives played in the curriculum change under investigation.

For analyzing the possible relationships between the school subject Dutch and the academic discipline Dutch language and literature, we propose a framework that starts from Stengel's position that school subjects and academic disciplines are different but related. Combining this position with our data, we distinguish between four different perspectives:

- 1) A perspective on school subjects and academic disciplines that refers to the fact that these entities are by *tradition* historically related since they basically deal, although in different ways, with the same body of knowledge. The way in which specialized scholarly disciplines separately focus on specific parts of reality is reflected in the distinction between school subjects in education. At the same time what is taught in schools, is expected to be taught in universities as well. We consider this traditional relationship as not necessarily implying any hierarchy between the school subject and the academic discipline and as the default starting point in our analysis.
- 2) A perspective that adds hierarchy and dominance to the traditionally existing relationship between the school subject and the academic discipline and can be characterized as a relationship in which *transmission* takes place from the academic discipline to the school subject. In this type of relationship the academic discipline fills the school subject in a top-down manner with a watered down extract of academic knowledge. This relationship is unidirectional and no mutual interests between the two exist.
- 3) A perspective that in fact escapes any form of relationship or hierarchy between the school subject and the academic discipline exists when they both chose not to relate and cooperate, i.e. *non-cooperation*. This can happen when the school subject wants to prevent the academic discipline to exert its influence in the form of transmission; it can also happen when the academic discipline considers the school subject as below its sphere of interest.
- 4) In a final perspective the school subject and the academic discipline opt for a relationship of *cooperation*. This can happen at the initiative of the school subject, e.g. asking for assistance of the academic discipline in an endeavor to redesign its curriculum in view of scholarly developments in the field. It can also happen where the academic discipline offers its help in developing the school subject. Needless to say that in this fourth perspective the academic discipline as well as the school subject can profit in terms of the legitimacy or status that they can derive from this cooperation, including societal relevance for the academic discipline and having an academic profile for the school subject.

5. DUTCH AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE AND DUTCH AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT

Although traditionally related, the school subject Dutch in upper secondary education and the academic discipline Dutch language and literature for a long time operated rather independently. As a matter of fact their relationship mainly became manifest in the teacher who has both a degree in Dutch language and literature and a degree in teacher training and was therefore an expert in (the teaching of) Dutch (Van de Ven, 1996). It also became manifest where elements that belong to the academic discipline Dutch language and literature filtered through in textbooks (Apple, 1993; Van der Aalsvoort, 2010). In the 1970s, as a consequence of developments in the academic discipline Dutch language and literature and societal needs, language skills were included as a third domain (next to literature and linguistics) in the academic discipline Dutch language and literature (Braet, 1997, p.106). Against this background, the establishment of the CVEN turned out to function as a catalyst in the discussion about the relationship between the school subject Dutch in upper secondary education and its related academic discipline. For the first time in Dutch educational history, there was a widespread discussion regarding the desired content and the exam program of the school subject, and representatives of the academic discipline were explicitly invited to think along and to come up with proposals. Opinions of scholars in the field of literature, linguistics and language skills then became part of the decision-making process initiated by the CVEN, and the proposal to include linguistics in the exam was totally in accordance with the new tripartite structure of the academic discipline. The teacher trainers, who had been appointed at most universities in the Netherlands since the 1970s, had not explicitly been invited by the CVEN, but they also tried to exert their influence in the advisory process. Hans Hulshof (representing the association of teacher trainers VULON in the CVEN) said in this context:

“We did not ask teacher trainers for a pre-advice, because that was not the point then. They were engaged in a different kind of discipline from the specialists in Dutch language and literature. The real issue now was what people who totally occupied themselves with language and literature wanted to be included in this school subject. We considered it to be important that they would take an interest in this question. Besides, I was a teacher trainer myself, and in that sense teacher training was represented.”

