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## Auf deutsch, bitte!

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# Auf Deutsch, bitte! Target language use among in-service teachers of German

N. Boon, en M. Tammenga-Helmantel

## Abstract

The present study investigates the use of German by teachers in GFL (German as a foreign language) classrooms in Dutch secondary education. It explores to what extent and in which classroom situations German is used, and whether a discrepancy exists between desired and actual use. Furthermore, this study aims to clarify what factors affect Target Language (TL) use including both hindering and fostering factors. In addition, we determine the impact of individual factors and discuss to what extent the curricular and linguistic situation of German in the Netherlands affects TL use. The results are based on a quantitative analysis of a questionnaire regarding their TL use, which was filled in by 32 GFL teachers. These teachers indicate that they speak German mainly when they give positive feedback, standard instructions, and general and individual orders or warnings, when they help during individual work, and when they discuss reading and listening texts. The complexity of the lesson content, students' reactions to TL use, and the teachers' own language proficiency are indicated as most important when deciding whether or not to use the TL. Desired and perceived TL use differ marginally.

**Keywords:** target language use, German as a foreign language, hindering factors, fostering factors, linguistic proximity

interaction is necessary for learning a foreign language (Ellis, 2005ab). TL use positively affects students' receptive and productive FL skills as well as their grammatical competence in the TL (Andringa & Schultz, 2016; Dönszelmann, 2019). Additionally, the use of the TL is proven to be beneficial to the classroom climate and student motivation (Tammenga-Helmantel, Van Eidsen, Heinemann & Kliemt, 2016).

Earlier research in Dutch secondary education FL classrooms reveals that TL use differs between the languages taught. Whereas the teachers of French as a foreign language (FFL) in Oosterhof, Jansma and Tammenga-Helmantel (2014) hardly speak French and are unsatisfied with their TL use, recent studies among Dutch teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) show that they generally teach in English (Tammenga-Helmantel & Mossing Holsteijn, 2016; West & Verspoor, 2016). At present, no data are available about TL use in the most frequently taught foreign language after English: German. Being the most frequently chosen foreign language in Dutch education, it is surprising that little is known about TL use in German as a foreign language (GFL) classrooms. Will GFL teachers resemble FFL teachers or EFL teachers regarding their preferences and choices regarding TL use? The outcome is not clear from the start since on the one hand, the school and societal context for German and French are similar in the Netherlands; both languages are optional in senior classes and linguistic input is generally restricted to the FL classroom. On the other hand, its linguistic context for German resembles that of English; both languages are Western Germanic languages with many lexical cognates resulting in high levels of receptive language use between their speakers (Swarte, 2016). Since teachers

## 1 Introduction

Using the target language (TL) in the foreign language (FL) classroom seems self-evident; exposure to the target language through providing opportunities for input, output, and

indicate that their learners' language proficiency strongly affects their code choice (e.g. Bateman, 2008; Hall & Cook, 2013), that is whether to use the learners own language or the target language, the TL use of EFL and GFL teachers might well be similar. A comparison of the studies on TL use in Dutch FFL, EFL and GFL teaching may clarify whether linguistic proximity mediates teaching practice.

The present study investigates the use of German in Dutch GFL classrooms. It explores to what extent and in which situations inside and outside the classroom German is used and whether a discrepancy exists between desired and actual use, as indicated by the participating teachers. Furthermore, this study aims to clarify what factors affect TL use, including not only hindering factors – which is common practice in the TL literature (e.g. Bateman, 2008; Haijma, 2013; Tammenga-Helmantel & Mossing Holsteijn, 2016) – but extending the discussion to fostering factors as well. In addition, we determine the impact of the individual factors and discuss to what extent the curricular and linguistic situation of German affects TL use. A total of 32 GFL teachers from different parts of the Netherlands participated in this study. To enable a comparison between English, French and German, we used the same questionnaire as applied for teachers of French as a foreign language (FFL) (Oosterhof et al., 2014) and teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) (Tammenga-Helmantel & Mossing Holsteijn, 2016).

The objective of this study is to provide more insights into TL use in Dutch secondary education, focussing on a language so far underrepresented in TL research, viz. German. Furthermore, it investigates the hypothesis that linguistic proximity affects TL use and aims at a deeper understanding of factors influencing TL use.

