

# MOVING BEYOND THE BINARY OF 'MULTILINGUALISM' AND 'THE LANGUAGE OF SCHOOLING' IN EDUCATION

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# WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

# TWO INTERCONNECTED EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

1. Addressing (linguistic) diversity and instalment of inclusive policies and classroom practices
2. Tenacious social inequality

*Not new*

Globalisation and mobility  sociocultural and linguistic diversity

Renewed attention of policy makers in a socio-political context that has changed drastically over the last two decades:

- Return of assimilation discourses and policies of conditionality;
- Revival of monolingual ideologies (“The use of a common language is indispensable for social cohesion”);
- Virtualization of citizenship and citizenship as eternal achievement.

# TWO INTERCONNECTED EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

## **Addressing increasing linguistic diversity and instalment of inclusive policies and classroom practices**

- increased linguistic diversity in schools and classrooms is experienced by teachers as one of the main problems;
- Teachers express lower feelings of competency on how to address pupils' linguistic diversity.

## **Current responses to tenacious social inequality**

- Continued use of 'bad' languages is seen as an obstacle to learning the language of instruction (LOI) and to school success;
- A territorial monolingual policy is strictly maintained in formal public spaces;
- The acquisition of the language of instruction (LOI) has been put forward for the last two decades as main (sole) lever to address social inequality.

# LOI AND ML: A BINARY RELATIONSHIP

- One side is seen as the legitimate (non-negotiable) norm and the other as the deviant one:
  - Learning only through the dominant language is seen as the legitimate norm: an **L2 submersion model**;
  - **Multilingual education** is seen as the deviant norm and counter productive for learning (marginal comment: ML double standard)

So, on the one hand, 'language' is put forward as the solution, the panacea for social equality and on the other hand 'language' is standing in the way, the villain.

IS THE CURRENT RESPONSE ADEQUATE/EFFECTIVE?

# EXCLUSIVE L2 SUBMERSION MODEL

- For the last 10-15 years, in most European policies, to address inequality, language (i.e. dominant language) has become more and more pivotal, as the main lever (condition) for school success;
- This conditionality is very prominent in (education) policy discourses and educational practices:
  - Almost exclusive focus on an L2 submersion model;
  - Remedial teaching programmes; pull-out classes; summer schools; ...
  - Not acknowledging, ban and suppress the use of pupils' other language repertoires at school and in the classroom

# DOXA INSTEAD OF EPISTEME

- Deeply rooted beliefs and misconceptions about languages and their role for learning;
- Fuelled by monolingual normative framing;
- Common sensical assumptions:
  - Migrant children only or mainly speak their home language at home and outside kindergarten;
  - Language spoken at home is the main explaining variable for children's cognitive development and school success;
  - Knowledge of the dominant language is the condition for success;
  - Children (and their parents) speaking another language than the dominant language should be submersed in the L2 and this as early as possible. So, allowing children to use their home language in childcare centers and at school impacts negatively L2 learning and hence their development and school success



