Making the most of MULTILINGUALISM at RCA

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1 Introduction

If you step into any performing arts university around the world, you will probably not get very far through the door without hearing different languages. At the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp (or RCA), in the last five years alone, students of over fifty nationalities, speaking almost as many languages, have enrolled on degree programmes in dance, drama and music. On any given day in the dining room you might hear Spanish, Icelandic, Greek, French, or Portuguese being spoken alongside Dutch and of course English, as first, second or even third languages. The RCA, like many theatre, dance and music schools around the world, increasingly mirrors the professional performance world where multilingualism is the norm in almost every discipline. Arts education has a long way to go regarding other sorts of diversity including socio-economic and ethnic background, especially amongst home students, but the sector's cultural and linguistic diversity cannot be underestimated.

Having a rich tapestry of languages and cultures can offer numerous advantages and significantly enhances the artistic, professional and social profile of any school especially in the performing arts. Yet navigating multilingualism on this scale is incredibly challenging: it takes agility, a willingness to adapt, listen, learn, make space for mistakes and, sometimes simply "talking with hands and feet", as the Flemish saying goes. These skills – and more – are in abundance at the RCA amongst teaching staff, administrative colleagues, students and researchers but also the technical and housekeeping teams... And yet it is not easy, especially as there has been a relatively fast shift from a mostly monolingual to multilingual school culture. Moreover, the school's main focus is art, not language education, and students and staff here have a very diverse range of aims, needs, profiles, and skills. Getting the most out of a multilingual school requires conscious collective effort, and, above all, a clear policy guiding how this effort should be best directed.

No such policy document exists to date at RCA, and so in recognition of the challenges outlined above, the school applied for funding for a ten-month research project entitled 'Meertaligheid als Troef' – meaning 'Multilingualism as an asset'. The project brief (see appendix A) was to map the current situation regarding language use in school from a variety of angles and develop a policy that best fits this situation. The aim of this policy was to build on existing good practice as well as setting out improvements or solutions to specific challenges in order to maximise the benefits of multilingualism in school.

The project was conducted between March and December 2021, with the main data-collection phase lasting from May-October. Data was collected from internal and external stakeholders, with a mixed methods approach drawing on literature and desk research, alongside interviews, focus groups, lesson observations and a student and staff survey. This rest of this report presents the main findings of the research accompanied by analysis and policy advice, as follows:

Chapter two sketches the broader context of language support in performing arts education. It draws on relevant academic literature to outline three key language skill-sets that help students succeed in an increasingly precarious professional context. This is followed by some brief 'takeaways' from the literature: errors to avoid and things to bear in mind when developing a language policy for this school. In particular, the question of increasing academicization is raised, and a possible way forward for balancing academic versus artistic concerns is presented.

Chapter three describes the context in which the school operates. There is a brief overview of the legal situation and constraints on policy, followed by information and reflections on the school's relation with three key stakeholders, including: other performing arts colleges in Belgium; AP University College, of which the RCA is a part; and the Conservatoire's sister school, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts.

Chapter four zooms in on the school's current situation regarding multilingualism in school and gives an overview of past policy work in the field. It then focuses on the research methodology of the present project, data collection and main findings on internal stakeholders including students, teachers, managers and other staff. Key challenges are outlined and linked to preliminary policy advice.

Chapter five provides analysis, and outlines the danger of 'cosmetic' change, versus the potential for a deep and structural shift regarding mindset and mentality. This is followed by 'food for thought' in the form of three potential avenues for structural policy change that were explored in this project, namely fully splitting the study programme into two monolingual programmes; the use of obligatory language tests and/or certificates as a condition of entry; and a proposal for an integrated multilingualism policy.

Chapter six, briefly sets out recommendations for policy based on the data presented in the earlier chapters and describes a range of small and larger concrete projects that can be implemented as part of this policy. This advice is divided between advice for the school itself, for its parent school AP University College, and for the broader Flemish performing arts / education context. This is followed by a brief outline of some key steps needed to implement the policy in future. The report concludes with a suggestion for a vision text to underpin future policy work.