CVEN chairman Braet at several occasions explained his ambition to strengthen the relationship and cooperation between the academic discipline and the school subject by inviting representatives of the academic discipline to engage in the CVEN advisory process (Braet, 1992). This led to a reaction by Helge Bonset, who, as a prominent member of the VON and a curriculum developer, strongly argued against cooperation by only inviting academic linguists instead of also teacher trainers to give their opinion on the CVEN proposals (Bonset, 1993). He criticized this participation of the academic field of Dutch language and literature in the advisory process in general, but his focus in this debate was on the linguists' advice, mainly because they proposed a new subject component that according to him

consisted of knowledge that was only relevant for the scholarly discipline of linguistics. Since it was his position that the development of new subject contents was the prerogative of the subject community, he considered the linguists' proposal as a form of transmission. CVEN chairman Braet was aware of the power relationships within which he had to fulfill his task to determine the exam program, as is clearly shown by the following quotation in which he explicitly opts for a cooperation perspective:

"I have to confess that, among other things, I used the chairmanship to try and bring closer together again, after two decades of drifting apart, mother tongue teaching and the academic discipline Dutch language and literature. For that reason mainly, academic specialists in Dutch language and literature were told that the CVEN would like to receive their pre-advice on the minimum standard subject matter." (Braet, 1992, p.196)

6. LINGUISTICS AS A NEW COMPONENT OF THE DUTCH EXAM

The discussion in and around the CVEN quickly developed into a controversy over the introduction of linguistics as a *new* component of the exam program for Dutch. It was not surprising that 'reflection on language', as CVEN originally called it, got a chance here: it had already been included in the attainment targets for lower secondary education and in teacher journals it was suggested to introduce it in upper secondary education as well.

In view of its limited size, the CVEN found it desirable to consult external experts. In 1990, this resulted in pre-advisory reports for literature, language skills and reflection on language. Seen from the perspective of their relationship with the school subject, linguists and literary scholars were 'by nature' actors in the debate on the relationship between the school subject and the academic discipline. In practice however, till the 1970s there had hardly been any contacts between academia and the school subject. The CVEN explicitly argued that calling in pre-advisors from academia would strengthen the relationship between the school subject and the academic discipline in terms of mutual interests and legitimacy:

"An important additional aim of the requests to the pre-advisors was improving the disturbed relationship between the academic discipline Dutch language and literature and mother tongue education. On the condition that the role of Dutch language and literature remains a serving and modest one, mother tongue education can only benefit by the interest of scholars in the field of literature, linguistics and language skills. Hopefully the pre-advisory reports lay new ground for a regular contact between schools and academia. The advisory reports that were produced make clear that they have a lot in common." (CVEN, 1991, p.17)

Also Hans Goosen (who as a teacher of Dutch was a CVEN member on behalf of the teacher association VON) in his interview referred to the complicated relationship between the school subject and the academic discipline. Some scholars argued in favor of separating the school subject and the academic discipline and did not want to get engaged with the school subject (*non-cooperation*). Others argued in favor of

transmission and preferred a relationship between the academic discipline and the school subject in which the academic discipline was leading. In that field of tension, the aim of the CVEN, i.e., showing that the academic discipline has something to offer to the school subject (*cooperation*), was rather difficult to realize. In Goosen's words:

"One of the major problems that we explicitly referred to in our problem analysis was the gap between what happened in academia and the schools' awareness thereof. That was partly a reproach to the scholars for not being engaged in problems in educational practice, not being engaged in the school subject Dutch. On the other hand we had the idea that they carried out interesting research, for example on writing, which did not take root in school practice. I very much agreed with Braet that that enormous gap was not a very productive situation. For me the whole operation to ask for pre-advisory reports was aimed at mobilizing scholars to play a role in developing the exam program for Dutch."

The CVEN explicitly wanted to take full account of the ideas and preferences in the field of education and therefore, in order to prevent any misunderstandings regarding its position, repeatedly distanced itself from a top-down transmission model:

"The fact that a certain advice – for example of linguists – had been asked, or a certain question – for example about a [literary] canon – had been asked, did not yet include any determination of the committee's position. It was purely about gathering as many potentially useful ideas as possible before the committee entered into its decision making stage." (CVEN, 1991, p.16)

In the CVEN Hulshof and Hendrix were made responsible for the domain of linguistics. They invited eleven linguists to write a pre-advisory report. This large number of linguists – in other subject domains only two or three advisors were invited – can be seen as an illustration of trying to seek legitimacy for (introducing) a *new* component in the exam program by asking academics for their opinion. According to Bonset (1990) the fact that the CVEN asked for these academic pre-advisory reports suggests that the committee wanted the linguistics to decide what has to be considered 'valid knowledge' in the school subject – which according to him could be seen as a perspective of transmission. In his interview, Bonset used this as an argument against the introduction of linguistics in the exam:

"It is about the way in which the linguists handle this, which goes against the grain with me. You can easily design a very interesting linguistics curriculum, but if you subsequently start a lobby, like in 1990, to make it compulsory for all higher secondary education almost instantaneously, i.e., without any substantial preparatory work, it does not make any sense of course. You must run a pilot, look where it leads to."

