

**L2 to L1 Transfer in the Use of Clause-Initial Constituents in the Writing of Students of  
English Language and Culture**

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### Abstract

This study focusses on L2 to L1 transfer in the writing of Dutch students of English Language and Culture. It predicts that Dutch students of English during their study, due to the intense exposure and teaching of English, will gradually gravitate towards the English preferences regarding clause-initial constituents, and therefore become more aware of which and how many adverbials they place in first position. A Dutch and native English speaker corpus will be used as a reference. The research questions are: 1) How does the writing of native English speakers compare to the writing of Dutch students of other subjects than English in terms of clause-initial constituents? 2) How does the writing of Dutch students of other subjects than English and of native English speakers compare to the Dutch writing of Dutch students of English in terms of clause-initial constituents? 3) How does the Dutch writing of Dutch students of English develop over the course of their study in terms of clause-initial constituents? This was studied by doing corpus research on texts from the LONGDALE, LOCNESS and a self-collected corpus. The results show that the native English speakers used less clause-initial adverbials than the Dutch students, more clause-initial subjects, and no clause-initial objects at all. In comparison to the data of the Dutch students of English, it showed that in year 1 the students were in between the two sets of data in terms of the number of clause-initial subjects and adverbials used. The longitudinal development showed that from year 1 to year 2 the number of clause-initial adverbials used decreased, while the number of subjects decreased, but that this development was 'reset' again in year 3.

Keywords: L2 to L1 transfer, longitudinal development, sentence structure, clause-initial constituents.

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## 1. Introduction

It has become clear that English is gaining ground in the Netherlands. For example, a large-scale survey of uses and attitudes to English in the Netherlands reveals that 90% of respondents “rated themselves as having at least reasonable to fluent reading, writing, speaking and listening skills” (Edwards, 2016, p. 97). This is confirmed by the fact that 2017 was the second year in a row that the Dutch were established to be the most proficient English speakers in non-English speaking countries, according to Education First (EF). An earlier EU survey also concluded that the Netherlands has the greatest proportion of non-native speakers of English in Europe (Eurobarometer, 2012). This shows that through globalization and education English plays a bigger part in the lives of the Dutch now than ever (Edwards, 2016). Nowadays, learning English is also seen as “a basic skill universally acquired” (Edwards, 2016, p.197). The effect of this is especially seen at universities, since many studies are switching to using English as the main language of instruction.

There are also students who use English as an object of study rather than a means. These students fully immerse themselves in learning the English language, since, for their study, they write exclusively in English, attend lectures that are exclusively in English, and they have to speak in English every class as well. Many students also move to an English-speaking country for half a year or a year, and attend English events organised by their study association. The positive effect of this immersion is that the students become advanced speakers of English, who are supposed to enter the study with an English CEFR-level of B2, but leave with a C2 level. Van Vuuren (2017) actually showed that 40% of the students that entered the study already were at C2, while only a handful were at B2. This shows the high level of English knowledge these students actually have. The question of this thesis is, then, what this heavy focus on and high level of knowledge of the L2 has on the L1.

While transfer is still one of the most commonly discussed and hotly debated issues in the study of bilingualism and second language acquisition, the extent of its possibilities are still debated. Cook (1991, 2003) proposed a theory of multicompetence, suggesting that people who know more than one language have a distinct compound state of mind which is not equivalent to two monolingual states. Subsequent research has suggested that L2 to L1 transfer occurs on different language levels, and that these effects are prevalent, and occur in all stages of the learning process.

This thesis expands on this line of research and explores L2 to L1 influence in the domain of word order. English has an SVO structure, which means that the default position of the subject is the clause-initial position. Dutch, in contrast, has an OV-structure with verb-second constraint, which gives Dutch more freedom in placing adverbials before the verb or post-verbally. This study will analyse whether the intense focus on the English language that Dutch students of English face will cause L2 to L1 transfer, in terms of word order, specifically in the case of clause-initial constituents. It is expected that during their studies, the students of English will gradually decrease their number of adverbials used in clause-initial position due to the influence of the English language they encounter, more so than regular students who are also exposed to English on a daily basis. The research questions that will be answered are:

- 1) How does the writing of native English speakers compare to the writing of Dutch students of other subjects than English in terms of clause-initial constituents?
- 2) How does the writing of Dutch students of other subjects than English and of native English speakers compare to the Dutch writing of Dutch students of English in terms of clause-initial constituents?
- 3) How does the Dutch writing of Dutch students of English develop over the course of their study in terms of clause-initial constituents?

To study the effects of intensive L2 study on the L1 corpus research will be conducted. The clause-initial constituents of Dutch texts from the LONGDALE corpus from year 1 to year 3 will be counted and categorised as subjects, adverbials or objects. The adverbials will also be categorised under linking, time, place, or other adverbials. The same will be done with texts written by native English students from the LOCNESS corpus and texts written by Dutch students of different subjects than English. These last two corpora will be used as a reference to the English and Dutch norm.

This thesis will be structured as follows. First, the background chapter will cover the theory of transfer, as well as the history of linguistic transfer. Then, L2 to L1 transfer and the theory of multicompetence will be discussed. There will also be a section on computer learner research and its benefits, and a section concerning the status of English in the Netherlands and the influence of English on Dutch. Lastly, it will be made clear how differences in sentence structure might give rise to L1 to L2 and, possibly, L2 to L1 transfer. Second, after the background chapter, the methods will be discussed, and third, the results will be established. This thesis will end with a discussion and conclusion of the results.

## **2. Background Chapter**

### **2.1 Transfer**

Transfer, defined as “involuntary influence of one language on the other in bilingual competence and performance” (Pavlenko, 2000, p. 175), is still one of the most commonly discussed and hotly debated issues in the study of bilingualism and second language acquisition. Research on transfer started in the fifties and sixties, under the influence of behaviourism and structuralism, and has been common practice in second/foreign language studies ever since (Talebi, 2013). Its focus has, however, been mostly on L1 to L2 transfer, also known as ‘substratum transfer’ (Odlin, 1989). SLA normally limits its investigation to L1

transfer, conceptualized as "the use of native language (or other language) knowledge—in some as yet unclear way—in the acquisition of a second (or additional) language" (Gass & Selinker, 1992, p. 234). The field of bilingualism does consider L2 influence on L1, but mostly in childhood and simultaneous bilingualism or on the speech community level in language contact situations (Appel & Muysken, 1987). The reason that these fields do not acknowledge L2 to L1 transfer is that they assume that once the speaker's language system has "matured," his or her linguistic native competence is no longer subject to change (Pavlenko, 2000). This was, among others, based on the famous discussion on bilingualism by Weinreich (1953) in which he proposed that subordinate bilingualism is a process of foreign or second language learning where in the linguistic system of the weaker language is attached to and perceived through that of the dominant language. Later MacWhinney (1997) presented a paper in which he proposed a very strong version of the maturation argument. He suggests that once a local brain area

"has been committed, it then begins to accept input data that lead toward a fine-tuning of the activation weights governing processing. If a second language is then to be imposed upon this pre-existing neural structure, it would directly interfere with the established set of weights" (p. 136).

He concludes that the use of transfer in second language learning would actually allow the learner to avoid transfer of the L2 back upon the L1. Because of these assumptions and the fact that SLA focusses more on the target language, SLA mainly studies L1 to L2 transfer and disregards L2 to L1 transfer (Pavlenko, 2000).

## 2.2 History of Linguistic Transfer

Transfer is a crucial factor in language learning (Talebi, 2013). There are two kinds of transfer: positive transfer (also known as facilitation) and negative transfer (also known as

interference) (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Negative transfer has long been believed to be the main source of problems for learners (Talebi, 2013). This notion caused for the so-called Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis to be created (Odlin, 1989, Gass & Selinker, 2008), which holds that the major source of error in the production and/or reception of a second language is the native language and that errors can be accounted for by considering differences between the L1 and the L2. Catford (1964), however, showed that similarities between languages can be problematic as well and dissimilarities can actually facilitate SLA. After the Chomskian Universal Grammar theory (Chomsky, 1969) was developed, transfer was not seen as the main source of problem in SLA anymore, since it considered L1 and L2 acquisition to be equivalent developmental processes. Chomsky asserted that a behaviourist position with regard to language learning was untenable, and that it was essential to view the learner as an active participant in the learning process and as a language creator (Talebi, 2013). Therefore, second language acquisition came to be regarded as a creative construction process rather than the transfer of old habits from L1 to L2 (Dulay and Burt, 1975). Dulay and Burt (1975, p. 37) define this creative construction theory as

“[T]he process in which children gradually reconstruct rules for speech they hear, guided by universal innate mechanisms which cause them to formulate certain types of hypotheses about the language system being acquired, until the mismatch between what they are exposed to and what they produce is resolved.”

In this way, there are L2 strategies that are common to all children regardless of their native language. In light of these studies, the argument was made that both transfer and creative construction are influential factors in learning a second and/or foreign language (Danesi, 1995). There are five main processes critical to the learning of a target language, and language transfer is still regarded as one of these important processes (Talebi, 2013). The other four

processes are overgeneralization, transfer-of-training, L2 learning strategies, and L2 communication strategies (Selinker, 1972).

### 2.3 L2 to L1 Transfer and Multicompetence

In contrast with the maturation notion of SLA, a number of scholars maintain the opposite, namely that someone's native language can actually be subject to change in adulthood and that therefore the stability of one's L1 is not as inflexible as normally presumed. These works mainly challenge the Chomskian notion of monolingual native speaker competence, which "idealizes away variation, performance, and especially bilingualism, [and] is even less suitable to SLA than it is to linguistics" (Sridhar, 1994, p. 801). This notion has one problem that researchers identify as the monolingual bias, which makes it possible for linguistic theory to dismiss "the existence of multilingual contexts of interaction in which (a) a second language could influence first language competence and (b) bilinguals may behave differently from monolingual speakers of either language" (Pavlenko, 2000).