A note on format: Two sets of colour-coded text boxes are used in the report: Blue boxes highlight qualitative data about the school in the form of quotations, anecdotes or descriptions from the surveys, interviews, and lesson observations. Green boxes are meant as a starting point for discussion, with commentary, analysis, interim conclusions, and policy action points or advice. Unless otherwise attributed, images and diagrams in this report are original.

A note on language: For the time being, this report is available in English only. In light of the lack of means to fully translate it into Dutch or any other language, English was chosen in order to ensure that the report is fully accessible to all members of our community.

2 Language use in performing arts education

2.1 Literature and previous research

Before analysing the specific school context it is useful to consider relevant previous research. Consulting work by other researchers helps save time and money by learning from other options for language policy and multilingualism that have been tested elsewhere. Moreover, by grounding policy in relevant empirical research we also ensure that the school stays up to date with the latest developments in arts education and in language support. This can help the RCA maintain and further develop its profile as a forward-thinking school and global leader in the field, thus also raising the profile of the AP University College, and the arts scene in Antwerp and Flanders. Finally, referring to literature can help us think outside the (Flemish) box, and open horizons in order to find creative solutions to fit a creative community.

There is not a great deal of research about language support for students of performing arts, but a small body of inspiring work does exist, focusing mainly on classical music, and in the context of English as a foreign language. Two texts are particularly interesting for readers who are not linguistics specialists – and can be also found online via [this link](#).[1] The 2007 article by Wolfe[2] draws on real-life practice in a conservatoire in Australia, and offers an overview of the needs and challenges related to language for music studies, as opposed to general academic language skills. Martin's 2013 article[3] is based on interviews with international students studying dance, and investigates the impact of personal, social and cultural factors on success and study experience. The rest of this chapter draws on these two articles alongside other research plus information gathered during this project in the school. This information is used to develop a framework of key language skills that performing arts students need to be successful in their studies and beyond. It also serves as a basis for the rest of the policy, outlining how RCA can help students acquire these skills.

The skills are divided into three categories,[4] each with a definition and example of the kinds of tasks and activities that students do which require this skill. The categories are also illustrated by quotations from the student survey and interviews conducted for this project. Finally, some of the main challenges and pitfalls for teaching these skills are summarized, as mentioned in the literature.

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[1] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u0MaoJwSSKHVRdkVsfwwEjpOGTMvc4r_/view?usp=sharing
2 Wolfe, J. "You'll have to start early if you want to be on time for the F sharp!" Language and the study of music: Implications for international students studying in tertiary music programs in Australia. [Conference paper]. Student success in international education, ISANA International Conference, November 27-30, 2007, Adelaide, Australia.
3 Martin, R. "Alienation and transformation: an international education in contemporary dance." Research in Dance Education, vol. 14, no. 3, 2013, pp. 201–215.
4 See also Britton, J. 'Languages and the conservatoire: a state of the challenge in music and dance education' (forthcoming in 2022), *Forum+ for Research and Arts* – written during this research project, this article provides a more detailed version of this framework for language skills for performing arts students in dance and music, as well as a comprehensive bibliography.

2.1.1   Academic and study-related language skills

During an interview, an international student says it was very challenging for them to write an academic dissertation in a foreign language. They describe their process: finding literature both in English and in their first language, using online translation software to help with understanding, writing slowly and laboriously, not sure if their ideas are coming across well. They say they were not sure where to go for help, they would have felt more motivated if their main study teacher was more involved in the process. I ask how they feel now – having submitted the paper, do they think it was a valuable exercise? They reflect briefly, then say that it was very challenging, but although they didn't realise while they were writing the paper, in fact it is very useful to have gone deeper into the history of this major piece of repertoire. They are sure that this will have a big impact on how they play it in future, for example in competitions.