The CVEN, with Braet emphatically in front, asked for pre-advisory reports explicitly from the perspective of the traditional relationship between the school subject and the academic discipline that it wanted to strengthen. The VON Board (1991) found that the invited linguists proceeded too much from a transmission perspective. Hulshof and Hendrix however, were aiming at a form of cooperation. In doing so they also emphasized the importance of providing prestige to the school subject by

the academic discipline, which might have been interpreted by the critics as a transmission perspective. In his interview Hulshof expressed this apparent paradox as follows:

“I always found it a bit strange that the academic discipline of Dutch has three domains, i.e., literature, linguistics and language skills, and that the domain of linguistics was always left out in education and in fact was only dealt with in grammar teaching in the lower grades. [...] We mainly wanted them to give their opinion, and that they, as linguists, would make out a case for the introduction [of linguistics]. Because until that moment they always held aloof and never interfered in education.”

In his interview Hendrix even considered the academic discipline responsible for the development of the school subject as far as content is concerned because teachers according to him simply do not have the time for that responsibility:

“[The linguists] did not bother about the position of the subject Dutch in secondary education, although there are many things there that need to be fixed. This has to come from the academic discipline, because otherwise it will never come about, because teachers lose their way, they don't have the time.”

7. LINGUISTICS AS A SEPARATE COMPONENT IN THE EXAM

The pre-advisors from the field of linguistics were first of all asked to give a clarification of the notion of ‘reflection on language’, as used by the CVEN, and to decide if it was desirable and feasible to include in the exam “more autonomous forms of reflection on language” next to the already existing and established “instrumental reflection on language for the benefit of language skills and literature” (CVEN, 1991, p.10). According to the linguists, earlier attempts to include reflection on language in the curriculum had not convinced the field since they had a relatively non-committal nature. They proposed to use the term linguistics (*taalkunde*) because they considered the term reflection on language (*taalbeschouwing*) unclear and inadequate to refer to the science of language. The CVEN accepted this proposal and given the fact that a new exam program had to be drafted there was according to the CVEN the opportunity to now:

“give linguistics a position in education that is equal to the position of other subject domains [...] based on the fact that an important aspect of human knowledge (the language system) and our society (the use of the language) is for no good reason absent in forms of secondary education that prepare [students] for higher education.” (CVEN, 1991, p.33)

The linguists proposed a two-component model for the school subject, i.e. “the study of the knowledge that man has of his mother tongue, and the study of (the knowledge of) the way in which the system is used” (CVEN, 1991, p.33). They did not consider it realistic that linguistics would immediately get the position in the curriculum that it, according to them, deserved. For the short term they saw a place for most elements of the language system within language skills teaching but for the long run they expected both components to occupy their own separate and

deserved places. In his interview Hulshof described the autonomy of the CVEN and the way in which it wanted to cooperate with the linguists as follows:

“The linguists did not propose something independent of our preliminary work. [...] They knew that we wanted to do something with linguistics, but they could discuss it openly. [...] We spoke extensively with them about the two-component model, the distinction between language system and language use. They proposed that model themselves and from then on we always kept it. They also stipulated that linguistics had to be included in the exam program as an aim in itself, and that we should not head for a link with language skills. They were clearly in favor of the autonomy of that subject component [linguistics]. We then adjusted a few things but generally speaking our plan completely corresponded to what they wanted.”

The CVEN in other words opted for calling in linguistic advisors from a perspective of cooperation. It was however well aware of the doubts that existed in the field of education about this move that was according to the CVEN unjustly interpreted as a plea for top-down transmission and therefore stated in its report that “contrary to what was sometimes claimed” linguistics was an autonomous initiative of the CVEN and that it considered “the enthusiasm of linguists for linguistics in upper secondary education quite promising for a further development of the experiment” (CVEN, 1991, p.16).