## 2 Background

Ellis (2005ab) reserves a central position for TL use when proposing ten general principles

for successful language learning. These include providing ample comprehensible input (Krashen, 1981), occasions for output in the foreign language (Swain, 1995) and opportunities for TL interaction. This entails that the TL should be spoken the majority of the time by both teachers and students in a FL classroom.

Although FL teachers generally indicate to take a positive stance towards TL use, they use the TL less than intended or recommended; they feel guilty as a result of being unable to provide the students with a great variety of FL input (e.g., Macaro, 1997; Turnbull & Daily-O'Cain, 2009). For instance, Hall and Cook (2013)'s global study investigating 2,785 EFL teachers' own-language use revealed that almost all of the teachers (96%) recognise the importance of TL use. Yet, in practice there is a great range in the extent to which the TL is used. Most of the teachers reported to regularly switch to the students' own language, especially when meanings in English are unclear, or when explaining vocabulary or grammar. Hall and Cook (2013)'s work is complemented by Basturkmen's (2012) review study in which she reported an often observed limited correspondence between language teachers' beliefs about good practice and actual teaching practice. Correspondence increases in planned aspects of teaching and when teachers have more teaching experience.

Recent studies exploring the TL use of in-service secondary school FL teachers in the Netherlands observed beliefs and behaviours similar to those in the international study on EFL teachers by Hall and Cook (2013). First, Haijma (2013) investigated the TL use of the most commonly offered FLs in Dutch secondary education: German, French, Spanish, and especially English. Taking a dual approach, she observed TL use in the classroom and used questionnaires to look at teachers' ( $n = 13$ ) and students' ( $n = 131$ ) attitude towards TL use. Second, Oosterhof et al. (2014) investigated the desired and perceived TL use of 97 FFL teachers, using a questionnaire based on the TL ladder developed by Kwakernaak (2007; see Table 1). Although based on small samples, both

Table 1

*Target language ladder, translated from Kwakernaak (2007, p. 14)*

1. Standard instructions	
2. Classroom discussion of reading and listening texts	
3. Returning tests	<b>Central classroom activities</b>
4. Chatting about non-subject related things during central classroom activities	
5. Explaining grammar	
6. General and individual warnings and punishments	
7. Standard instructions and support	<b>Individual work</b>
8. Positive feedback, admonitions, and warnings	
9. Greeting students and saying goodbye to them	<b>Before and after the lesson in the classroom</b>
10. Chatting with students before/after the lesson in the classroom	
11. Making agreements with individual students about the subject	
12. Making agreements with individual students about their (mis)behaviour	
13. Greeting students in the hallway or elsewhere in/near school	<b>Outside the classroom</b>
14. Chatting with students outside the classroom	
15. Subject-related conversations with colleagues	
16. Chatting with colleagues	

studies showed similar findings: positive attitudes regarding TL use are observed among both teachers (Haijma, 2013; Oosterhof et al., 2014) and students (Haijma 2013). Whereas the TL use among the students was fairly moderate, the teachers in their studies opt for the TL more regularly (Haijma, 2013). Yet, the teachers in the study of Oosterhof et al. (2014) consider using the TL as challenging, and are often dissatisfied with their TL use. In Haijma's (2013) study by far the most TL was spoken during English lessons (see also West & Verspoor, 2016), of which students also indicated to understand most compared to the other foreign languages. Tammenga-Helmantel & Mossing Holsteijn (2016) reduplicated Oosterhof's et al. (2014) study with 61 teachers. Their study confirms that EFL teachers generally teach in English. Moreover, the discrepancy between desired and perceived actual TL use of teachers has been shown to be larger among FFL teachers than EFL teachers (Tammenga-Helmantel & Mossing Holsteijn, 2016).

Previous research revealed that TL use is strongly determined by the content of the lesson, e.g. giving instructions, maintaining discipline, building rapport, and explaining grammar (Hall & Cook, 2013, see also

Bateman, 2008; Dönszelmann, 2019). Therefore, the questionnaires in Oosterhof et al. (2014) and Tammenga-Helmantel and Mossing Holsteijn (2016) applied Kwakernaak's (2007) target language ladder, which identifies 16 different situations inside and outside the classroom, subdivided into four categories. Both studies showed that the desire to use the TL was largest in situations that are regarded easy or linguistically predictable (e.g., chunks or formulaic expressions), for instance when giving positive feedback or greeting students at the beginning or end of a lesson. For messages expressing negativity, such as warnings and punishments, and situations outside the classroom, the teachers indicated to use Dutch. Likewise, the teachers in Haijma (2013) used the TL when they praise students and make announcements and when they begin or end a lesson.