"Een boodschap kan goud waard zijn, maar als niemand het begrijpt, is er ook geen echte communicatie mogelijk."

<u>Definition</u>: The category of academic language skills of course includes skills for academic or artistic research, including academic reading and writing skills alongside use of terminology, formulating your opinion, and structuring an argument. However, academic language skills are not only about writing a dissertation. They also include basic communicative competence that may be particularly relevant to students at the beginning of their course, such as skills to navigate everyday life, follow classes and understand instructions. The category also relates to language for navigating difference or even confusion over pedagogical styles and learning expectations – these skills are extremely relevant when students first arrive in a new school, and generally require sophisticated linguistic skills and also a certain level of self-knowledge and confidence.

<u>Tasks that require these skills include</u>: formulating a research topic; writing in an academic register; reading about theory or history; expressing your opinion in written or oral form; participating in class discussions; making bibliographies and citing sources; understanding and using terminology related to theory or subject-specific keywords; following directions for how to get around campus; understanding guidelines, deadlines and modalities of evaluation for an assignment; asking for clarification about feedback that you don't understand; discussing and comparing prior learning experiences.

<u>Challenges</u>: The single greatest challenge for multilingual and international schools like RCA is the huge variety of language backgrounds, levels and also educational histories amongst students and staff. This also leads to a challenge of navigating cultural differences related to hierarchy, classroom interaction and feedback. A low level of language skills, or lack of confidence, will have a significant impact on a student's ability to ask questions, check understanding, engage in dialogue and thus benefit from their studies. In addition, it is

particularly challenging to teach research skills and academic writing to students who have no prior background in this. A related challenge, as seen in the anecdote above, is motivation, and developing a shared understanding in school of why academic or theory subjects are relevant.

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Policy action points:
- Work to see how school can be even more inclusive for students with diverse academic and educational backgrounds.
- Develop a school culture where academic and artistic research are valued as part of the process of learning how to perform, and vice versa.
- Offer targeted academic language support in the form of coaching or imbedded classes.
- Consider developing alternative assessment formats that will benefit students with English as a second language as well as students with special educational needs.

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2.1.2 Artistic and professional language skills

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"Different languages are used in the world of arts anyway, so it's good that we already come into contact with this when we're at school."

"Bélgica es un pais donde viven ya muchísimas culturas, creo que si exploráramos toda la información cultural que tiene el pais, pudiéramos hacer un arte nacional mucho más interesante."

"Als je de mogelijkheid krijgt om je eigen artistieke input in je moedertaal te geven, het kan helemaal anders zij dan in een taal dat je niet beheerst."

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Definition: This category includes two related sets of skills. First, artistic language relates to the ability to discuss one's own and other's artistic practice with a level of linguistic nuance (and metaphor, where appropriate). Second, professional language competence relates to practical skills needed to function in an international, multilingual work context and engage in professional discourse, and 'talk like a creative entrepreneur'.[5]

Tasks that require these skills include: interacting with students, teachers and artists in different languages and cultures; collaborating and negotiating with others during ensemble rehearsals and performance; translating or adapting text for performance or publicity; ability to give/receive/respond to feedback; analysing + expressing your opinion about your own and others' artistic practice; knowledge of vocabulary for subject-specific discourse / theory / history; preparing text that looks attractive on the page; talking about yourself and your work on stage or in public; writing different text genres including reviews, programme or CD notes, biography or website texts; applying for further study or funding; filling in application forms, negotiating fees, preparing budgets.

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[5] Harvey, S., & Stocks, P. "When arts meets enterprise: Transdisciplinarity, student identities, and EAP." London Review of Education, vol. 15, no. 1, March 2017, pp. 50–62.