Underneath this switch from ‘reflection on language’ to ‘linguistics’ lay different perspectives regarding the content of the subject domain and the role of the academic discipline. After the communicative and functional turn in the school subject Dutch in the 1970s (Kroon, 1985), practically all attention went to language skills. Against that background reflection on language was mainly considered important as a means to improve students’ language skills. The critics considered the interpretation of linguistics by the CVEN as autonomous knowledge, derived from the academic discipline linguistics, as a threat to language skills teaching, and associated it with an unwanted interference by the academic discipline in the school subject, and therefore rejected it. In the discussions that followed, it mainly depended on the participants’ perspective on the desired content of the new subject component which term they preferred. By choosing ‘linguistics’ one might raise the suspicion to be in favor of transmission from the academic discipline Dutch language and literature, more specifically linguistics, to the school subject Dutch. A choice for ‘reflection on language’ on the other hand, as made by some teacher trainers and specialists in the field of language skills, suggested a choice for non-cooperation and excluding the academic discipline of linguistics from the school subject, and a preference for strengthening language skills teaching.

8. THE CVEN-ADVICE: LINGUISTICS IN THE EXAM

The introduction of linguistics in the exam of upper secondary education was the proverbial toss-up. There were about as many advocates as opponents in the field consultations. The needs analysis outcomes were explained as an argument against (De Glopper & Van Schooten, 1990), but also as an argument in favor of its intro-

duction (Bennis, 1991). Linguists advised in favor, teacher associations advised against or were divided. The same arguments were sometimes used in favor of, sometimes against linguistics. The CVEN (five members in favor, one against) cut the knot and advised in favor of linguistics in the school-organized part of the exam, but to begin with as an experiment and only for pre-university education. For this decision it gave the following motivation:

“These proposals want to put an end to a situation in which, as a result of historical factors, there is no recognizable and independent position for linguistics in the exam program. [...] The proposal is to use about 10% of the teaching time in the upper grades of pre-university education for comprehensive reading of existing journalistic or (popular) academic texts about a limited number of linguistic topics. [...] Nevertheless it is, even with this modest approach, unwise to immediately opt for a general introduction [of linguistics]. It is better to make a limited number of schools experiment for a couple of years with the new domain of linguistics on a voluntary basis.” (CVEN, 1991, p.29)

In the CVEN advice the essence of the subject component of linguistics was described as follows:

“With the component of linguistics we refer to the ability of candidates to make linguistically justified statements about a number of language phenomena and language issues of general importance. More specifically it is about: 1. the ability to recognize and possibly describe some important characteristics of language use; 2. the ability to give an opinion on some language issues of societal relevance; 3. to have sufficient knowledge of the language system and language use to be able to accomplish the tasks mentioned in 1 and 2.” (CVEN, 1991, p.17)

Goosen was the only CVEN member who was against the introduction of linguistics in the exam. In the final report of the CVEN he took a minority position and in his interview he motivated this as follows:

“The needs analysis gave no reason [to introduce linguistics], a vast majority of teachers was not in favor of it, VON members were not in favor of it, and, most importantly, other matters were generally thought to be much more urgent: for me this was sufficient reason to vote against it.”

Goosen was supported in his position by the VON Board (1991, p.6), that characterized linguistics as “not functional and not communicative” and “more aimed at students of Dutch or at people who have ‘language’ as a hobby.” Braet included Goosen’s minority point of view in the CVEN-report. Braet himself was clearly in favor of introducing linguistics in the school subject and in the outcomes of the needs analysis and the teacher consultation he saw sufficient support:

“The experiment linguistics actually was received surprisingly well. To such a new component in an already chock-full program, you only expect opposition. Indeed, in places, there were also heavy protests against it, but in the survey there are more advocates than opponents, together with a large group of abstainers. Let me here reveal something, as far as the CVEN is concerned the experiment continues, but... if in five years’ time there is still the same number of opponents, it should not become generally compulsory.” (Braet, 1992, p.143)

The CVEN advice seemed to be received positively by the Ministry of Education and the field of education. It was however not implemented but passed on mainly because the Government had meanwhile decided that the upper grades of secondary education as a whole, including the exam programs of all subjects, had to be renewed. For the school subject Dutch this task was given to a newly established advisory committee, the VOG-N, leading to the start of another chapter in the decision making process and the school subject's history.