Besides the content of the lesson, teachers mention other factors hindering their TL use. A classification of these factors is proposed in Tammenga-Helmantel and Mossing Holsteijn (2016), see Figure 1.

The internal factors teachers mention most often are a shortage of time and energy, their own language proficiency and pedagogical

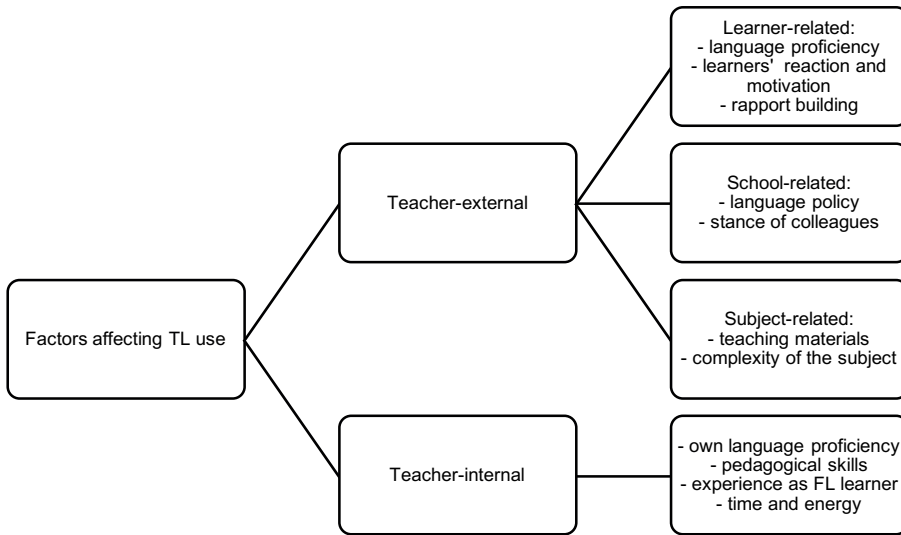


Figure 1. Teacher-external and teacher-internal factors affecting target language use.

skills, and their own experiences as learners in secondary school (e.g. Bateman, 2008; Tammenga-Helmantel & Mossing Holsteijn, 2016). Teacher-external factors are often of even more importance and can be subject-related, including the course books as well as the complexity of a lesson, or school-related, i.e., the schools' policy and colleagues' opinions regarding TL use (cf. Bateman, 2008; Oosterhof et al., 2014; Tammenga-Helmantel & Mossing Holsteijn, 2016). Most importantly, however, students affect teachers in their TL use by their reactions to TL use, their proficiency in the TL and whether or not they are used to the TL being used in FL classes. These factors are more often than not constraining TL use although sporadically positive influences are mentioned in the literature; especially some teachers consider the language policy at the school and agreements about TL use with colleagues as fostering their TL use (see Hermans-Nykerk, 2007; Oosterhof et al., 2014).

This study will explore the TL use of 32 GFL teachers. We will discuss their preferred and perceived use of German and the factors they consider hindering or fostering TL use. Additionally, we will compare our results

with the studies regarding TL use by Dutch FFL and EFL teachers. This comparison might clarify to what extent the typological distance between own and target language influences TL use, as postulated earlier. This results into the following research questions:

### 3 Research questions

1. In which classroom situations do the participating GFL teachers wish to use the target language?
2. In which classroom situations do the participating GFL teachers indicate to use the target language?
3. To what extent do desired and indicated TL use differ?

Additionally, we investigate GFL teachers' perception of factors mediating their TL use and we determine the weight and the nature – be it fostering or hindering – of these factors:

4. Which factors are perceived to influence target language use?
- 4a. Is there a difference in the extent to

which these factors are judged to affect target language use?

4b. Are these factors judged to foster or inhibit target language use?

