



Academic language workshops for non-native speakers at Ghent University: *implementation and effects*

1. Facts
2. Research
3. Concept
4. Effects
5. Conclusion

Flanders: enrolment at universities

language tuition: Dutch

to enrol: degree secondary school + B2 CEF for L2
speakers

2010 – 2015 Evolution of enrolment minorities

40.000 students

%	'10 - '11	'11 - '12	'12 - '13	'13 - '14	'14 - '15
Migration background	6,9 %	7,5 %	10,4 %	10,8 %	11 %
Migration background (non-European)	3,2 %	3,1 %	3,9 %	4,4 %	4,8 %

First year pass rate

Total population: 56%

Ethnic minority: 20%

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Long term: relation between academic literacy and academic success

(De Wachter & Heeren, 2014)

Schellekens, 2006; Berckmoes & Rombouts, 2009; De Wachter & Heeren, 2010; Tahon, 2013

+ own research Ghent University, 2009

Language policy: since 2009:

- Non-native speakers : workshops
- Personal feedback on writing (now: at-risk students)
- Plenary sessions in different faculties
- Writing clinics
- Website on academic writing
- Academic language skills test without binding effect

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Tasks stimulate
language learning &
processing skills

Bygate 1999

Authentic academic tasks are integrated

Cumming 2013

Study success &
network are linked

De Bruyn 2006

Interaction
hypothesis

Gass 1997, Long 1996,
Swain 2005, Gass 2005

By instructional
scaffolding, learners
can function beyond
their level

Alexander 2012

Academic skills
shouldn't be taught
without content

Bee Tin 2003

LAP courses
should adopt
a unique
pedagogy

Alexander 2012

Good TBLT blends
subjective and objective
needs

Van Avermaet 2006

LSP is about
manipulating language
in different ways

Davies 2001

Needs-based:	Learners co-determine content
Task-based:	Real-life academic tasks
Interactive:	Max 4 learners / tutor (+/- 20 learners)
Open structure:	Anything can happen Not compulsory Low threshold, no tests, non-hierarchic, non-linear
Focus:	Learner needs
Tutors:	2 staff members 3 teachers in training / peers
Atmosphere:	open & relaxed

- Non-native speakers of Dutch – B2
- Weekly
- Evening
- 1 teacher + 3/ 4 trainee teachers
- Small groups
- Task-based approach

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What is the effect of the task-based workshops on the abilities of the L2 students?

- self-confidence
- attitudes
- receptive and expressive language skills

Methodology & Sources

- in-depth interviews: Oct, Nov, Dec 2012
- focus groups: 2012 (Steunpunt Diversiteit & Leren)
- pre- and post-questionnaires: Oct, Dec 2015

Effect on L2 Students

How do they feel about the workshops?

What did you like and dislike about the workshops?

<i>Like</i>		<i>Dislike</i>	
Feedback, coaching & interaction	8	Not enough grammar	1
Atmosphere	6	Not enough variety	1
Tasks / content	6		
Applicability	1		
Variety	1		
Everything	1		

15 Respondents
(Interview October & December 2012)

Effect on L2 Students

How do they feel about the workshops?

What did you like and dislike about the workshops?

... we can practice. It'd be useless if we'd get a few definitions to learn by heart in five minutes and then, pff I don't know. Practice is extremely important to me, because us students, well most of the time we're quietly behind our books and such. Here we get the opportunity to talk and to practice.

F - L1 Arabic Student (Belgium), December 2012

Effect on L2 Students

How do they feel about the workshops?

What did you like and dislike about the workshops?

If you talk to people, maybe they won't give you feedback, because they are with friends, family or acquaintances and they will not always pay attention to you. But here in the workshops you will support us, you will [...] give feedback.

J - L1 French Student (Congo), December 2012

RQ – Effect on L2 Students

How do they feel about the workshops?

What did you like and dislike about the workshops?

These workshops are better than anything I've learned in any other course. [...] Well the rules, the grammar that's no problem. The problem is applying the rules in reality. And we don't do that in class. In class for example, the present perfect. And then you do 10 or 20 exercises on the present perfect. And when I'm studying the present perfect I can do it perfectly for 20 or 100 times, that's no problem. But the problem is when I have to [...] use language in different ways in a context.

S - L1 Spanish Student (Colombia), December 2012

RQ – Effect on L2 Students

What did they gain from the workshops?

What is the main thing these workshops have taught you?

Self confidence / willingness to talk	5
Presentation skills	5
Writing skills	3
Vocabulary	2
Pronunciation	2

9 respondents
(Interview December 2012)

RQ – Effect on L2 Students

What did they gain from the workshops?

What is the main thing these workshops have taught you?

I think that after these workshop [...] I dare to speak to other people and talk about my problem to them and that is a good thing

A – L1 Dari Student (Afghanistan), December 2012

Discussion

- declining numbers
 - registration data
 - perception
 - preparatory program → Voortraject Hoger Onderwijs
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Conclusion

The Task-Based workshops:

- offer a rare chance to actively use Academic Dutch
 - are a safe context to experiment and receive feedback
 - lead to increased self-confidence & enhance productive skills
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Thank you

Questions?

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