The most important theory to support the existence of L2 to L1 transfer, and therefore to combat the SLA notion of maturation of the L1 is Cook's theory of multi-competence. This theory was fuelled by the idea that people actually shift between languages in their mind (Cohen, 1995). Pavlenko and Travis (2002) refer to this as 'bidirectional transfer', which they describe as the interaction between the two languages. Cook (1991) introduced the term multi-competence, which refers to the knowledge of two or more languages in one mind. The theory of multi-competence suggests that two language that are in the same mind should "form a language super-system at some level rather than completely isolated systems" (Cook, 2003, p. 7). This theory therefore challenged the idea that L1 and 'interlanguage' were two separate systems in one mind.

Cook (2003) describes three models that could illustrate the relationships between the two or more language in the mind. The Separation model describes the possibility that all of the languages are in closed off compartments, which is similar to the idea of coordinate bilingualism as posed by Weinreich (1953). This means that the L2 learner chooses which language they speak, either the one or the other, but not both. This is the model that Cook (2003) finds to be the least fitting, since it does not allow discussion of L2 to L1 transfer. Then the Integration model is presented, which enholds the exact opposite of the Separation model, namely that all of the languages in the mind of the L2 learner form a single system (Cook, 2003). This model still does not allow discussion on the influence of L2 to L1, as there is no L2 nor L1. In a single mind you cannot count languages – L1, L2, L3 – since they are a single system (Cook, 2003). Unlike the Separation and the Integration model, the Interconnection model does allow for discussion on L2 to L1 transfer. This model has two variants; the Partial Integration model and the Linked Languages model. In the Partial Integration model the two language systems overlap in the same mind, while in the Linked Languages model the languages are separate, but they do influence each other. Eventually these become a sort of integration continuum in which people for example start with separation and move towards integration or vice versa (Cook, 2003).

If there are effects on the L1, the question remains whether they are they positive or negative. Cook (2003) states that both are possible. In a positive sense learning an L2 can function as a sort of ‘brain-training’. Kecskes & Papp (2000), for example, showed that Hungarian children who have learnt English use more complex sentences in their first language than those who do not. Bialystok (2001), furthermore, showed that children that use an L2 have more precocious metalinguistic skills than their peers who do not. In contrast, a person can to some extent lose the ability to use their first language, once they learn a second one. “In circumstances where one language becomes less and less used, people do lose their

command of it, whether as a group or as individuals” (Cook, 2003). Cook (2003) does also mention that it is difficult to assess whether differences between languages are problematic, because they rely on a value judgement about what is good and bad. According to Cook (2003) “enhanced metalinguistic ability is only valuable if it is useful in some definable way; losing some aspect of the first language is only a disadvantage if it prevents the L2 user carrying out some activity successfully”. Therefore, it is difficult to say if the influence English for example has on Dutch is actually a negative factor or not.

#### 2.4 L2 to L1 Transfer on Different Language Levels

L2 influence has been documented on several linguistic levels, such as phonology, morphosyntax, lexicon and semantics, and pragmatics. Pavlenko and Jarvis (2002) describe that the effects of L2 influence are not only “pervasive and widespread, but they may also appear quite early in the L2 learning process” (p. 178). Pavlenko and Jarvis (2002), for example, conducted a study of oral narratives by Russian L2 users of English. They examined narratives produced by 22 participants, who all had learned their English after puberty and had been exposed to English for a period between 3 and 8 years. They found that out of 22, 17 participants, who had been living in the United States for three-eight years, showed L2 transfer in their use of Russian. Five of these 17 participants had only been living in the United States for three years.

The areas in which L2 to L1 influence has been studied and acknowledged the most are phonology and lexicon (Pavlenko, 2000). Research in phonology proposes that the human perceptual system remains flexible during someone’s life and when sensory input changes it can be modified (Pavlenko, 2000). When learning an L2 the learner may experience “restructuring of the acoustic-phonetic space encompassing both L1 and L2” (Leather & James, 1996, p.279). This restructuring may cause the formation of new L1 parameter values

that are different from monolingual norms and go more towards the norms of the L2. This may result in some L2 learners not being perceived as native speakers of their L1 anymore. For example, in Latomaa's (1998) study of English L2 users of Finnish an American participant complained, "After five years here in Finland I went back to the States and the neighbors asked which country I am from" (p. 65).

The research of L2 to L1 influence in morphosyntax is limited, but there are still a few studies that suggest that morphosyntax can also be influenced by an L2. The area in which transfer is most noticeable is sentence structure, in particular word-order rules. These might be restructured or even lost due to L2 influence. For example, Waas (1996) researched 118 Germans speakers who moved to Australia as adults and had lived there for about 16 years. These speakers exhibited a deviation from standard German sentence structure when speaking German again. Boyd and Andersson (1991) found out that the L1 speech of their American informants gained a more variable placement of adverbials under the influence of Swedish, while the L1 speech of their Finnish informants lost its possessive clitics under influence of Swedish. There are also several researchers who researched L2 to L1 influence on morphosyntax through grammaticality judgement tests. They suspected that L2 effects on the L1 were not limited to the production of sentences, but also occurred in the ability to judge the grammaticality of sentences (Pavlenko, 2000). De Bot, Gommans, and Rossing (1991) studied L1 attrition in the speech and grammaticality judgements of Dutch immigrants in France who immigrated after the age of 17 and had lived in France for at least 10 years. The results showed that the amount of contact with L1 speakers and the time elapsed since immigration showed significant effects on the L1. The participants who had the least contact with L1 speakers had judgements that differed the most from the control group.

Lexical and semantic influence from L2 to L1 has been extremely well-documented in literature. There are four types of lexical borrowing: (1) *loanwords*: lexical items from one

language adapted phonologically and morphologically for use in another; (2) *loan blends*: hybrid forms which combine elements of both languages; (3) *loan shifts*: L1 words which acquire the L2 meaning; (4) *loan translations*: literal translations of L2 words, phrases, or expressions (Haugen, 1953). All of these phenomena can also occur as language change, but they are very typical concepts of bilingualism as well, “in which new L1 forms and expressions appear to reflect new social and conceptual reality” (Pavlenko, 2000). Jaspaert and Kroon (1992) analysed the written language of one particular person: A.L., an 83-year-old man who moved to the United States about 60 years ago. This man was a native speaker of Dutch, and he switched a lot between English and Dutch, since he would still write letters in Dutch to his relatives and friends at home. The authors analysed these letters and found that 5% of the open category words (i.e. nouns, adjectives, and verbs) were influenced by his L2. All four categories above (loanwords, loan blends, loan shifts, and loan translations) were found. An example of a loan blend was that he used *bekomen* instead of *worden* (to become). An example of a loan translation was that the man used *oproepen* (a literal translation of the English word *to call*) instead of the correct Dutch word *opbellen* (to telephone). The authors explained these marked lexical occurrences “as a form of adaptation of the semantic structure our informant has made to the semantic structure that is used by people he interacts with” (Jaspaert and Kroon, 1992, p. 146).

There is not much research available concerning L2 influence on pragmatics, but there are some anecdotes available that show that it is possible to have pragmatic L2 transfer. Namely, Kyoko Mori (1997), a Japanese woman who has lived in America since she was 20 years old, describes below how she is able to distinguish symbolic invitations from real ones in the Midwest, but not in Japan:

“In Japan, there are no clear-cut signs to tell me which invitations are real and which are not. People can give all kinds of details and still not expect me to show up at their

door or call them from the train station. I cannot tell when I am about to make a fool of myself or hurt someone's feelings by taking them at their word or by failing to do so" (p. 10).

Waas (1996) also discusses pragmatic loss in the L1. In her study of the L1 proficiency of German immigrants in Australia she also looked at the communicative competence of the immigrants. All of the participants showed L1 attrition: none of them could complete the interview without utilising their L2. They all were also not very conversationally fluent, in that they lacked expressiveness and authenticity. This means that they lacked *hoc* responses, idiomatic phrases, proverbs, and humour (Waas, 1996). Even features that are normally very automatized such as reflex responses, repartee, and onomatopoeia were lost by the participants. The reason Waas (1996) poses for this attrition is that the subjects migrated voluntarily, and wanted to integrate into their new society, which probably resulted in assimilation. This was also reflected in the results, since people who had little to no affiliation with Germany anymore showed more L1 attrition than people who still did.

## 2.5 Computer Learner Corpus Research

Collecting learner data is not a new idea, since both the fields of foreign language teaching and second language acquisition have been collecting learner output for descriptive and/or theory-building purposes from the beginning (Granger, 2004). Using computer learner corpus (CLC) research as a field of scientific enquiry is quite new, however, since it only became a discipline in the late 1980s, and it already has made a significant impact (Granger, 2004). SLA has not favoured CLC research, because it is data of natural language use, which is often uncontrolled, and sometimes unreliable. Introspective data can be limited too, however, since it is often quite artificial and restricting (Granger, 1998). The advantages of CLC are vast as well, which is why it is on the rise.

CLC “are electronic collections of spoken or written texts produced by foreign or second language learners” (Granger, 2004, p. 2). The data is stored electronically, which makes it possible to collect a large amount of it fairly quickly. Learner corpora are therefore very large: in the millions rather than in the hundreds or thousands of words. Since many SLA researches note that using a very narrow empirical base has quite a drawback, the size of the corpora used in CLC can be named as an advantage. In light of the small size of corpora of longitudinal SLA studies, Gass and Selinker (2008) note that “[i]t is difficult to know with any degree of certainty whether the results obtained are applicable only to the one or two learners studied, or whether they are indeed characteristic of a wide range of subjects” (p. 31). It can take a while to collect it, but the size of the corpora used in CLC is a major asset in terms of representativeness of the data and generalizability of the results (Granger, 2004).