## 4 Method

### 4.1 Participants

In total, 32 in-service GFL teachers teaching at secondary schools spread across the Netherlands participated in this study. The participants were recruited during two different conferences for secondary school language teachers. The second author gave lectures on TL use at both occasions, and in order to get to know the audience, especially to find out what topics needed to be emphasised, the teachers were requested to respond to a digital survey on TL use one week prior to the conferences. The participants were informed that the questions were aimed at revealing the situation regarding TL use in their classrooms and served as input for the lectures. Only the survey data of the teachers who gave permission for use of their data for research purposes (91.4%) were used. The first group ( $n = 20$ ) attended a conference for teachers of German in November 2016, organised by the German Language and Culture department of the Radboud University in Nijmegen, Netherlands. The second group ( $n = 12$ ) were present at a meeting for GFL teachers during the Day of Language, Arts, and Culture arranged by the Teacher Education department of the University of Groningen, Netherlands. During these conferences, teachers had the possibility to attend workshops and lectures, including a lecture on TL use, get informed on recent developments within their discipline and exchange their teaching experiences with other teachers.

At the time of participation, the majority of the teachers ( $n = 17$ ; 53.1%) indicated to have been working as a teacher for more than 10 years. Another 31.3% ( $n = 10$ ) of the teachers were at the beginning of their teaching career, with less than 5 years of experience. Only 5 (15.6%) participants had between 5 and 10 years of teaching experience. All of them were teaching both junior and senior classes.

The teaching context of GFL teachers in the Netherlands is as follows. Junior students in secondary education (i.e., approximately from 12 to 15 years) generally learn two modern foreign languages besides English. Most secondary schools offer German and French. For senior students, English remains obligatory whereas German and French are optional.

### 4.2 Materials and procedure

The current study employed a questionnaire (see Appendix A) which consisted of questions aimed at giving insight into the TL use of the participants. In the first part of the questionnaire, the teachers indicated for 16 situations inside and outside the classroom, based on Kwakernaak (2007), to what extent they desire to use the target language and to what extent they use the target language. In the Results we refer to these data as 'desired' and 'indicated', respectively. 4-point Likert scales were used, with 1 corresponding to 'very undesirable'/'never', and 4 to 'very desirable'/'always'. The participants responded twice to the stated situations, once for junior classes, and once for senior classes. The first part of the questionnaire enables answering research questions 1, 2, and 3.

In the second part of the questionnaire, the teachers rated to what extent they thought commonly mentioned teacher-external and teacher-internal factors (from Tammenga-Helmantel & Mossing Holsteijn, 2016) affect their use of the TL. Again, a 4-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1 ('no influence') to 4 ('much influence'). The external factors included the input regarding TL use received during teacher education, school policy on TL use, students' reactions towards TL use, the course books used, and the complexity of the lesson content. Teacher-internal factors included teachers' own language proficiency and their own TL experiences as students in secondary education. In addition, the teachers were asked to indicate whether these factors were fostering or inhibiting their TL use or 'not applicable'. These two questions were used to answer research question 4.

### 4.3 Design and analyses

As indicated previously, participants responded to a list of situations, thereby indicating both how much they use the TL and how much they would like to use the TL in both their junior and senior classes. Rankings of the perceptions of these situations were based on the medians of the answers, since the data were non-normally distributed. To determine whether the desired and actual TL use varied across the different situations, Friedman’s ANOVA’s were run (questions 1 and 2). These tests were run separately for junior and senior classes. Next, Kendall’s coefficient of concordance (*W*) was calculated for effect size, that is to say, to find out whether there was good agreement among the teachers.

Participants also indicated to what extent they perceived various factors to affect their TL use and whether these factors motivate or inhibit them to use the TL in their lessons. First, the strength of these factors was ranked based on the medians. In order to find out if individual factors impact TL use to a greater extent than others, a Friedman’s ANOVA was run and again, Kendall’s *W* was calculated to express the effect size (question 4). Next, the

answers regarding the strength of influence (from ‘no influence’ to ‘much influence’) and the nature of the influence (viz. ‘inhibiting’, ‘fostering’ or ‘not applicable’) were transformed to one scale which ranged from 1 to 7, with 1 indicating ‘inhibiting, much influence’, subsequently decreasing in amount of influence to 4, ‘neutral/no influence’, and then increasing in amount of influence to 7 indicating ‘fostering, much influence’. In so doing, we intended to provide insight into the inhibiting and fostering characteristics, while also taking into account the impact of the factor.

