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Darlene Keydeniers

Two languages in daycare

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An appraisal of bilingual early childhood education and care in the Netherlands

English is gaining ground in the Dutch educational system. Many secondary schools in the Netherlands offer Dutch-English bilingual programs and early foreign language teaching in primary schools is becoming increasingly popular. This also goes for bilingual childhood education and care (henceforth: ECEC). This dissertation provides an in-depth overview of Dutch-English bilingual ECEC in the Netherlands, by addressing the following research questions: 1) what is the sociolinguistic, educational and sociopolitical context in which bilingual ECEC in the Netherlands transpired, 2) how is bilingual ECEC implemented and carried out, and 3) what are the consequences of the presence of two languages in bilingual ECEC for the actual practice and use of Dutch and English in one classroom, and for how Dutch and English affect each other structurally?

The results of this dissertation show that there are links between the context, underlying ideologies and the implementation and organization of bilingual Dutch-English input. In addition, it reveals discrepancies between the Dutch government's underlying ideologies and those of some of the daycare centers, and between the organization of bilingual input on paper and in practice. The results of this dissertation further indicate that the implementation of bilingual ECEC in the Netherlands is not something that needs to be feared, as time spent in bilingual ECEC on one language does not seem to come at the expense of the other. Rather, the two languages take on different roles in the classroom, and seem to find a way to work together and to support one another.

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