Another advantage of CLC are the strict design criteria. Learner language is highly variable, and is influenced by a wide variety of situational, linguistic and psycholinguistic factors, and CLC is able to control these factors and therefore make the findings more reliable (Granger, 2004). Atkins et al. (1992) for example list 29 variables to be taken into account when building a corpus (e.g. age, gender, medium, field). On top of those, CLC must incorporate several L2-specific variables (e.g. L2 exposure, timing, reference tools). According to Granger (2004) the number of variables create a high degree of control and “distinguishes CLC data from the samples of language use that are commonly used in SLA research” (p. 5).

Next to size and accuracy, using a computer can also be named as an advantage of CLC. When analysing big corpora it is essential to use automated approaches, since it saves much time and effort for the researcher. A computer can, for example, count the words and make frequency lists much faster than when you would do it manually. Even though SLA has not been as enthusiastic about CLC as ELT, there are signs that this is changing. SLA

specialists are beginning to see the value of CLC data which, because their size and representativeness can help them validate their hypotheses and formulate new ones.

## 2.6 The Status of English in the Netherlands

English is a popular language in the Netherlands, so much so that in some situations speakers use English as the main language instead of Dutch . Some Dutch linguists worry about the emergence of English, since they fear that Dutch might disappear. They also think that many English loanwords are unnecessary, and could be replaced by Dutch words (Redactie Onze Taal, 2009). On the other hand, others find English very useful and would not know how to live without them (Ridder, 1995).

Adopting English into Dutch really took off after the Second World War. Before the war German had the most influence, but now English was the language of the allies, the providers of money and progress. American music, film and literature was spreading all over the world and English became the main language in many international organisations and of the scientific world (Ridder, 1995; Redactie Onze Taal, 2009). In the present, this shift is still noticeable, since it is not difficult to find examples of the influence English has on Dutch, especially when referring to lexical items, such as loanwords. English is mostly very prominent in areas related to popular culture and commerce, such as film and television program titles, advertisements, shops, and newspaper articles (Ridder, 1995). English is not very unusual in education as well, since its used frequently in university lectures through English textbooks and specialist terminology coined by speakers of English (Ridder, 1995). Some lectures are even fully presented in English, especially in master programs (Redactie Onze Taal, 2009).

English is naturally used to express things that Dutch does not have a suitable alternative for, such as *computer* and *airbag*, but it is also used because speakers feel that

using English instead of Dutch in some situations can boost your image (Ridder, 1995). This is especially apparent in the language of younger people, since they use words such as *cool* and *chill*. It is also noticeable in the media, however, as, for example, more and more television programs have English names: *Life 4 You*, *So You Think You Can Dance*, *The Voice of Holland*. There are several reasons why English is given such prestige by the Dutch. Firstly, English is fashionable (Ridder, 1995). English is usually associated with popular culture, since English is the main language of cinema film, television, etc. Secondly, Smits and Koenen (1989) argue that English is useful when expressing feelings, as it sounds more vague than the native Dutch, since the hearer feels a less close bond between the speaker and a foreign word than between a speaker and their native language. Lastly, as English becomes more present in the lives of the Dutch, through pop culture, commercials, and education, it also gains a kind of status. While older people are still a bit sceptical regarding the use of English, young people welcome it with open arms (Edwards, 2016). It is almost necessary to be able to speak English in the Netherlands, since it is almost assumed all Dutch people are bilingual. In written media whole passages in English are not being translated, and sometimes television programs are not even subtitled (Edwards, 2016). This shows that English is becoming the norm in the Netherlands, and is widely accepted.

## 2.7 The Influence of English on Dutch

Next to the coining of many loanwords, English has more effects on the Dutch language. Firstly, mixing English with Dutch can cause the coinage of some English-looking words and phrases, which are not actually English or Dutch. These are sometimes called 'Dutchlish'. Posthumus (1989) names the different kinds of Dutchlish:

1. *Adopted words which have undergone transformations.* For example: English words which in English can only be used in the plural form, but which in Dutch have been given a singular form, such as *pyjama*.
2. *Adoptions whose meaning is different in the source language.* The word *crack* for example is still used as a noun in Dutch in the sense of “a brilliant person,”. In British English only the adjective is used with this particular meaning.
3. *Shortened forms which in English have a different meaning.* For example: Dutch *flat* can be used to indicate an apartment as well as a block of flats.
4. *Compounds.* For example: race-fiets, hockeyveld.
5. *“Fantasy English.”* Words or expressions which have been coined due to an imperfect knowledge of English, for example *a lonely wolf* (after “a lone wolf”).
6. *Adoptions whose meaning is different in Dutch, or “false friends”.* For example: pick-up for “record player”.

The adoption of English is also apparent in several aspects of Dutch society. Some situations that were fully in Dutch before, are also becoming more and more English. This, for example, happens in business, where meetings are often held in English, even if all participants are Dutch. This change can cause language users to lose their familiarity with the grammar of Dutch, since they use English on so many occasions (Redactie Onze Taal, 2009). Secondly, therefore, English has an effect on the Dutch grammar of the Dutch.

This effect was researched by Govers (2009). She found some of these grammatical changes in the Dutch of high school students who follow a bilingual education program, and researched whether these influences were incidental or systematic. She asked 65 students of

the fourth grade of a high school in Rotterdam in which English is the second language to participate. 45 of them followed the bilingual program, 25 of them the regular program. The 25 regular students functioned as a control group. This was necessary, since all sixteen-year-olds listen to English music, watch English tv, play English games etc. All participants were given a test with 90 cases in which English might influence Dutch. First they looked at the spelling of several words such as compounds (e.g. *lange afstandsloper* instead of *langeafstandsloper*), verbs (e.g. *gefaxed* instead of *gefaxt*), plurals (e.g. *hobbies* instead of *hobby's*), and possessives (e.g. *Jan's fiets* instead of *Jans fiets*). On these parts the bilingual participants made some more mistakes than the regular participants, but it was a very small difference. These mistakes are made very often in Dutch anyway, and it is therefore more a case of your knowledge of spelling than the influence of English.

The bilingual participants did score less well on other spelling features, such as capitals, punctuation, and word order. They would for example write dates in the English fashion (*26 Juli 1979* instead of *26 juli 1979*). In a grammatical evaluation test the bilingual participants would for example mark 'In Holland je kunt veel tulpen zien' as correct.

Govers (2009) concludes that students who follow a bilingual program do make more 'English' mistakes in their Dutch, and therefore that the program influences their native language negatively. She does not think a solution is available, but she expects that the students can overcome this stage once they learn more and more about the second language. When they master the second language, the confusion and thus the mistakes will stop.

## 2.8 English and Dutch Sentence Structure

The main syntactic difference between Dutch and English is that Dutch is an OV-language with verb-second in the main clause, whereas English is SVO (Dreschler & Hebing, 2015). The verb-second rule entails that the finite verb has to be in second position. This

creates a multifunctionality in which not only the object, but also other constituents, like adverbials, can occur in first position, as shown in the examples below.

- 1) *Met genoeg kunnen we u meedelen dat uw aanvraag gehonoreerd is.*

**With pleasure** can we you inform that your application honoured is.

‘It is with pleasure that we can inform you that your application has been honoured.’

- 2) *Op de Noordpool is het misschien te koud, maar op Kreta sterf ik van de hitte.*

**On the North Pole** is it perhaps too cold, but **on Crete** die I of the heat.

‘It is perhaps too cold at the North Pole, but I will die of the heat on Crete.’

Or (more colloquially): ‘The North Pole is perhaps too cold, but Crete I find far too hot.’

- 3) *Dat is onze oom. Hij nam ons altijd mee naar de boerderij.*

**That** is our uncle. **He** took us always with to the farm.

‘That is our uncle. He always took us with him to the farm.’

(Dreschler & Hebing, 2015)

As shown by the examples, the first constituent can be discourse-new, as seen in example (1), but it can also be contrastive, as in example (2), or discourse-old, as in example (3). So, Dutch word order is quite free and allows non-subjects as well as subjects in clause-initial position (Dreschler & Hebing, 2015). English can also, by default, place given information in clause-initial position (as shown by the English translation in example (3)), and, with a bit more difficulty, place contrastive information in clause-initial position. Example (1) is not possible in English, however.

In English, the non-subject clause-initial constituent is not used frequently, and when it is, it is relatively more marked and usually closely associated with contrast, as seen in the translation in example (2) (Dreschler & Hebing, 2015). This is why Dutch learners are warned against using clause-initial clauses such as in the following examples:

- 4) a. With these words he said goodbye.  
b. Met deze woorden nam hij afscheid.
  
- 5) a. In the latest Beowulf movie we witness what happens to Beowulf after Grendel dies.  
b. In de laatste Beowulf film zien we wat er met Beowulf gebeurt nadat Grendel sterft.

(Dreschler & Hebing, 2015)

The linking of an utterance to the immediately preceding discourse by means of the first constituent as seen in the examples above is called local anchoring by Los & Dreschler (Dreschler & Hebing, 2015). It occurs most notably in the form of an adverbial phrase, which often also contains a demonstrative or possessive pronoun. This is not wrong in English, but it is marked. To achieve a neutral connection to the previous sentence the grammatical subject of the sentence is usually used (Van Vuuren, 2017).

Another difference between English and Dutch that stems from the verb-second rule is subject prominence. The subject in a verb-second language, such as Dutch, is more stable than the subject in an SVO language such as English. In verb-second language the subject is mostly reserved for the protagonist of the discourse, which means the subject is often a personal pronoun or the subject is left out. In an SVO language the subject is more variable, and can express the protagonist, but also any other discourse entity. In Present-Day Dutch local anchoring therefore often causes the first constituent to be a PP, while in English

subjects can occur that would never occur in Dutch (Dreschler & Hebing, 2015). Examples (6) to (7) show subjects that are normal for Present-Day English, but are marked or ungrammatical in Present-Day Dutch:

- 6) a. *This advertisement will sell us a lot.*  
 b. *\*Deze advertentie zal (ons) veel verkopen.*
- 7) a. *The latest edition of the book has dropped a chapter.*  
 b. *\*De laatste editie van het boek heeft een hoofdstuk laten vallen.*
- 8) a. *The last few years have witnessed a new perspective on the verb-second constrain.*  
 b. *?De afgelopen Jaren zagen (de opkomst van) een nieuw perspectief op de verb-second regel.*
- (Dreschler & Hebing, 2015)

The examples above show that Present-Day Dutch rejects these kinds of subjects. Carroll & Lambert (2003) have shown that verb-second languages, such as Dutch, resists the use of inanimate, non-agentive subjects (as the examples above), while these kinds of subjects are no problem in English.