9. CONCLUSION

The relationships between school subjects and their related academic disciplines is an important issue in curriculum studies that however did only get limited attention in empirical research (Applebee, 1974; Medway et al., 2014). The discussions during the CVEN period regarding the introduction of linguistics in the Dutch curriculum and exam made it clear that the choice for a strong or loose connection between the school subject and the academic discipline can be a dilemma, and that different perspectives on the nature of the (desired) relationship between the two can influence the decision-making process (cf. Stengel, 1997).

When the CVEN started its work, the school subject Dutch and the academic discipline Dutch language and literature, irrespective of their traditional historical relationship, did not really engage with each other, and as a consequence they did not really communicate and cooperate. Against the background of a more or less default assumed traditional relationship between the school subject and the academic discipline, this situation of non-cooperation was strongly questioned by the CVEN. Especially the committee's chair Braet, as well as Hulshof, representing the association of teacher trainers in the committee, were strong advocates of a cooperative relationship between the school subject and the academic discipline that could be profitable mainly for the school subject. They, for that matter, invited academic linguists to become engaged in the work of the CVEN by producing an advisory report on the position of linguistics in the exam. This invitation was accepted and the linguists presented a proposal regarding the place and content of linguistics in the curriculum. Their involvement however, and especially their proposal, were interpreted by the opponents of linguistics in the curriculum, as a one-sided top-down attempt to redefine the relationship between the school subject and the academic discipline as a relationship of transmission. These opponents included the board of the VON, its CVEN representative Goosen, and one of its prominent members Bonset. In order to prevent linguistics to be included, the opponents preferred the school subject and the academic discipline to be in a non-cooperative relationship, and proposed to leave the responsibility for the content of the school subject to the autonomy of the teachers and teachers trainers.

In the period that the CVEN was active, it advocated a cooperative relationship between the academic discipline Dutch language and literature and the school subject Dutch to the benefit of the school subject. According to the CVEN, the school

subject had a great deal to win from the involvement of academic linguists in developing and establishing linguistics as part of the exam program. This position was contested by the opponents of linguistics in the exam of upper secondary education. In line with Kuhn's (1962) well-known analysis of the structure of scientific revolutions it can be concluded that the rivalry between competing perspectives was not so much solved on the basis of arguments referring to content, but above all on the basis of power relationships and dominant positions. On the one hand linguists and those who supported their advice showed little understanding of the context related resistance of the field of education against contents imposed upon the school subject Dutch by the academic discipline. On the other hand the field of education had little eye for the proposals and the attempt that was made by the CVEN to meet the field half way by proposing a *voluntary* experiment for linguistics, in pre-university secondary education only, and with only a limited amount of teaching time involved. Also the opponents' focus in their negative evaluation of the CVEN proposal was on an image of linguistics that exclusively dealt with language structure, where the CVEN proposed to not only include knowledge of language structure but also of language use in linguistics in secondary education. As a consequence the opponents of linguistics never really reacted on the *content* that was proposed by the CVEN *nor* on the committee's proposal to first do a pilot and on the basis of that make a final decision.

The conflicting interests and the distance between the parties involved could be traced back to different perspectives on the relationship between the school subject and the academic discipline. They were intensified by the fact that they took place in the aftermath of a wave of democratization in which a strong resistance against the dominance of academic knowledge and power had come into existence, and in which more than ever before great importance was attached to the participation of the field of education in shaping the content and methodology of school subjects. As such the history of the introduction of linguistics in the exam of secondary education constitutes a perfect illustration of the statements by Ball (1991, p.59) that "school subjects in whatever area, are the product of and a reflection of interest group conflicts" and Goodson and Marsh (1996, p. 131) that "the secondary school curriculum far from being a stable and dispassionately constructed unity, is in fact a highly contested, fragmented and endlessly shifting terrain." Getting a deeper insight in these power relations in the field of curriculum development leads to a clarification of the relationship between school subjects and their related academic disciplines (and vice versa).

An analysis of the two other periods of curriculum change dealt with in our research project as a whole, i.e. 1995-1996 and 2003-2008, shows that the perspectives on the relationship between the school subject Dutch and the academic discipline Dutch language and literature change over time as a consequence among other things of the changing power relationships in the field, and that the same applies to the perspectives on what is to be considered legitimate knowledge in the school subject Dutch.

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