## 5 Results

### 5.1 In which classroom situations do the participating GFL teachers wish to use the target language?

Table 2 ranks the 16 different classroom situations from most to least desirable for junior and senior classes. It shows that teachers had the most positive attitude towards applying the TL when using standard expressions, such as greeting students and giving standard instructions and positive

Table 2  
*Ranking of desired use of target language use in different situations in junior and senior classes*

Situation	Median*	
	Juniors	Seniors
Greeting students and saying goodbye to them	4	4
Standard instructions	4	4
Positive feedback, admonitions, and warnings	3	3
Standard instructions and support	3	3
Chatting about non-subject related things during central classroom activities	3	3
Classroom discussion of reading and listening texts	3	3
General and individual warnings and punishments	3	3
Greeting students in the hallway or elsewhere in/near school	3	3
Chatting with students before/after the lesson in the classroom	3	3
Subject-specific conversations with colleagues	2.5	2.5
Returning tests	2	3
Chatting with colleagues	2	2
Making agreements with individual students about the subject	2	2
Chatting with students outside the classroom	2	2
Making agreements with individual students about their (mis)behaviour	2	2
Explaining grammar	2	2

Note. \*1: very undesirable, 2: somewhat undesirable, 3: somewhat desirable, 4: very desirable  
A .5 value indicates an even number of responses, with the median being in between two different numbers.

feedback. Teachers found it somewhat desirable to use the TL when chatting with their students inside the classroom, when giving them general or individual instructions or warnings, and when discussing reading and listening texts. Teachers were less eager to use the TL when they speak to their GFL colleagues or their students outside the classroom, when they return tests, when they make arrangements with individual students about the subject or the student's (mis)behaviour, and when they explain grammar.

For junior classes, the 16 situations differed significantly in the extent to which teachers considered it desirable to use the TL,  $\chi^2(15) = 247.5, p < 0.001$ . The effect size was moderate,  $W(15) = 0.516, p < 0.001$ . The same was found for senior classes:  $\chi^2(15) = 207.0, p < 0.001$ , displaying a moderate effect ( $W(15) = 0.431, p < 0.001$ ). Kendall's concordance coefficients ( $W$ ) show that there is a fairly good agreement among teachers regarding situations being desirable for TL use. In other words, many participants judged the situations similarly. For instance, most teachers answered 'always' (4) when they

were asked to indicate how much they desire to use the TL when greeting students, whereas most of them answered 'sometimes' (2) for how much they would like to use the TL when explaining grammar.

### 5.2 In which classroom situations do the participating GFL teachers indicate to use the target language?

Table 3 ranks the situations for junior and senior classes regarding TL use as perceived by the participating GFL teachers. The orders of the situations in senior classes largely resembles that of junior classes. As can be seen, greeting students and giving standard instructions and admonitions are done in German. The teachers indicate that they use the TL most often when they give positive feedback, standard instructions, and general and individual orders or warnings, when they help during individual work, and when they discuss reading and listening texts. The teachers seldom opt for German, when they chat, either with students inside or outside the classroom, about non-subject related matters, or when they chat or have subject-related

Table 3

*Ranking of indicated use of the target language in different situations in junior and senior classes*

Situation	Median*	
	Juniors	Seniors
Greeting students and saying goodbye to them	4	4
Standard instructions	4	4
Positive feedback, admonitions and warnings	3	3
Standard instructions and support	3	3
General and individual warnings and punishments	3	3
Classroom discussion of reading and listening texts	3	3
Chatting about non-subject related things during central classroom activities	2	3
Greeting students in the hallway or elsewhere in/near school	2	2.5
Subject-related conversations with colleagues	2	2
Chatting with students before/after the lesson in the classroom	2	2
Returning tests	2	2.5
Chatting with colleagues	2	2
Chatting with students outside the classroom	2	2
Making agreements with individual students about the subject	2	2
Explaining grammar	2	2
Making agreements with individual students about their (mis)behaviour	1	2

Note. \*1: never, 2: sometimes, 3: often, 4: always

A .5 value indicates an even number of responses, with the median being in between two different numbers.



conversations with colleagues. Likewise, they say they only sporadically use the TL when they greet students in the hallway or elsewhere in or close to school, when they return tests and explain grammar, and when they make arrangements with individual students about the subject. In case teachers make arrangements with their students about their (mis)behaviour, they tend to do this in Dutch. There was a significant difference between the use of the TL in junior classes in the 16 situations:  $\chi^2(15) = 238.1$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The effect was strong,  $W(15) = 0.496$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . A significant difference was also found for senior classes:  $\chi^2(15) = 201.3$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Again, Kendall's concordance coefficients reveal that teachers of senior classes agreed to a moderate extent regarding TL use in practice:  $W(15) = 0.419$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . That is to say, the teachers quite often gave similar answers when indicating how much they use the target language for the individual situations.