### 2.8.1 Position of Adverbials in English

In general, most adverbials are placed in final position in English. According to Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finnegan (1999), 14 percent of adverbials occurs in initial position, 20 percent in medial position, and 64 percent in final position. Each class of adverbials has a strong preference for a different position as well: circumstance adverbials

prefer final position, stance adverbials prefer medial positions, and linking adverbials prefer initial position (Biber et al., 1999).

Circumstance adverbials prefer final position, because many of them “complete the meaning of the verb” (Biber et al., 1999, p. 772), and therefore they must come after the verb. There are other circumstance adverbials, however, that can also be placed in initial and medial positions, which depends on “semantic category, syntactic structure, and length” (Biber et al., 1999, p. 773). Within the category of circumstance adverbials, 20 percent of time adverbials occur in initial position, 25 percent in medial position, and 55 percent in final position. 5 percent of place adverbials occur in initial position, 5 percent in medial position, and 90 percent in final position. It is also important to note that placing of adverbials can differ in terms of it being a phrase or a clause. Time adverbials, for example, occur 25 percent of the time in initial position, and 75 percent in final position if they are in clause form.

Stance adverbials can actually be placed in all positions, because they normally have scope over the proposition of the entire clause (Biber et al., 1999). Most stance adverbials occur in medial position, though, but that medial position has many variants as well. Stance adverbials are therefore the most mobile adverbials of all classes. The position of the stance adverbials mostly depends on register (Biber et al., 1999)

Linking adverbials are often placed in initial position, to establish a connection between the two clauses so that the reader or hearer is clearly signalled on the link (Biber et al., 1999). Linking adverbials also occur in medial and final position, and the placement of linking adverbials depends on “register, semantic role, and the particular linking adverbial being used” (Biber et al., 1999, p. 774). Of all linking adverbials, 50 percent occurs in initial position, 40 percent in medial position, and 10 percent in final position (Biber et al., 1999). Initial position is therefore not a marked position for linking adverbials in English.

### *2.8.2 The Use of Initial Adverbials in the L2 of Students of English*

Regarding clause-initial adverbials, Van Vuuren (2017) studied how many place and additional adverbials were actually used by Dutch learners of English in comparison to native speakers of English and if this number would transfer to their English. Dutch speakers generally use many time, place and additional adverbials in first position for referential purposes. Van Vuuren (2017) studied the texts of students of English Language and Culture at Radboud University and compared the results to native English texts as a reference. According to the results, they actually do use more place and addition adverbials in clause-initial position than native English speakers, indeed for referential purposes. While the number of place adverbials between year 1 and year 3 gradually decreased, the number of addition adverbials steadily increased (Van Vuuren, 2017). As place adverbials are preferred in final position in English, it seemed like the students were getting more and more aware of this. Addition adverbials, however, are preferred in initial position, both in English and in Dutch, since they have a linking function. Native speakers of English therefore place this adverbial in initial position as well, but they do use less of them. Van Vuuren (2017) speculates that the increase of additional adverbials in clause-initial position could be accounted to the growing realisation of the Dutch students that it is important to apply structure in texts, but only use one technique to do so, and use other possibilities less than native speakers. The results also showed that while the Dutch students often used additional adverbials for referential purposes, the native English speakers did not. This shows that the Dutch students try to create cohesion in a Dutch way in their English, and that transfer of sentence structure to the L2 does happen. Another contrastive analysis conducted by Van Vuuren (2017) showed that Dutch students of English use even more clause-initial adverbials in their Dutch than in their English, which supports the transfer claim even more.

## 2.9 This Study

As stated by Cook (2003), speakers lose their command of a language when it becomes less and less used. This case of language loss is exactly where this study focusses on. This thesis hypothesises that due to the extreme focus on the English language that Dutch students of English face in their study has an effect on their L1 (Dutch), resulting in some kind of language loss. English is present in the lives of all Dutch people, since it is dominant in pop culture, advertising, and television as well, but it is more dominantly present in the lives of students of English. They almost exclusively write and read in English, and therefore this study predicts that they will have a stronger influence of English on their L1 than Dutch students of other fields would have.

Most of the research on L2 to L1 transfer has focussed on the phonological and lexical influence of an L2 on an L1 (Pavlenko, 2000; Leather & James, 1996; Latomaa, 1998; Waas, 1996; Boyd & Andersson, 1991; De Bot, Gommans & Rossing, 1991; Haugen, 1953; Jaspaert & Kroon, 1992). Less research has been conducted on L2 influence on other L1 features, such as word order and sentence structure. Van Vuuren (2017) does expand on transfer in the case of sentence structure, but does so from an L1 to L2 perspective. This study therefore is going to build on these studies, and study the influence the English language has on the use of clause-initial constituents of the Dutch of students of English. English generally places less adverbials and therefore more subjects in clause-initial position than Dutch, due to its SVO-structure. This study predicts that native English speakers will use less adverbials, and more subjects in clause-initial position than Dutch students of other subjects than English, due to the difference in sentence structure between the languages. It is also expected that the students of English will use less clause-initial adverbials than the Dutch students of other subjects, but slightly more than the native English speakers. Finally, it is hypothesised that over the course of their study, due to the intense contact with English that Dutch students of English

encounter, their Dutch might gravitate even more towards the preferences for clause-initial constituents of English.

### 3. Methodology

This thesis presents a corpus analysis of 118.642 words of text in total, which consist of texts from the LONGDALE corpus, the LOCNESS corpus and a small self-collected corpus.

The LONGDALE (Longitudal Database of Learner English) corpus consists of a large longitudinal database of text written by advanced EFL learners with different language backgrounds (Meunier, 2015). In the LONGDALE project, the same students were followed over a period of at least three years (from year 1 to year 3 of their studies). The corpus consists of a wide range of data types, from fairly uncontrolled data such as argumentative essays, narratives or informal interviews to more guided types in the form of summaries or picture descriptions. The project started at the university of Louvain, but the Radboud University has also collected data for the LONGDALE project, starting from 2008. The corpus mainly consists of English texts, but the Radboud University has also collected a smaller amount of Dutch texts, written by students of English Language and Culture. These are the texts that will be analysed in this thesis. This Dutch corpus consists of 222 texts with a total word count of 86.301 words. They were collected from 2013 until 2016 and are from all three years of study: (1) 100 timed, argumentative writing assignments on the statement ‘De media besteden teveel aandacht aan het leven van sterren’ written by first year students with a total word count of 40.032 words, (2) 65 timed, argumentative writing assignments on the statement ‘Geld is de wortel van alle kwaad’ written by second year students with a total word count of 23.970 words, and (3) 57 timed, argumentative writing assignments on the statement ‘Hoogopgeleide moeders moeten verplicht aan de arbeidsmarkt deelnemen’ written by third year students with a total word count of 22.299 words. The students were all given 30 minutes

to write the assignments, so they are considerably short. The mean length of the texts is 385 words. Due to the small number of Dutch texts in the LONGDALE corpus, it will not be possible to do a full longitudinal study. There are no full cohorts of students who wrote a Dutch text every year of their study, therefore this thesis will be a cross-sectional study.

LOCNESS (Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays) is a corpus of native English essays made up of British pupils' A level essays, British university students' essays and American university students' essays. This corpus will be used as a reference to find out whether Dutch students of English use a similar number of subjects in clause-initial position as native speakers of English do in English. The texts selected for this thesis were a selected amount of the A-level exam texts, since these seemed most similar to the texts in the LONGDALE corpus and the small Dutch corpus, as they were argumentative essays and had a similar word count. In total 39 texts were analysed with a total word count of 21.110 words. The topics of the texts were (1) Transport, (2) The Parliamentary System, (3) Fox Hunting, and (4) Boxing. The mean text length was 541 words.

In order to allow a comparison to the Dutch of students of different subjects than English, a small corpus was collected. This corpus presents 25 texts written by Dutch students of a different subject than English and has a total word count of 11.231 words. All participants were given the statement 'De media besteden teveel aandacht aan het leven van sterren', and they were given a 30 minutes to write, so that the word count would be approximately the same as the texts in the LONGDALE corpus. The group was made as homogenous as possible, since only students were asked to participate, and they filled in a questionnaire to establish that they had not, for example lived in an English-speaking country. They were also asked if they spoke any other languages, what they were studying, how much courses were taught in English, and if they had taken any international exams that assess your

level of English. This corpus is unfortunately somewhat smaller than the other corpora, since there simply were not enough respondents available.

An overview of the texts and word count is provided below:

Table 1. sub-corpora

	Texts	Words	Mean Text Length	Standard Deviation
LONGDALE corpus year 1	100	40.032	400	133,58
LONGDALE corpus year 2	65	23.970	369	129,55
LONGDALE corpus year 3	57	22.299	391	157,45
LOCNESS corpus A-level texts	39	21.110	541	200,21
Dutch corpus	25	11.231	449	156,16

The data will be analysed per main clause on whether a subject, adverbial or an object is in clause-initial position. This will be done manually, since it is not possible to for example filter out main clauses in a computer program. The adverbials were also categorised under linking, time, place adverbials, since these are the most occurring adverbials and could also show signs of transfer. English and Dutch have a very different preference for placing place adverbials, for example, and it would be interesting to see if the Dutch students of English adopt these preferences in their Dutch. Other adverbials were categorised under 'other'. Main clauses that were part of quotes were removed, as they were not produced by the students

their selves. Sentences in which it was unclear what the writer meant were also left out. For example:

- 9) Steeds meer nieuwsprogramma's en kranten gaan zich bemoeien met het leven van de sterren. **In dit zijn er teveel.**

(student RAD1505, year 3)

It is unclear if the writer made a typo and wanted to write *en* instead of *in*, or if the writer left out a word in between *dit* and *zijn*. It is therefore unclear whether the clause-initial clause is the subject or an adverbial. Because of this unclarity, these kind of sentences were left out of the analysis. Sentences that had a typo/missing word/mistake, but of which the meaning was clear were left in. For example:

- 10) **It impossible** within modern society to return to the democracies of the ancient Greek city states.