# A LARGE BODY OF SYSTEMIC VARIABLES

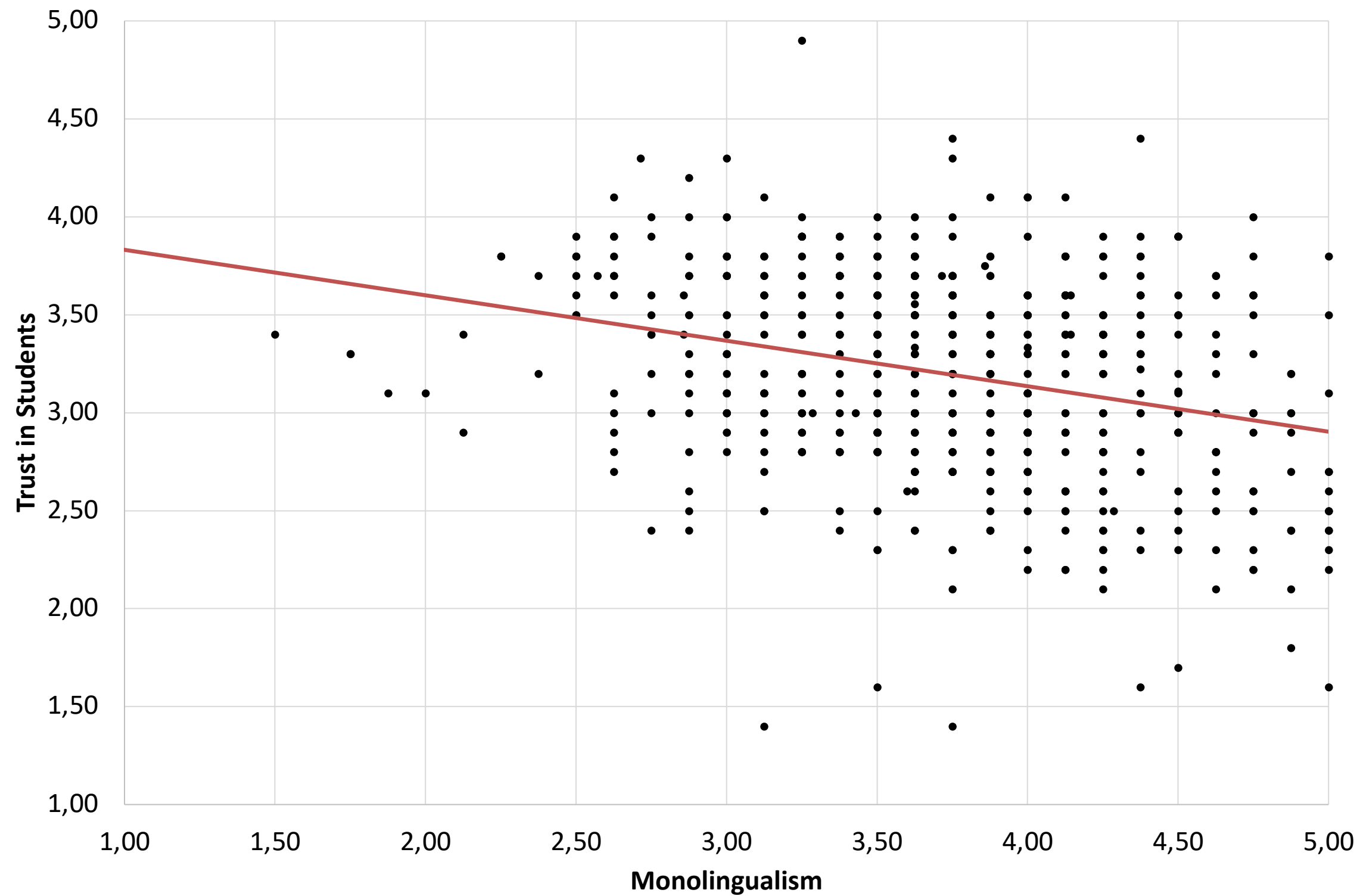
Many studies have already pointed to a plethora of variables explaining the reproduction of inequality of education.

- SES
- Sociology research points to a multitude of explaining and intervening variables (teachability culture; futility culture; tracking; ...)
- Educational science research as well (leadership; powerful learning environments; high expectations; co-teaching; feedback; ...)

# THE BURDEN OF PROOF IS FLIMSY

- Systematic pull-out classes are unsuccessful (Karsten et al.,2006):
  - development of pupils' LOI;
  - transition into mainstream classes;
  - risk of stigmatisation;
- Putting young newcomers in segregated LOI submersion programmes cannot be justified (Groothoff,2020):
  - no difference in vocabulary development in separate exclusive LOI submersion programmes compared to inclusive mainstream classroom programmes.
  - teacher-pupil relationship and pupils' mutual enthusiasm, affection and respect for each other was stronger in the inclusive mainstream condition.
- Saunders, Goldenberg & Marcelletti (2013) advocate for a mix of targeted LOI lessons for shorter periods of the day, preferable inclusive in the mainstream classroom:
  - via co-teaching;
  - language sensitive teaching;
  - high quality interaction;
  - a powerful language classroom environment, rich language input of the teacher, maximum opportunities for pupils' language production and interaction and direct feedback of teachers are pivotal.