Challenges: This category requires a high level of linguistic competence, as discussing artistic topics with a level of nuance is challenging even in one's first language, let alone in a second or third language. Artistic ideas are rarely linear, but relate to 'messy' narratives, and often require use of metaphor[6] as well as terminology related to theory and personal experience. The greatest challenge is therefore helping students develop a wide vocabulary and learn creative strategies to express this range of nuance. An additional challenge here is multilingualism, and the fact that artists often have to perform the same task in different languages and contexts. Finally, it is hard to teach 'versatility', and most performing arts schools do not have a long tradition of teaching entrepreneurship and professional communication skills meaning that resources and curricula often have to be developed from scratch.

Policy action points:
- Develop strategies and contexts where students can experiment and make mistakes in a playful and safe way when learning how to describe art;
- Concentrate efforts on linguistic strategies needed for describing art (key vocabulary, descriptive language, adjectives, metaphor);
- Actively include exercises to promote linguistic versatility and entrepreneurship, for example practicing genres such as grant applications, programme notes or funding pitches.

2.1.3 Soft skills and social integration

A student in an focus group explains that ensemble work is essential for them at this stage of their training and development. To get the most out of ensemble work, they need to have a good group dynamic, but sometimes it was hard to find people to work with, and to build up a good contact with the other group members. The student thinks this is partly because they are an international student, and they didn't always speak the same language as others in their ensemble.

Another student tells a similar story: for their instrument in particular, ensemble playing is essential. They point out that making connections with other musicians in the bar after a concert or a jam is an essential skill – this is the time and place they are building a foundation for what will happen on stage together as musicians, and also where they network and find new ensembles. If they lack knowledge of the local language and social cues, they will miss out on projects now, and also potential work for the future.

"It's not always easy to understand the "common conversation" that happens out of the lessons between the students and you can miss a lot of informations about things that are not really school-related but still important for your integration."

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[6] Wolfe, J. "An investigation into the nature and function of metaphor in advanced music instruction." Research Studies in Music Education, 2018, vol. 41, no. 3, pp. 280–292.

Definition: Although interpersonal interaction is rarely mentioned in the literature as a curriculum aim, the above examples show that soft skills and social integration are anything but an optional extra. For students in the arts this language skill goes beyond a question of psycho-social well-being and touches on competences that are essential for making connections, building and maintaining relationships, 'selling' their work in an authentic way – or, put simply, getting gigs and keeping them. We cannot assume that all students will simply pick up on the cues and etiquette of a specific culture or professional context, particularly when operating in a multilingual and multicultural context. By explicitly discussing differences, students reinforce their intercultural capital and grow into resilient, versatile performing artists ready for an international profession.

Tasks that require these skills include: knowledge of communication and cultural norms during an internship or professional project; language for integration, daily life and administration; communicating with different audiences including fellow artists and general public; language skills for friendship and creative collaboration; awareness of register and social conventions appropriate for informal / formal learning and socialising as a student; ability to use 'multi-dimensional' language to talk about personal experience in relation to artistic practice (including reference to affect, identity, faith or trauma[7]).

Challenges: By their nature, and because they often relate to contexts outside the classroom, these language skills are rarely mentioned in the literature or in curricula and might even be seen as 'un-teachable'. Learning these skills will require new approaches and creativity. Moreover, the development of soft skills also relates not only to language level or motivation but is impacted by external factors beyond the school's control (such as students' financial, physical and mental health).

Policy action points
- Work together with student psychologists to develop tools for intercultural awareness and communication in school community;
- Develop guidelines for groups to negotiate choice of language and language use in smaller groups and ensemble work;
- Consider how neurodiversity, mental health, and cultural background impact students' ability to integrate, and build social connection and creative collaboration in school.

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[7] Carr, C., Maxwell, C., Rolinksa, A., & Sizer, J. "EAP teachers working in, with and through the creative arts: An exploration." Pedagogies in English for Academic Purposes, eds. C. MacDiarmid & J. J. MacDonald, Bloomsbury, 2021, p. 161.