(A-levels, Parliamentary System 01)

It is clear that the word *is* was forgotten, and that *it* is the subject. Therefore, these kinds of sentences were left in.

#### 4. Results

All texts were analysed on the number of clause-initial subjects, adverbials, and other constituents. The adverbials were then categorised under linking, place, time, and other adverbials. All results are presented per text and category below.

## 4.1 Native Speakers of English and Dutch Students of Other Subjects than English

### 4.1.1 Subjects

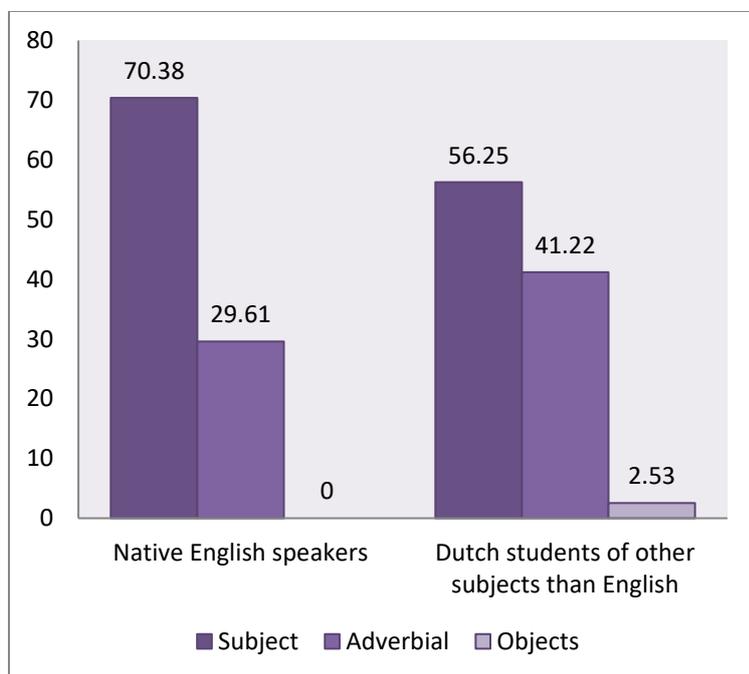


Figure 1. Clause-initial constituents per 100 main clauses in LOCNESS and a corpus of Dutch students

The data show that native English speakers use 70.38 subjects in clause-initial position per 100 main clauses. In contrast, the Dutch students of other subjects than English used only 56.25 subjects in clause-initial position per 100 main clauses. This shows that there is indeed a large difference in the use of clause-initial subjects between native English speakers and Dutch students of other subjects than English.

### 4.1.2 Adverbials

There were only 29.61 clause-initial adverbials per 100 main clauses in the native English speaker texts. The number of adverbials in clause-initial position in the texts written by Dutch students of other subjects than English is quite high, namely 41.22 adverbials per

100 main clauses. This shows that there is indeed a big difference in the use of clause-initial adverbials between native English speakers and Dutch speakers that do not study English.

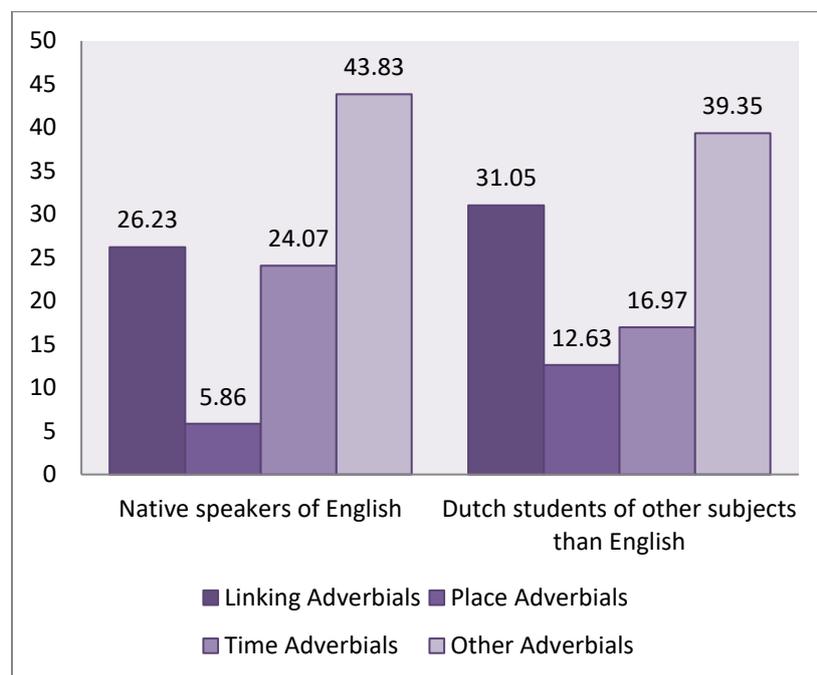


Figure 2. Type of adverbials per 100 clause-initial adverbials in LOCNESS and a Dutch corpus of students

The number of clause-initial linking adverbials in the native English speakers' texts was 26.23 per 100 clause-initial adverbials. In the Dutch data 31.05 clause-initial linking adverbials per 100 clause-initial adverbials were found. Linking adverbials are frequently used in argumentative essays, and Van Vuuren (2017) showed that linking adverbials occur many times in argumentative essays, more so than in academic texts. Argumentative essays allow for so many linking adverbials, since they for example list arguments, oppose arguments and end with a conclusion. Many of the following linking adverbials were therefore found:

- 11) **All in all**, the road and rail travel will have a problematic voyage into the future, but their problems will be overcome in the end.

(A-levels 1, Transport 11)

12) **However** it also meant its growing reputation from the true wishes of the people.

(A-levels 2, Parliamentary System 01)

13) **Firstly**, fox hunting is a cruel, vicious sport which shows no kind of remorse or kindness towards animals.

(A-levels 3, Fox Hunting 06)

Dutch students of other subjects than English used 31.05 clause-initial linking adverbials per 100 clause-initial adverbials. Similar linking adverbials were found:

14) **Daarnaast** vind ik dat er belangrijker nieuws bestaat, dan alleen het leven van sterren.

(Respondent 25, Verpleegkunde)

15) **Echter** ben ik van mening dat er niet TE veel aandacht aan het leven van deze personen wordt geschonken.

(Respondent 22, Leisure Management)

16) **Als laatste** hebben sterren ook een voorbeeldfunctie die ze zeker ten goede kunnen benutten.

(Respondent 5, Cultural Anthropology and Social Studies)

17) Maar **al met al, ik denk** dat er vrij weinig aan te doen valt verder, want het wordt alleen maar meer met al die sociale media.

(Respondent 1, Psychology)

The last example stands out, because it shows transfer of English sentence structure. In this example the subject is placed directly after the linking adverbial, which is marked in Dutch,

because of the V2-constraint. In English this would be perfectly fine, because of its SVO-structure.

5.86 place adverbials occurred per 100 clause-initial adverbials in the native English speaker texts. Place adverbials are preferred in final position in English, so this small number of clause-initial place adverbials is unmarked. The few place adverbials that were found in clause-initial position were often placed there for contrastive purposes, such as in the examples below:

18) The problem is obvious - there are too many cars on Britain's roads. There are two ways around the problem - reduce the number of cars, or build more roads. **In cities**, where all traffic jams start, there is no room for more roads - every square yard is already in use.

(A-levels 1, Transport 02)

19) An issue which is becoming increasingly debated is whether or not fox hunting should be banned. **In today's society** it is an outdated and barbaric "sport" which, in my opinion, should be banned.

(A-levels 3, Fox Hunting 03)

In the Dutch texts written by students of other subjects than English 12.63 clause-initial place adverbials per 100 clause-initial adverbials were found. This is a large difference in comparison with the English data, and shows that Dutch indeed generally puts place adverbial in clause-initial position more than English does.

Quite a large number of time adverbials (24.07 clause-initial time adverbials per 100 clause-initial adverbials) occurs in clause-initial position in the native English speakers' texts. The Dutch texts written by students of other subjects than English show that they use 16,97 clause-initial time adverbials per 100 clause-initial adverbials.

Clause-initial adverbials that were categorized as ‘other’ occurred 43.83 times per 100 clause-initial adverbials in the native English texts, while they occurred 39.35 times per 100 clause-initial adverbials in the Dutch texts by students of other subjects than English.

#### 4.1.3 Objects

Not a single object was found in clause-initial position in the texts selected from the LOCNESS corpus. In the Dutch data, however, 2.53 clause-initial objects per 100 main clauses were found, such as in the example below:

20) **Het leven van de sterren** vind ik hier niet storend vaak aan bod komen.