**5.3 To what extent do desired and indicated target language use differ?**

The outcomes for the desirability to use the target language and for the teachers' perceived TL use are quite similar. First, Tables 2 and 3 show that the rankings of the 16 situations for indicated and desired use largely correspond. Second, the median values for desirability – although slightly higher – seem to accord with the values for the perceived actual use. In other words, the participating GFL teachers seem to be satisfied with their TL use, both in junior and in especially in senior classes.

**5.4 Which factors are perceived to influence target language use?**

As shown in Table 4 the teachers indicate that the complexity of the lesson or content, students' reactions to the use of the target language, and their own language proficiency are decisive as whether or not to use the TL. Generally, the teachers perceive little influence from their schools' policy on TL use, course books used and teacher education, and from students not being used to TL use. The teachers' own target language experiences as students in secondary education seem to not at all affect their code choice.

**5.4a Is there a difference in the extent to which these factors are judged to affect target language use?**

There was a statistically significant difference between the amount of influence the individual factors listed have on the target language use of teachers,  $\chi^2(7) = 42.3$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . However, the effect size was rather small,  $W(7) = 0.189$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . That is, there is little agreement among teachers regarding the extent to which their TL use is perceived to be influenced by various internal and external factors.

**5.4b Are these factors judged to foster or inhibit target language use?**

Table 5 displays for each factor the perceived strength of the influence and whether teachers considered these factors to encourage or hinder their TL use or that it has no influence on their TL use. Our results show that most factors can either hinder or foster TL use. The

Table 4  
*Ranking of factors influencing target language use*

Factor	Median*
Complexity of the lesson content	3
Students' reactions to the use of the target language	3
Language proficiency of the teacher	3
Current situation/rules within your school/section regarding target language use	2
Students not being used to the use of the target language	2
Input during teacher education	2
The course books used	2
Experiences as students in secondary education	1

Note. \*1: no influence, 2: little influence, 3: some influence, 4: much influence

Table 5

*The strength and nature of influence of different factors on target language use, expressed in % of respondents choosing a particular answer*

	very inhibiting		neutral			very fostering	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Input during teacher education				56.3	9.4	15.6	18.8
Current situation within your school regarding TL use			6.3	43.8	6.3	18.8	25.0
Students' reactions to use of TL	18.8	18.8		21.9	18.8	3.1	18.8
Students not being used to use of TL	9.4	28.1	12.5	37.5	6.3	3.1	3.1
Experiences as students in secondary education		3.1		78.1	3.1	9.4	6.3
The course books used	3.1	6.3	3.1	46.9	3.1	15.6	21.9
Language proficiency of the teacher		3.1	3.1	62.5	6.3	21.9	3.1
Complexity of the lesson content	28.1	37.5	6.3	18.8	3.1		6.3

teachers mention two factors that mainly foster TL use: the input during teacher education on TL use and the schools' policy regarding this issue. By contrast, the complexity of the lesson content generally negatively affects TL use. A Cronbach's reliability analysis revealed a low internal consistency of the scale ( $\alpha = 0.628$ ) indicating that the eight factors investigated diverge in the amount of influence they had on teachers' TL use.

## 6 Discussion

Generally, lessons have a certain structure in which several elements are fixed, such as the greeting of students at the beginning and end of lessons, giving standard instructions (*Öffnet eure Bücher, bitte!* 'Open your books, please'), and giving positive feedback. Such elements are generally expressed by the use of chunks and formulaic expressions, thus easily remembered by students. As expected, it is in these linguistically and socially predictable and often reoccurring situations that the teachers in our study indicate to often use the TL. In contrast, situations which are less predictable, such as chatting outside the