# THE MONOLINGUAL PARADOX



(Pulinx, Agirdag & Van Avermaet, 2014)

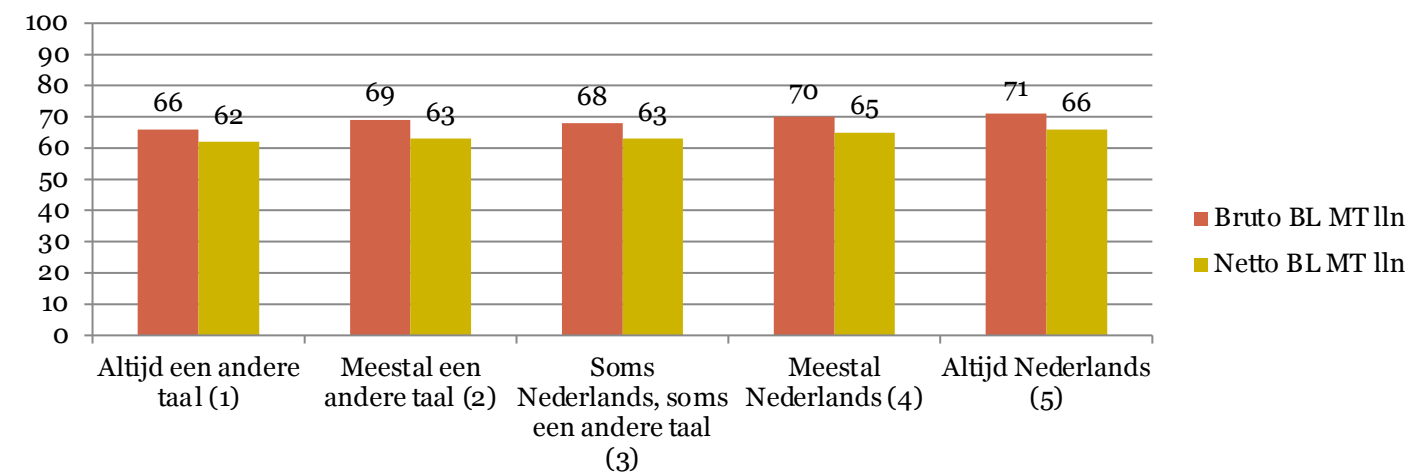
# MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION: EPISTEME

# EFFECT ON L2 PROFICIENCY

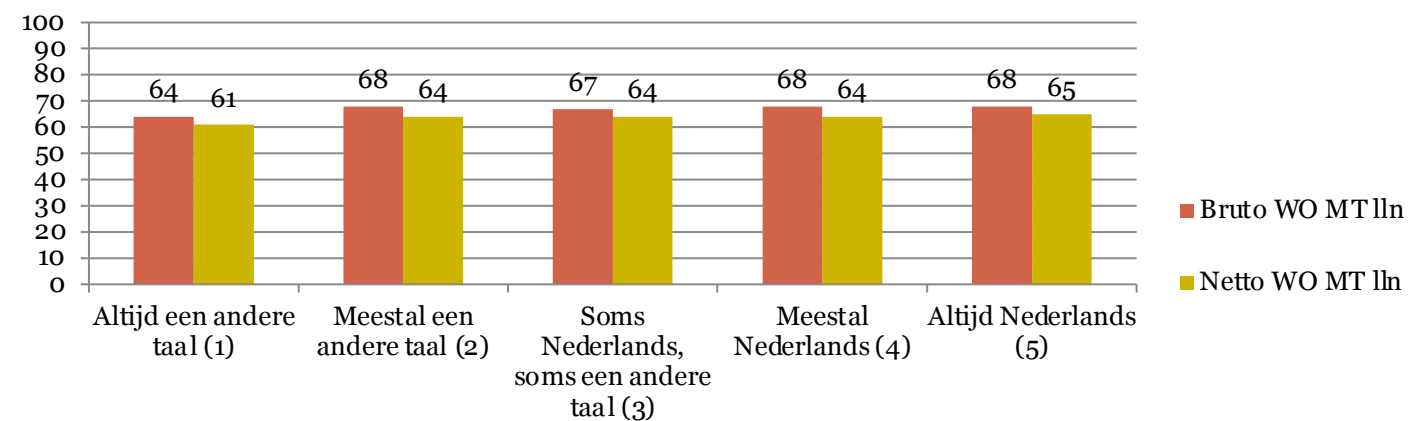
- Multiple regression analysis:
  - DV: Reading Comprehension Dutch
  - Control variables: gender, baseline comprehension Dutch
- A-condition:  $M = 21.14$  ( $n = 42$ )
- Control:  $M = 21.91$  ( $n = 43$ )
- Beta A-condition = 0.008 ( $p = .936$ , ns)
- Explained variance = 20.6% ( $F(4,93) = 7.289$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

Exploiting children's ML repertoires had no negative effect on reading comprehension Dutch.