(Respondent 4, Social Work)

## 4.2 Dutch Students of English

### 4.2.1 Subjects

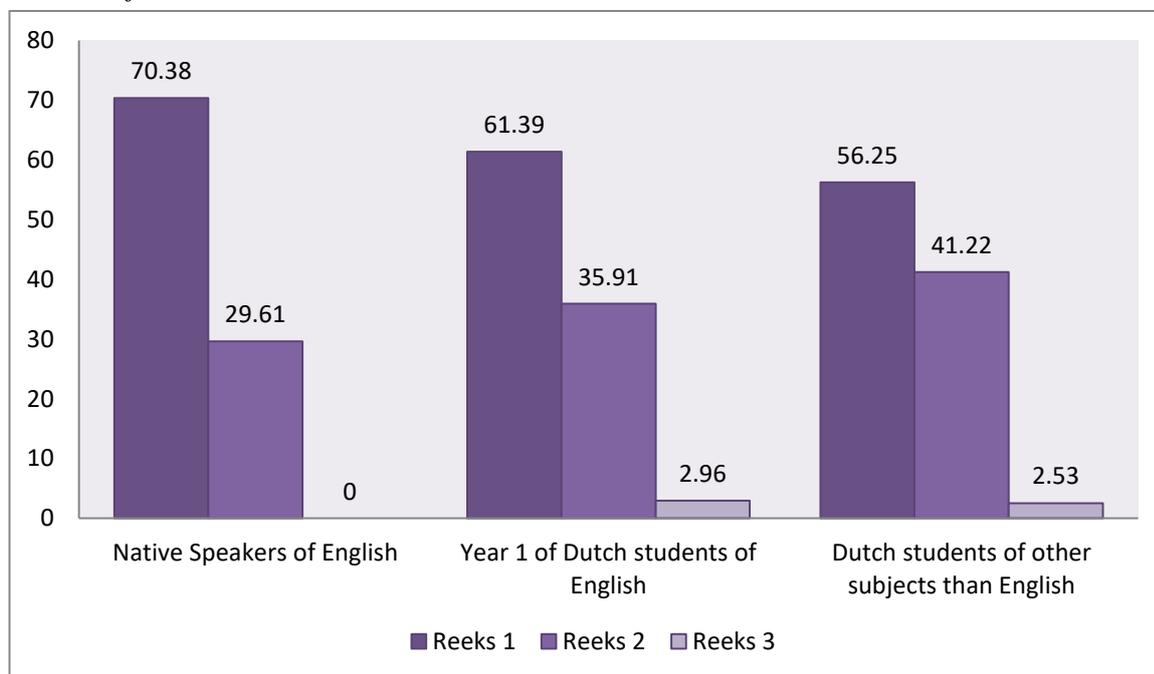


Figure 3. Clause-initial constituents per 100 main clauses in LOCNESS, year 1 of LONGDALE and a corpus of Dutch students

As shown by figure 3, the Dutch students of English actually start of their study with a number of subjects that is in between the English and Dutch data. The native English speakers use 70.38 clause-initial subjects per 100 main clauses, while year 1 of the Dutch students of English use 61.89, and the Dutch students of other subjects use 56.25.

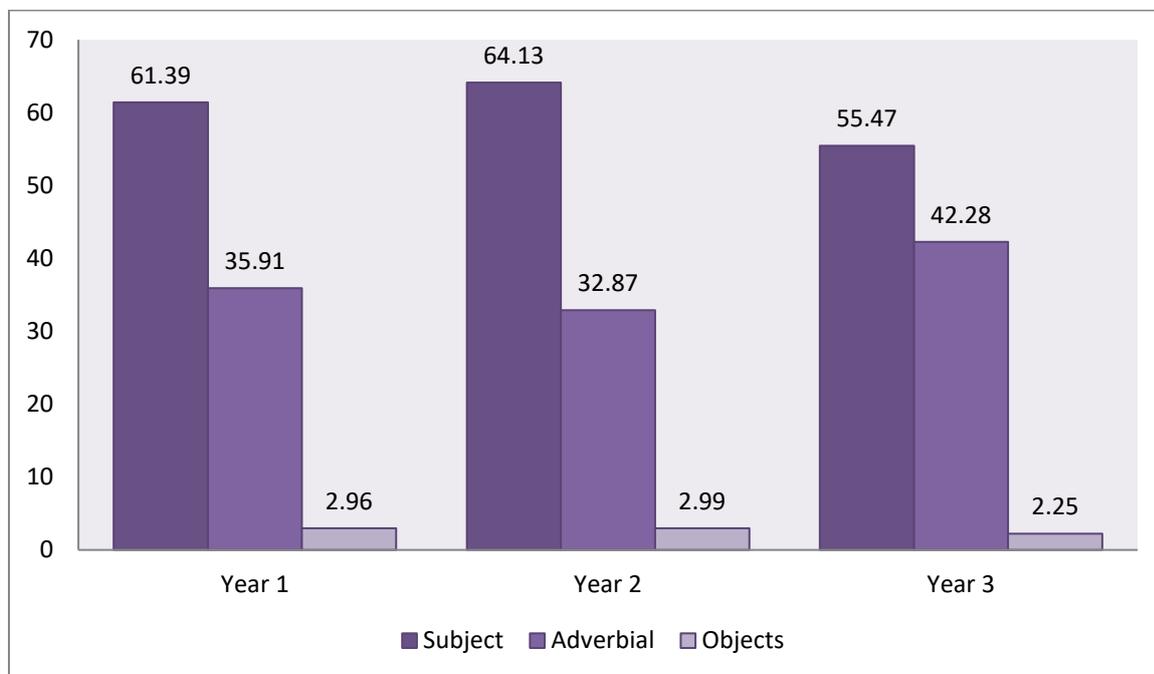


Figure 4. Number of clause-initial constituents per 100 main clauses in LONGDALE

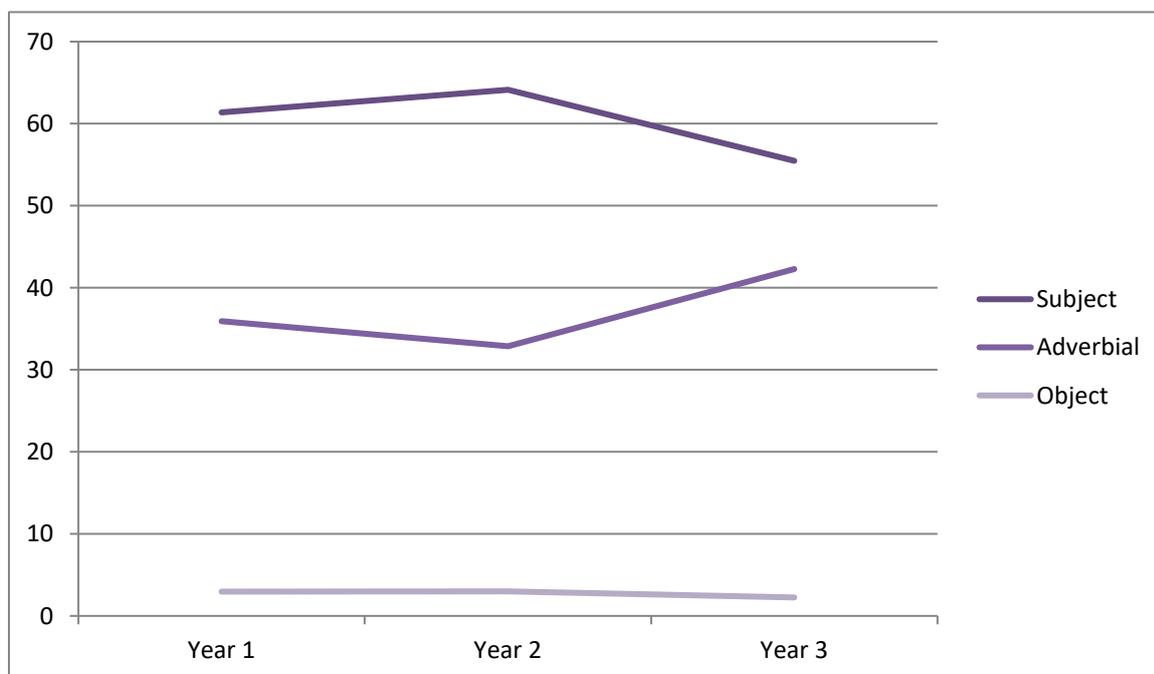


Figure 5. Number of clause-initial constituents per 100 main clauses in LONGDALE

The data also show that the number of subjects placed in clause-initial position do not gradually increase over time. The number increases from year 1 to year 2: in year 1 61.39 subjects per 100 main clauses are placed in clause-initial position, while in year 2 64.13 are (increase of 4.46 percent). In year 3 this number decreases again from 64.13 subjects per 100 main clauses to 55.74 (decrease of 13.08 percent).

#### *4.2.2 Adverbials*

As shown in figure 3, the number of clause-initial adverbials is also in between the English and Dutch data. The native English speakers used 29.61 clause-initial adverbials, while year 1 of the Dutch students of English used 35.91, and the Dutch students of other subjects than English used 41.22.

Figure 4 and 5 show that the number of clause-initial adverbials decreases from year 1 to year 2, which makes the number of adverbials in clause-initial position in year 2 closer to the English data (29.61 clause-initial adverbials per 100 main clauses). In year 1 35.91 adverbials per 100 main clauses are used, while in year 2 32.87 are used (decrease of 8.47 percent). Then, the number increases again to 42.28 clause-initial adverbials per 100 main clauses (increase of 28.63 percent), which makes the number closer to the Dutch data (41.22 clause-initial adverbials per 100 main clauses).