classroom setting, or which are cognitively and linguistically more challenging (e.g., the explanation of grammar or conversations with individual students) teachers are more likely to resort to Dutch. These results align with Oosterhof et al. (2014) and Tammenga-Helmantel and Mossing Holsteijn (2016) who showed that Dutch FFL and EFL teachers use the TL whenever the teaching situation is relatively undemanding. Hence, the teachers use the TL in comparably easy situations, roughly matching with Kwakernaak's (2007) TL ladder. However, the GFL teachers also used German in slightly more challenging situations such as discussing reading or listening texts what the FFL teachers in Oosterhof et al. (2014) did in Dutch. On the other hand, even more challenging situations such as explain grammar or informal chatting with colleagues was done in Dutch, whereas the EFL teachers in Tammenga-Helmantel and Mossing Holsteijn (2016) have indicated to frequently use English. It could be that the well-developed receptive skills of Dutch secondary school students in German and English enable the teachers to use the TL also in less predictable and linguistically more challenging situations. On the other hand, the linguistic distance between Dutch and French

and, related to that, lower receptive proficiency levels of the students may well hinder FFL teachers to use the TL or at least to a lower extent than teachers of German and English. The higher proficiency levels, especially the productive skills, in English compared to German (CVE, 2013) may lead EFL teachers to use the TL more and in more challenging situations than their GFL colleagues.

Minimal differences were observed between desired and perceived use of the TL showing that the participating GFL teachers are generally satisfied with their TL use. Our data accord with the findings for Dutch EFL teachers (Tammenga-Helmantel & Mossing Holsteijn, 2016) and deviate from FFL teachers (Oosterhof et al., 2014). GFL and EFL teachers are apparently able to use the TL in their teaching in those situations they desire to use it, probably supported by the linguistic proximity between Dutch and the TLs. FFL teachers, on the other hand, are generally dissatisfied about their TL use; they want to use it more and in more differing situations. Probably the learners' language proficiency, especially their receptive skills, seem to obstruct the teachers to use the TL in French classes. Future research should clarify whether this is also the case in senior FFL classes, when language skills are expected to have improved.

Our study shows that factors affecting TL use have different impacts. The complexity of the lesson content, the students' reactions to the use of the TL, and the teachers own language proficiency most strongly mediate the teachers' TL use. Complex content generally discourages teachers to use the TL, e.g. when explaining grammar or new vocabulary (see also Hall & Cook, 2013). In line with this finding, Haijma (2013) noticed that the foreign language teachers in her study were often afraid that students did not fully understand what is explained in the TL, especially when the topic is fairly difficult. By contrast, the teachers' own language proficiency positively affects their TL use. Our participants seem to be confident about their own language proficiency; they feel comfortable and like to speak in German.

Finally, the students' reactions regarding TL use both positively and negatively influence the TL use of their teachers. Apparently, some teachers can motivate students through TL use and TL use fosters their classroom climate (see Tammenga-Helmantel et al., 2016; West & Verspoor, 2016) whereas others have a hard time struggling with unmotivated students.

In addition, the teachers in our study differ regarding the factors they perceive as affecting their TL use. First, some factors are considered encouraging by some teachers whereas others regard them as hindering TL use. This was observed in the role the school context plays for the individual teachers. In the literature, both positive and negative influences of school policy on TL use have been reported (see Hermans-Nykerk, 2007; Oosterhof et al., 2014). Second, some factors play a role for some teachers but not for others. An example is the impact of teacher education, which exclusively encourages the TL use of the teachers, whereas other teachers indicate that teacher education does not affect their TL use. Individual differences between teachers regarding prior education and teaching context are probably responsible for these outcomes.

Our data must be considered with caution. Our results base on self-reports of teachers concerning their own TL use and are probably biased. Dutch FL teachers consider TL use relevant and essential (Haijma, 2013; Oosterhof et al., 2014) and tend to be too positive about their own TL use (see also Mysliwicz, 2015). Future research should investigate what really happens in classrooms (see also Tomlinson, 2012). Classroom observations that focus on both the quantity and quality of TL use are needed, in addition to the self-reports of teachers. Classroom observations would also enable monitoring the target language use among students, either when they are speaking to each other or to the teacher. Moreover, questionnaires could be elaborated by interviewing teachers about their choices. This will give more insight into the teachers' motivation to use or to refrain from using the TL in specific situations.

## 7 Conclusion

The GFL teachers who participated in this study indicated that they generally use the TL in their classrooms but do not do so dogmatically. They clearly differentiate between classroom situations and seem satisfied with their TL use in teaching practice. The relevance of TL use as input for the students is no point of discussion for these teachers and they know how to put TL use into practice. For teachers who still struggle with integrating TL use into their teaching, the ranking of the classroom situations displayed in this article might be helpful to determine their zone of proximal development regarding TL use. In addition, a critical review of the factors affecting TL use might help them tackle hindrances and integrate fostering factors into their teaching environment and, in doing so, they can elevate their teaching practice.