# ACHIEVEMENT AND LANGUAGE USE ON THE PLAYGROUND

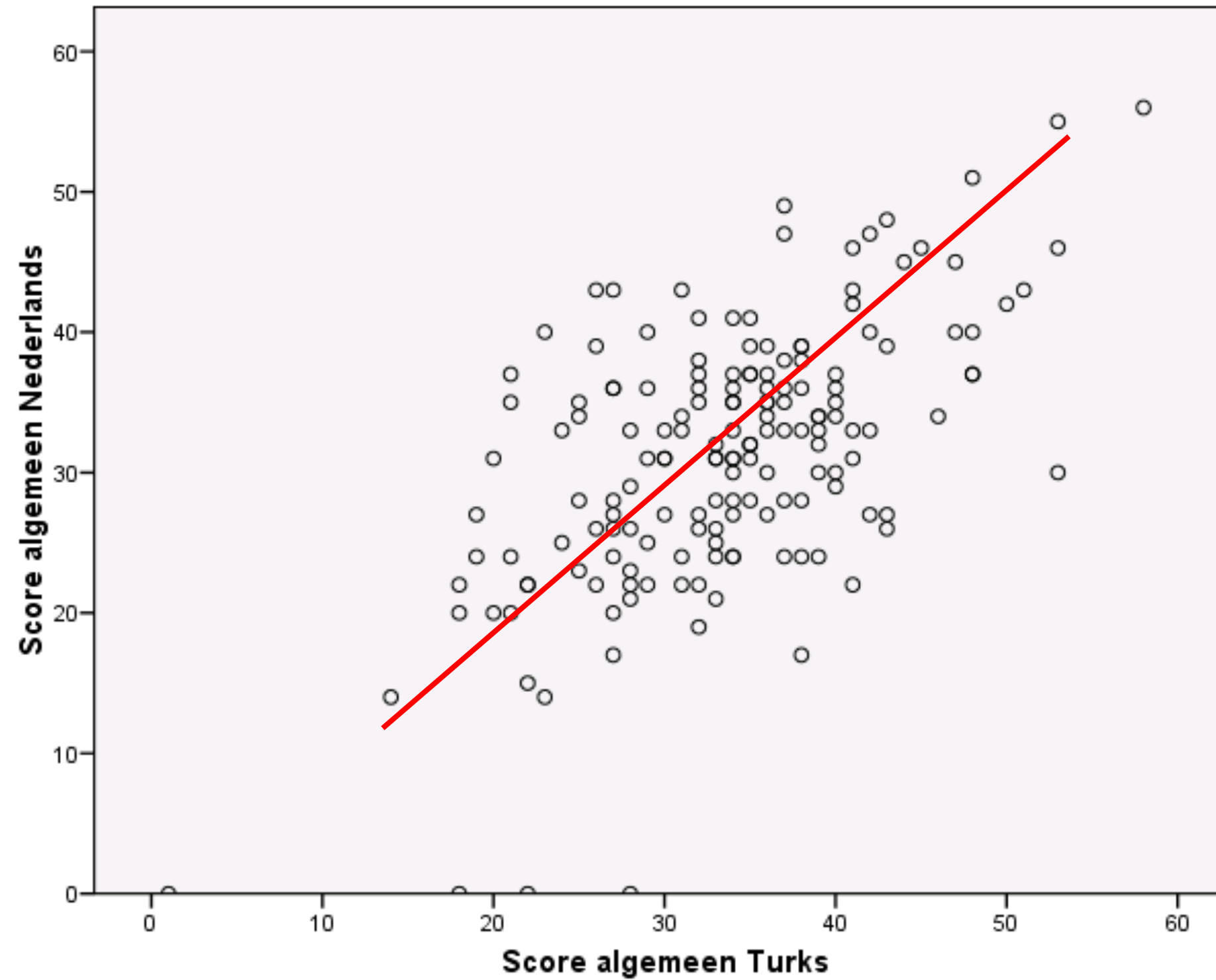


Reading comprehension

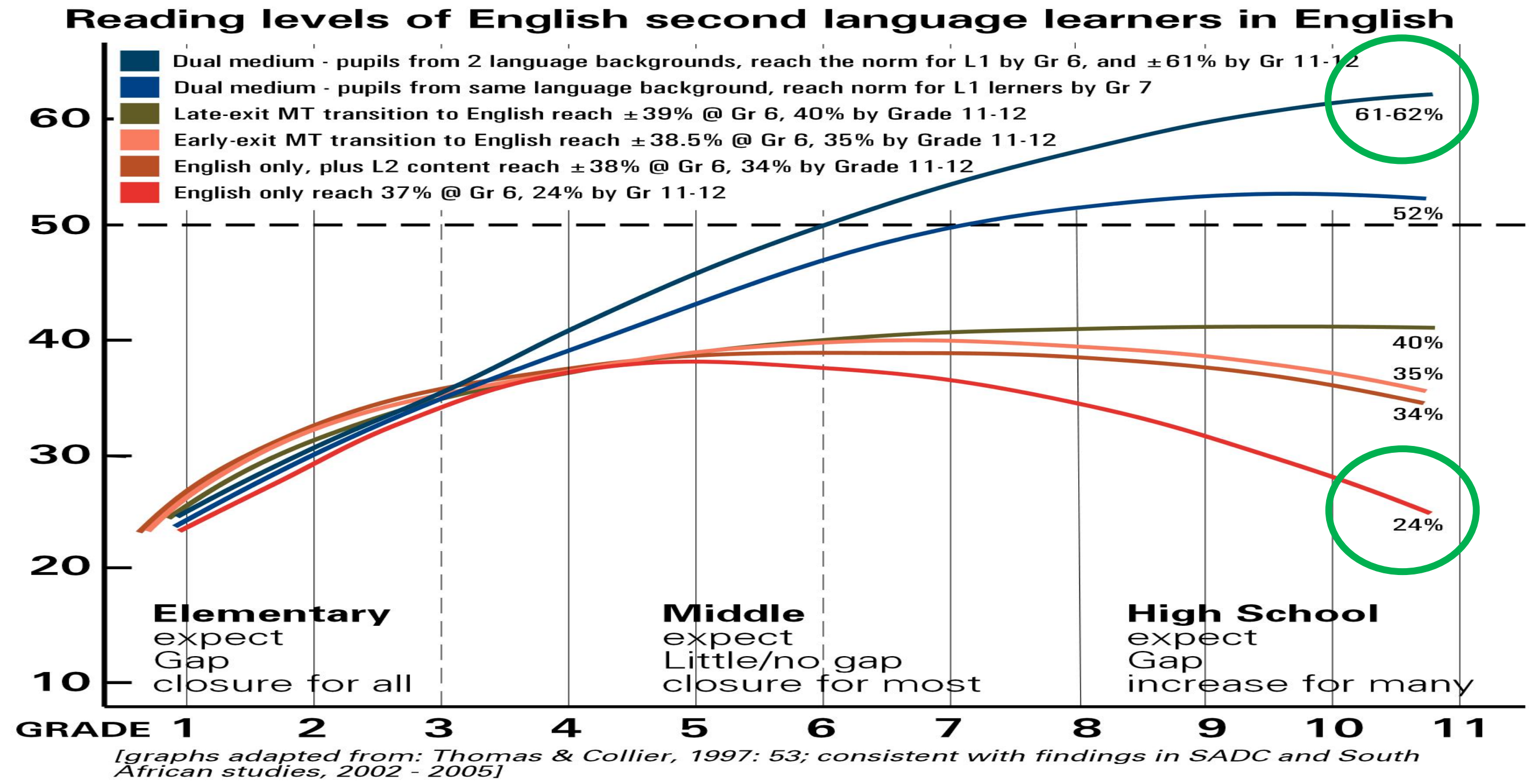


World sciences

# INTERDEPENDENCY LX EN LY

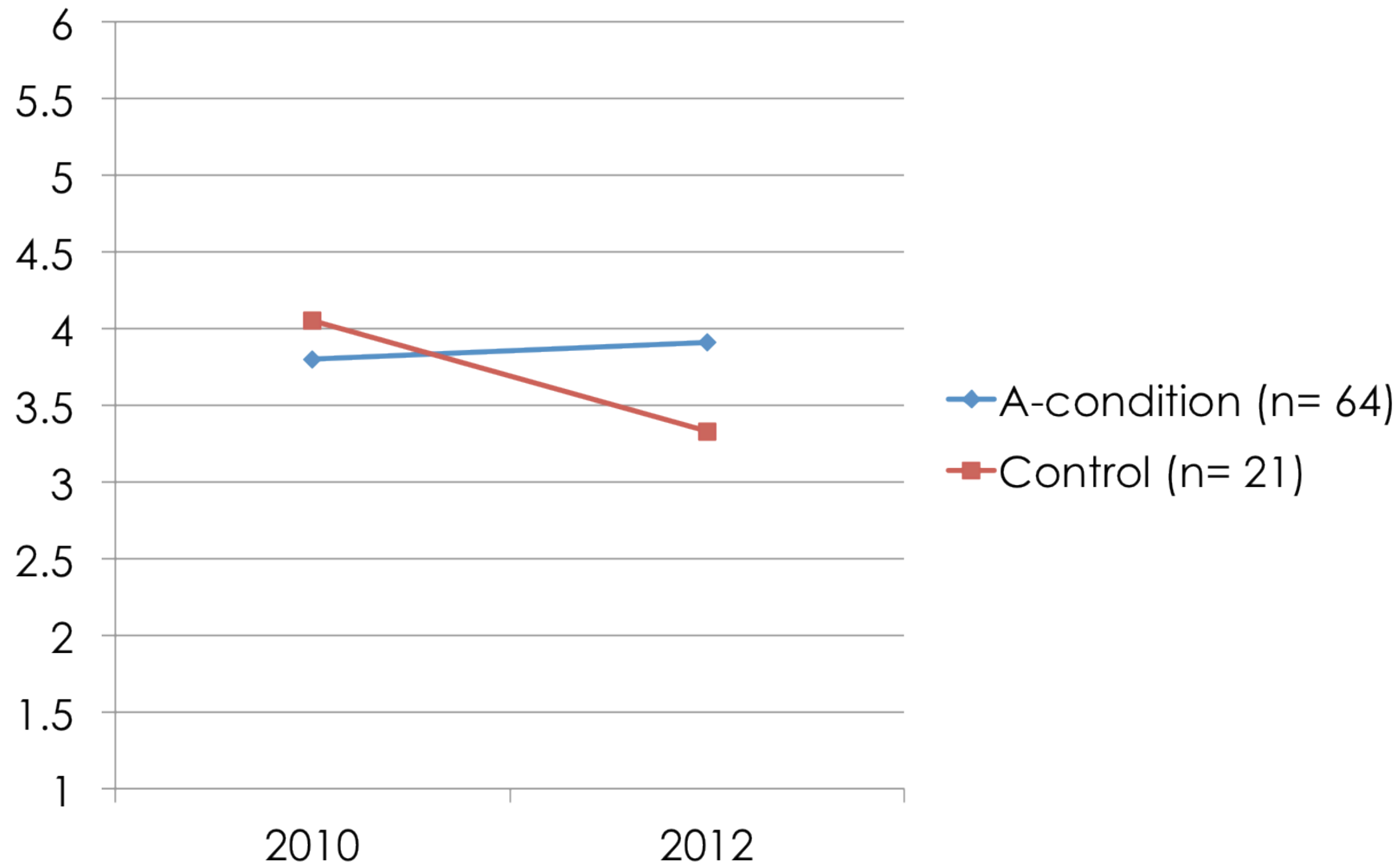


# TWO WAY IMMERSION PROGRAMMES





# SOCIO-AFFECTIVE EFFECTS ON PUPILS: SELF-CONFIDENCE



# IMPACT ON TEACHERS

Attitudes towards home language of pupils and multilingualism in general:

- Positive attitude and appreciation in kindergarten
- Growing awareness of linguistic diversity in primary school

"I've grown in the use of different languages in the classroom. I have a greater appreciation now for the language of the children."  
(teacher newcomers, primary school)

# EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FOR ML EDUCATION

- Meta studies (Rolstad, Mahoney & Glass, 2008; Reljic, Ferring & Martin, 2015):
  - programmes whereby both the home language and LOI are exploited in mainstream classroom work better than monolingual LOI exclusive submersion programmes.
- A prolonged multilingual school policy and classroom practice is, however, of crucial importance (Cummins, 1981; Thomas & Collier, 1997; Collier & Thomas, 2017).
- An intensive and longitudinal ‘two-way immersion’ model (TWI) is the most promising for the school success of multilingual pupils in general, for their acquisition of the LOI in particular.
- A multilingual school policy thus provides the greatest guarantee to contribute for more equity in education.