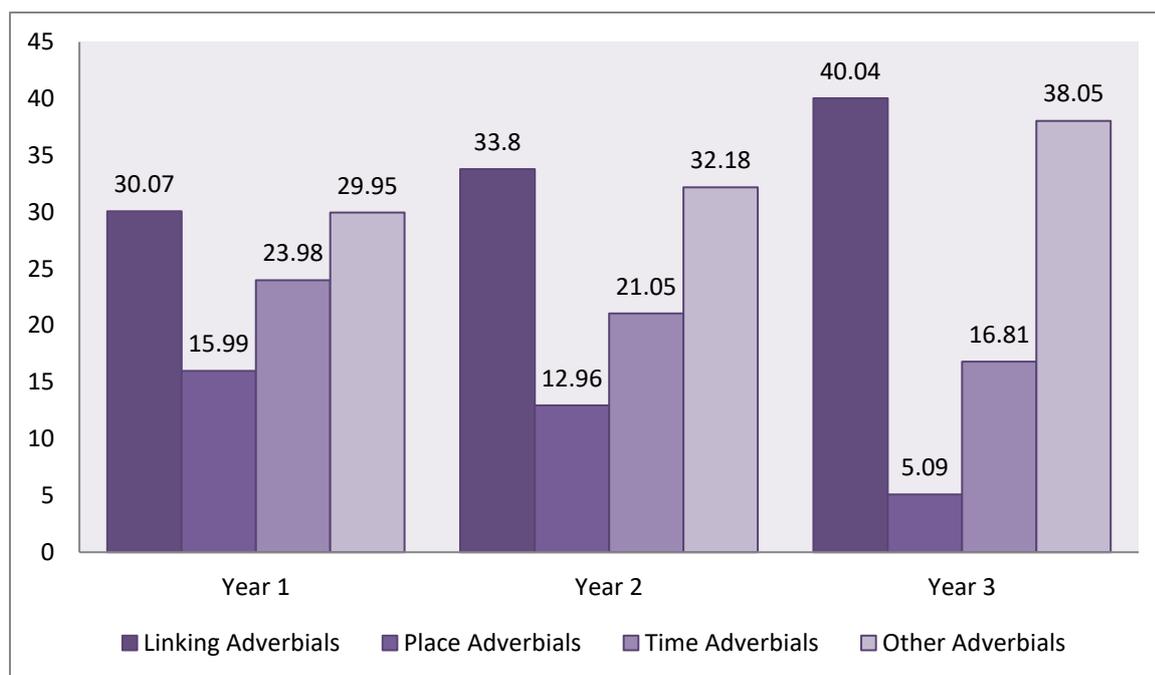


Figure 6. Type of adverbials per 100 clause-initial adverbials in LONGDALE

When looking at the types of adverbials used, a gradual increase in linking adverbials was found. Linking adverbials increased from 30.07 linking adverbials per 100 main clauses in year 1 to 33.8 in year 2 (increase of 12.40 percent), and then to 40.04 in year 3 (increase of 18.46 percent). Again, similar linking adverbials to the English and Dutch texts of students of other subjects than English were found in these texts:

21) **Daarentegen** ben ik van mening dat personen hoogopgeleid of niet, niet kunt

dwingen ergens aan deel te nemen.

(student RAD0019, year 3)

22) **In conclusie** zou je dus kunnen zeggen dat niet geld maar macht de wortel van het

kwaad is.

(student RAD1420, year 2)

23) **Ten eerste**, de zinsnede ‘geld is de wortel van alle kwaad’ is niet volledig: de

gehele quote is ‘de liefde voor geld is de wortel van alle kwaad’.

(...)

**Ten tweede**, hoewel we vastgesteld hebben dat de liefde voor geld kwaad kan veroorzaken, is dit zeker niet de enige oorzaak van kwaad, oftewel wortel.

(student RAD1456, year 2)

24) **Al met al** is het duidelijk dat de media teveel tijd (en geld) besteed aan het ompspitten van het privéleven van beroemdheden.

(student RAD1551, year 1)

The linking adverbial in example 24 occurred numerous times, which is interesting, since, even though there is no real proof for it, this adverbial is sometimes called an anglicism (Onze Taal, 2011). Sometimes, the writers would even use the English version of the adverbial as in example 25:

25) **Al in al** lijkt het me een beter plan om minder aandacht te besteden aan sterren.

(student RAD1511, year 1)

Place adverbials decreased from 15.99 clause-initial place adverbials per 100 clause-initial adverbials in year 1 to 12.96 in year 2 (decrease of 18.95 percent), and then to 16.81 in year 3 (decrease of 60.73 percent). In case of place adverbials, therefore, the number does decrease to a similar number to the English data (5.86 clause-initial place adverbials per 100 clause-initial adverbials).

Time adverbials decreased from 23.98 time adverbials per 100 main clauses in year 1 to 21.05 in year 2 (decrease of 12.22 percent), and then to 16.81 in year 3 (decrease of 20.14 percent). In case of the time adverbials, therefore, the number gradually decreases to be the same as the Dutch data.

'Other' adverbials increased from 29.95 other adverbials per 100 main clauses in year 1 to 31.18 in year 2 (increase of 7.44 percent), and then to 38.05 in year 3 (increase of 17.90 percent).

#### 4.2.3 Objects

The number of objects in clause-initial position in the texts of the Dutch students of English stays fairly similar. It starts off at 2.96 clause-initial objects per 100 clause-initial adverbials in year 1, then increases to 2.99 in year 2, and decreases to 2.25 in year 3. As shown by the results, objects were therefore found in all years of study:

26) (...), want **daar** smullen mensen het meest van.

(student RAD1550, year 1)

27) **Voedsel** verkregen zij dan door te ruilen tegen producten of diensten.

(student RAD1569, year 2)

28) Maar **wat het beste voor hen is** weten ze goed zelf.

(student RAD1365, year 3)

The number remains close to the Dutch data (2.96 clause-initial objects per 100 clause-initial adverbials).

## 5. Discussion

This thesis has presented a comprehensive overview of the use of clause-initial constituents in Dutch argumentative essays produced by Dutch students of English Language and Culture at Radboud University at different stages in their development, as well as in the argumentative essays by native English speaker argumentative essays and Dutch students of other subjects that were used as a reference. The results show that the difference in the use of

clause-initial constituents between the native English speakers and Dutch students of other subjects is indeed significant, as the native English speakers used less clause-initial adverbials than the Dutch students, more clause-initial subjects, and no clause-initial objects at all. In comparison to the data of the Dutch students of English, it showed that in year 1 the students were in between the two sets of data in terms of the number of clause-initial subjects and adverbials used. The longitudinal development then showed that from year 1 to year 2 the number of clause-initial adverbials used decreased, while the number of subjects decreased, but that this development was ‘reset’ again in year 3.

The students started off in year 1 with 60.27 subjects per 100 main clauses, which is still close to the Dutch number of clause-initial subjects (55.18), but is already increasing towards the English number of clause-initial subjects (69.18). That number increased to 63.55 clause-initial subjects per 100 main clauses in year 2, but decreased to 54.91 in year 3. This number is close to the Dutch number of clause-initial subjects again. The number of adverbials began at 35.91 clause-initial adverbials per 100 main clauses, which is again close to the Dutch number of clause-initial adverbials (41.22), but also to the English number of clause-initial adverbials (29.61). In year 2, the number decreased to 32.87 clause-initial adverbials per 100 main clauses, but then increased to 42.28 in year 3. Just as in the case of the clause-initial subjects, the clause-initial adverbials have reached a number in year 3 that is very similar to the Dutch data, which suggests some kind of ‘reset’ of the preferences for clause-initial constituent placement. There are several reasons to explain this unexpected outcome. Firstly, in year 3 of the study of English Language and Culture there is room to follow classes or a minor in different departments. Despite the rise of English classes in Dutch education, these classes are often still in Dutch. There also is one course in the bachelor in year 3, *Geesteswetenschappen in de Samenleving*, which is in Dutch as well, and puts much focus on Dutch writing skills. Due to these changes in the curriculum, the students are

exposed to Dutch more than in the two preceding years and could change their preferences for clause-initial constituent placement accordingly. Secondly, these results might illustrate that a speaker can learn to control their L1 and L2, to such an extent that they can separate them in their minds. In terms of Cook's (2003) multicompetence model, this would mean that the students start with an integration model and move towards a separation model in the integration continuum. This would also confirm the statement made by Govers (2009) that the English transfer effects in the Dutch of Dutch learners of English will probably be reversed once they learn more about the second language. These two reasons might overlap, since regaining control over Dutch and learning to separate the two languages could be the result of the renewed input of Dutch. As Cook (2003) said, when a language becomes less and less used, speakers might experience loss of language knowledge. Even though using fewer clause-initial adverbials and more clause-initial subjects is not wrong in Dutch, and therefore cannot be described as a loss, the students did experience transfer from English to Dutch in terms of the preferences for clause-initial constituents. This was reversed in year 3, however, and that could suggest that this 'loss of language knowledge' does not have to be permanent.

The results also showed the lack of clause-initial objects in the English data. Objects are normally found in post-verbal position, but the object can be in clause-initial position for extra (contrastive) emphasis. The results reflect that this does not happen very often. Clause-initial objects did not disappear towards year 3 of the data of the Dutch students of English, however. The number of clause-initial objects actually remained quite similar from year 1 to year 3. This shows that the scarcity of clause-initial objects did not transfer to the Dutch of Dutch students of English.

It is also interesting to see that the use of clause-initial time adverbials gradually decreased. Time adverbials are actually placed in initial position more than other circumstance adverbials in English (Biber et al. 1999), as they have an important text-

structuring function. This is also reflected by the high number of clause-initial time adverbials in the native English speaker data, which is higher than the number of clause-initial time adverbials in the data of Dutch students of other subjects than English. To see that number decrease therefore goes against expectations. On the other hand, the number of clause-initial time adverbials in year 3 is similar to the number of clause-initial time adverbial used in the texts by Dutch students of other subjects than English. It might therefore be possible that English actually uses more time adverbials in clause-initial position, while Dutch uses more other adverbials in clause-initial position. In that case, the Dutch students of English have not experienced transfer from English in the domain of time adverbials.