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## Samenvatting

### **Auf Deutsch, bitte! Doeltaalgebruik onder docenten Duits**

Dit onderzoek bestudeert de inzet van het Duits, oftewel de doeltaal, door Nederlandse vo-docenten Duits in hun onderwijs. Onderzocht wordt hoeveel en in welke lessituaties Duits wordt gebruikt en of er een discrepantie bestaat tussen wenselijk en werkelijk doeltaalgebruik.

Daarnaast heeft deze studie als doel te achterhalen welke factoren doeltaalgebruik beïnvloeden, zij het belemmerend dan wel stimulerend. Verder bepalen we de invloed van de individuele factoren en bespreken in welke mate de curriculaire en linguïstische situatie van Duits in Nederland doeltaalgebruik beïnvloedt. De resultaten zijn gebaseerd op een kwantitatieve analyse van een vragenlijst over doeltaalgebruik die ingevuld werd door tweeëndertig docenten Duits. Deze docenten geven aan dat zij het Duits gebruiken wanneer ze positieve feedback, standaardinstructies, en algemene en individuele geboden of waarschuwingen geven, wanneer ze hulp bieden tijdens het individueel werken, en als ze lees- en luisterteksten bespreken. De complexiteit van de lesstof, reacties van studenten op doeltaalgebruik, en hun eigen taalbeheersing zijn volgens de bevroegde docenten de belangrijkste factoren die hun doeltaalgebruik bepalen. Het verschil tussen wat de docenten aangeven als het gewenste en het daadwerkelijke gebruik van de doeltaal bleek marginaal.

**Kernwoorden:** doeltaalgebruik, Duits als een vreemde taal, belemmerende factoren, stimulerende factoren, talige nabijheid

# Appendix A

Name:.....

Email:.....

What language do you teach?

German  English  French  Spanish

How many years of teaching experience do you have? Less than 5 years / between 5-10 years / more than 10 years

1. Please indicate to what extent you desire to use the target language and to what extent you use the target language in the following situations in **junior classes**.

1= very undesirable  
 2= somewhat undesirable  
 3= somewhat desirable  
 4= very desirable

1= never  
 2= sometimes  
 3= often  
 4= always

	desirable tl use					your tl use			
	1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4
standard instructions and admonitions									
classroom discussion of reading and listening texts									
returning tests									
chatting – not subject-related									
explaining grammar									
general and individual orders, warnings, and punishments									
standard instructions and help during individual work									
positive feedback, admonitions, and warnings during individual work									
greeting students									
chatting – with students before/after class									
making arrangements with students about the subject									
making arrangements with students about their (mis)behaviour									
greeting students									
chatting – with students outside the classroom									
subject-specific conversations with colleagues									
chatting – with colleagues									

2. Please indicate to what extent you desire to use the target language and to what extent you use the target language in the following situations in **senior classes**.

1= very undesirable  
 2= somewhat undesirable  
 3= somewhat desirable  
 4= very desirable

1= never  
 2= sometimes  
 3= often  
 4= always

	desirable tl use				your tl use			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
standard instructions and admonitions								
classroom discussion of reading and listening texts								
returning tests								
chatting – not subject-related								
explaining grammar								
general and individual orders, warnings, and punishments								
standard instructions and help during individual work								
positive feedback, admonitions, and warnings during individual work								
greeting students								
chatting – with students before/after class								
making arrangements with students about the subject								
making arrangements with students about their (mis)behaviour								
greeting students								
chatting – with students outside the classroom								
subject-specific conversations with colleagues								
chatting – with colleagues								

3. Please indicate to what extent the following factors influence your current target language use and whether they are encouraging or discouraging you to use the target language.

1= no influence  
 2= little influence  
 3= some influence  
 4= much influence

How?

a. input during teacher education					N/A / encouraging / discouraging
b. current situation within your school regarding TL use					N/A / encouraging / discouraging
c. students' reactions to use of TL					N/A / encouraging / discouraging
d. students are not use to use of TL					N/A / encouraging / discouraging
e. your own experiences from high school regarding TL use					N/A / encouraging / discouraging
f. the course books used					N/A / encouraging / discouraging
g. your own language proficiency					N/A / encouraging / discouraging
h. complexity of the lesson content					N/A / encouraging / discouraging