DEALING WITH MULTILINGUALISM IN EDUCATION:

TIME FOR NEW RECIPES?

# CONCERNS OF TEACHERS

- “Children’s mothertongue is ‘poor’ or ‘restricted’”;
- “Allowing the use of children’s mother tongue will increase/maintain segregation”;
- “When children speak their mothertongue at school I loose control of what happens in the class; they gossip; it has a negative impact on learning (the school language)”;
- “If I translate, the motivation to learn the school language drops”;
- “There is already so little time to learn the school language”;
- “I have more than 10 different languages in my classroom. I cannot speak/understand all these languages”.

# BEYOND BINARIES

Given:

- Social context: hyper diverse spaces (schools and classrooms);
- Practicalities: feasibility of customary bilingual education in urban heterogeneous classrooms?;
- Theoretical insights:
  - new sociolinguistic conceptions of multilingual communication in today's complex world (translanguaging, ...);
  - Sociolinguistic research unraveled the complex dynamics of youngsters' multilingual practices to communicate; construct and share knowledge
- Social inequality being a tenacious problem and danger of sloppy or elitist ML policies increasing inequality;
- The counter productive and highly ideologized binary discussions in society at large and education in particular;

Move beyond the binaries towards a new approach to learning at school that integrates ML in education and learning

# FUNCTIONAL MULTILINGUAL LEARNING (SIERENS & VAN AVERMAET, 2014)

- Exploiting multilingual repertoires as didactical capital for learning: functional use of home languages in multilingual, L2-dominant learning environments;
- Exploiting multilingual repertoires to raise multilingual awareness, create positive attitudes towards ML, contribute to identity and status, to wellbeing, self confidence, self-esteem, to express ideas, opinions and feelings, ...
- Important condition is creating powerful learning environments

A 'multilingual social interaction model for learning' as alternative for a 'language learning model'

# FML: WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM RESEARCH?

- No negative effect on learning of 'language of schooling';
- Scaffold for learning;
- Positive effect on:
  - Self-confidence and wellbeing;
  - Teachers' beliefs and practices;
  - teacher perceptions;
  - mixed friendship relationship;
- Positive effects of ML assessment;
- In context of ML policy ALL children feel better at school;
- In schools with a strict monolingual policy or a vague policy one can observe teachers and principals struggling with the ML realities and the strict rules.



# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS?

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1. Create, ensure and push forward with a multilingual policy at macro, meso and micro level;
2. Opt for a political discourse that connects people and that encourages them to embrace multilingualism and to perceive and exploit it as part of good citizenship;
3. Invest in a multilingual school wide policy that is developed and supported by the whole school team;
4. Create powerful learning environments for the enhancement of pupils' language of instruction but reflect on the most meaningful and effective path to it;
5. Value, respect, represent and make the language diversity visible in the school and the classroom;
6. Assure that ALL languages are acknowledged, allowed and encouraged to be used in the social space;
7. Exploit pupils' multilingual repertoires in (language) learning and assessment processes;
8. Reinforce the dispositions, beliefs, professional vision, self-efficacy and situation specific skills of teacher teams to exploit multilingualism in the classroom and to create more language sensitive school environments.

# CONCLUSIONS

# CONCLUSIONS <sup>1/2</sup>

- Educational success and equity cannot be realized through an exclusive L2 submersion policy/practice. It is a continuous, complex, dynamic process;
- It is in processes of social participation and building social networks (e.g. via education) that languages are being acquired (through language use);
- A ML policy and ML practices in education, in which ALL linguistic repertoires of EACH person (pupils and parents) are being exploited as a strength, an asset for learning and social participation;
- A multilingual policy is embedded in an inclusive school policy and intersects with other systemic variables;
- An 'ecology of ML' for more equity in education.

# CONCLUSION <sup>2/2</sup>

- For more than 40 years we denied migration to be a permanent phenomenon.
- Shall we deny for another 40 years the 'multilingual reality' and do we want to maintain the simple and insufficient recipes of monolingual school policies and practices, based on ideologies of a 'national identity', 'social cohesion' and 'virtual citizenship'?
- A kind but firm invitation to act against this form of social hypochondria.

# FURTHER READING AND REFS

# REFS

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