The numbers of linking adverbials in clause-initial position were also different than expected. As shown by Van Vuuren (2017), Dutch learners rely heavily on linking adverbials and local anchors in their L1 and L2, more so in their L1 than in their L2. They also used more clause-initial linking adverbials than L1 English novice writers. It was therefore not unexpected that the native speakers of English would use less clause-initial linking adverbials than the Dutch students of other subjects than English. When looking at the data of the Dutch students of English, it shows that the number of clause-initial linking adverbials actually increased by quite a lot over time (from 30.07 clause-initial linking adverbials per 100 clause-initial adverbials to 33.8, to 40.04). This might be explained by the fact that students are explicitly taught to apply clear structure in their writing and to cohesively link their sentences together (Van Vuuren, 2017), both in English, as well as in Dutch. They are, however, also encouraged to use other devices than linking words in English, since teachers wish to reduce the heavy reliance on linking words that many students of different languages have (Van Vuuren, 2017). Van Vuuren (2017) showed that the use of clause-initial linking adverbials in the English texts of Dutch students of English also increased against expectations, most likely because of the students' efforts to create cohesion. Since the number of clause-initial linking

adverbials increased in Van Vuuren's study and this study, it becomes more clear that the assumption that students of English get more aware of applying clear cohesion in texts might be correct. It is also difficult to account this increase in the use of initial linking adverbials to transfer from English, since linking adverbials are commonly placed in clause-initial position in both languages to apply cohesion. In comparison to the Dutch and English reference data, the number of clause-initial linking adverbials in the texts by Dutch students of English is also the closest to the Dutch data, so from these results it would be concluded that the rise in clause-initial linking adverbials was not transferred from English.

It was very interesting to see that the use of clause-initial place adverbials by Dutch students of English decreased over time (from 15.99 clause-initial place adverbials per 100 clause-initial adverbials to 12.96), but did not increase again as the number of clause-initial adverbials did and instead decreased even further to 5.09 clause-initial place adverbials per 100 clause-initial adverbials. Place adverbials are in theory not placed in initial position often, since they are preferred to be placed in final position (Biber et al., 1999), while in Dutch it is neutral to place them in clause-initial position. This was also reflected by the native English speaker and Dutch students of other subjects than English data, since the native English speakers used only a small number of clause-initial place adverbials in their texts (5.86 per 100 clause-initial adverbials), while the Dutch students of other subjects than English used a rather large number of clause-initial place adverbials in their texts (12.63 per 100 clause-initial adverbials). This is why it was so interesting to zoom in on this category, since there are clear differences between English and Dutch in the use of clause-initial place adverbials, and it would therefore be expected to also see a clear difference between the English data and the Dutch students of English data. That was not the case, however. In year 3, the students came really close to the English data in the use of clause-initial place adverbials with 5.09 clause-initial place adverbials per 100 clause-initial adverbials. As shown by Van Vuuren

(2017), this decrease happened to students of English in English texts as well. It is therefore shown by these results that the English students do show some English transfer that does not disappear in year 3 in the case of place adverbials, which means that L2 to L1 transfer did occur in case of preferences for sentence structure in the writing of Dutch students of English. This counteracts the argument that the transfer of the preferences for clause-initial constituents from English can be reversed due to an increasing ability in system separation, because the use of clause-initial place adverbials is not yet separated in the minds of these students. As Pavlenko and Jarvis (2002), Leather and James (1996), Latomaa (1998), Waas (1996), Boyd and Andersson (1991), Rossing (1991), and Jaspeart and Kroon (1992) showed that L2 to L1 transfer effects occur on the level of phonology, lexicon and pragmatics, this result shows that it also occurs on the level of sentence structure.

It is, however, also important to keep the possibility in mind that this type of transfer can also occur in the writing of other students. These students also are exposed to a lot of English input in their education, since many studies, such as psychology, are mainly taught in English. One student in the Dutch corpus of students of other subjects than English was actually a psychology student and displayed a striking example of transfer from English, which is shown in the results section by example 17. This kind of sentence structure was also found in the study by Govers (2000), where followers of a bilingual high school program judged it as correct. This shows that transfer from English may not only be occurring in the Dutch of students who focus on learning English, but also in the Dutch of students of other subjects that do get a large amount of English exposure. This would require further research, however. The corpus used was also fairly small in comparison to the other corpora used, so it is not entirely representative of all Dutch students of other subjects than English.

The unfortunately small size of the Dutch corpus also puts other limitations on this thesis, since it makes it difficult to generalize the results. For the purposes of this study the

results from that corpus were generalized, but it is important to keep in mind that this might not actually be as representative of the entire group. The difference between the placement of adverbial phrases and clauses were also not considered, which might have had an influence on the discussion of the general positioning of adverbials.

## 6. Conclusion

The case study presented here shows that while the use of clause-initial adverbials in the Dutch of students of English Language and Culture decreases from year 1 to year 2, but increases again in year 3 to a Dutch 'average'. This seems to mean that the students become increasingly aware of the differences between Dutch and English between their first and third year at university. There was an interesting case of transfer in the types of adverbials used, however, since the use of clause-initial place adverbials seemed to gradually decrease from year 1 to year 3. Place adverbials are marked in first position in English, while in Dutch it is neutral to place them there. The results therefore show that in this case the students do experience transfer from the L2 in the case of clause-initial place adverbials. Another interesting result is the drastic rise of the use of clause-initial linking adverbials in the texts of Dutch students of English from year 1 to year 3. This was most likely not a case of transfer from the L2, since the English data actually used fewer clause-initial linking adverbials than all of the Dutch data. It can, however, be explained by the students' increased awareness of the need for applying cohesion in their texts.

There are several questions that rise from the results of this study. Firstly, the number of adverbials, subjects and objects used in year 3 of the Dutch students of English raises the question why this number is so similar to the Dutch data, while the data in year 1 and 2 were leaning more towards the English data. This could be explained by the level of Dutch exposure increasing in the curriculum of year 3, which would imply that the transfer effect could be short-term. In that case, as long as there is enough English exposure, the students

would use fewer clause-initial adverbials and more clause-initial subjects, but as soon as this exposure decreases and the Dutch exposure increases, this would be reversed. It could also be explained by an increasing ability of system separation, due to an increasing knowledge of the language. Even though this has already been counteracted by the decreasing number of clause-initial place adverbials, it would still be interesting to conduct a more specific follow-up study on whether this transfer effect is a short-term or longitudinal development. This could be done by first exposing students of English and other students (as a control group) to English writing classes, and letting them write a text in Dutch after, and then exposing them to Dutch writing classes, and letting them write a text again. In this way it can be tracked how their preferences for clause-initial constituents develop over time in relation to their exposure to the respective languages.

Secondly, this study raises questions about L2 to L1 transfer in the case of types of clause-initial adverbials. Van Vuuren (2017) concluded that students of English tend to transfer their preferences for clause-initial adverbials from their Dutch to their English, and this study concluded this also happened from English to Dutch, but only in the case of place adverbials. It would therefore be interesting to do a follow up study specifically on the types of adverbials used and focus on more types. A distinction could also be made between adverbial phrases and clauses, since they have differences in placement, and that distinction was left out in this study. In this way it can be found out if the transfer that was found in this study occurs in different types of clause-initial adverbials as well.

Thirdly, it can also be questioned why the use of clause-initial linking adverbials in the texts of Dutch students of English rose so drastically towards year 3. The reason that was stated by Van Vuuren (2017) and this study, was that students become more aware of the need to apply cohesion in texts, but use only one technique to achieve it, which is linking words. In

this way they use different approaches than native speakers of English would. This would be interesting to study in itself, because it can have important educational purposes.

The results of this study are especially relevant for educational purposes as well. Anglification of the education system in the Netherlands is already under intense scrutiny, as discussion are arising all around. Psychology students at Radboud University have already complained about the low level of English the teachers of that study have, and that this might affect their level of study and their own level of English. It is not only the L2 that people are worried about, however, since Lotte Jensen, professor Dutch Literature and Culture History, worries that the increasing amount of English used in the lecture halls might affect their Dutch as well. She states that these students are most likely to apply for a job in the Dutch job market and that in such an environment an advanced Dutch language proficiency is crucial (Hermans, 2017). Studies like these could provide a scientific background to these statements and find out how this transfer effect actually develops. It is of course never the goal of any educational facility to have their students experience loss of their L1, and it is therefore important to evaluate studies like these and adjust curriculums accordingly. A study that could be conducted is one where texts by students of other subjects than English, who do use mostly English in their study, are analysed on effects of transfer in their use of clause-initial constituents. A control group of similarly aged people who do not study would then be added, to see whether the effect occurs due to the English curriculum, or the general presence of English in the daily lives of the Dutch. Of course more levels of L2 to L1 transfer could also be studied in this way, because it is important that in the pursuit of L2 fluency, educational policy makers do not lose sight of L1 development.

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### Appendix

Table 1. Types of constituents used in clause-initial position

	Year 1 Dutch students of English	Year 2 Dutch students of English	Year 3 Dutch students of English	Native speakers of English	Dutch students of other subjects than English
Subjects	1347 (61,39%)	964 (64,13%)	593 (55,47%)	770 (70,38%)	378 (56,25%)
Adverbials	788 (35,91%)	494 (32,87%)	452 (42,28%)	324 (29,61%)	277 (41,22%)
Objects	59 (2,96%)	45 (2,99%)	24 (2,25%)	0 (0%)	17 (2,53%)
Main Clauses	2194	1503	1069	1094	672

Table 2. Types of adverbials used in clause-initial position

	Year 1 Dutch students of English	Year 2 Dutch students of English	Year 3 Dutch students of English	Native speakers of English	Dutch students of other subjects than English
Linking adverbials	237 (30,07%)	167 (33,80%)	181 (40,04%)	85 (26,23%)	86 (31,05%)
Place adverbials	126 (15,99%)	64 (12,96%)	23 (5,09%)	19 (5,86%)	35 (12,63%)
Time adverbials	189 (23,98%)	104 (21,05%)	76 (16,81%)	78 (24,07%)	47 (16,97%)
Other adverbials	236 (29,95%)	159 (32,18%)	172 (38,05%)	142 (43,83%)	109 (39,35%)
Total clause-initial adverbials	788	494	452	324	277