2.2 Important takeaways from the literature

In addition to the policy action points given above for the specific categories, there are also six further points from the literature to bear in mind when developing a language policy for a specific context and community in the performing arts. These are outlined below:

Needs analysis: It is important to bear in mind that language priorities and needs will be different in different contexts. This relates to many factors, including: the structure, content and aims of the curriculum; how students are assessed and evaluated; the background and previous experience of students and staff; plus the school's language dynamic and multilingual environment, in particular when staff or students are working in a second or third language.[8]

Specificity of skills in the arts: Although schools often use international standardised language tests like IELTS and TOEFL to assess students' language level for university entrance or visa purposes, researchers have questioned whether these are appropriate for performing arts degrees at higher education level, given the very specific combination of subject-specific terminology plus nuanced language use required by these fields of study.[9] Critics have also pointed out the value of subject-specific course materials[10] rather than relying on generalised EAP (English as an Academic Language) resources and assignments.

Time pressure and structure: Some literature[11] has suggested that performing arts students may find it hard to attend language class regularly due to their irregular schedules, and rehearsal or practice commitments outside regular teaching hours. Language support or classes can take this into account, for example by offering online options.

Diversity and special educational needs: We must keep in mind links to diversity and inclusion: lack of adequate language support will disproportionately disadvantage international students / those with less academic prior schooling / those with special needs.

Social integration + well-being as foundation: We also must not underestimate the importance of social integration.[12] This is not just an 'added bonus' but a fundamental part of the learning process, both for well-being (which underpins success in international student experience) and

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[8] Lesiak-Bielawska, E. "English for Instrumentalists: Designing and Evaluating an ESP Course." English for Specific Purposes World, vol. 43, no. 15, 2014, pp. 1–32.

[9] Wolfe, J. "You'll have to start early if you want to be on time for the F sharp!" Language and the study of music: Implications for international students studying in tertiary music programs in Australia. [Conference paper]. Student success in international education, ISANA International Conference, November 27-30, 2007, Adelaide, Australia.

[10] Wakeland, L. "Development of an English-for-specific-academic-purposes course for music students." Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics, vol. 14, no. 2, 2013, pp. 45–59.

11 Lesiak-Bielawska, E. "English for Instrumentalists: Designing and Evaluating an ESP Course." English for Specific Purposes World, vol. 43, no. 15, 2014, p. 16.

[12] Sovic, S. "Coping with stress: the perspective of international students." Art, Design & Communication in Higher Education, vol. 6, no. 3, 2008, pp. 145–158.

also for networking skills, ease and confidence in group-work / project-work which is often directly linked to success in exams and performances for performing arts students.

Balance of academic vs artistic skills: It is useful to consider the school's position regarding the typical division between 'people who make art (painters, composers, theatre directors, performance artists, etc.)' and those who 'study artworks or artists (such as art historians, musicologists, theatre researchers, performance theorists, etc.)'[13] In many traditional performing arts programmes, academic writing has been regarded as less important. Yet this is rightly seen as a more challenging skill, for which students often need intensive (individual) support, particularly if they do not have an academic background. We must not underestimate the need for support in this skill, but also the potential added value and empowerment that young artists gain by engaging with scholarship.

2.3   A language policy to match the paradigm shift

In short, language support needs to match the paradigm shift in arts education, moving away from the desire to train only 'people who make art', to training artists who both make and study art. The two images below visualise these two approaches. First, a traditional approach whereby artistic practice is kept separate from academic research. Here the chief focus is on 'making art' – and language skills serve chiefly as a means to that end. 'Studying art', and related language skills, for example to write a thesis, are of secondary importance. The second image visualises a possible path for a more integrated vision. Here, language support serves as a tool to build bridges. Students gain awareness of the importance of all genres of linguistic communication (academic alongside artistic, professional and social), helping them develop not only as excellent performers but also as versatile, resilient artists and creative entrepreneurs in the face of increasing precarity in the arts world.

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[13] Arlander, A. "Characteristics of visual and performing arts." The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts, eds. M. Biggs & H. Karlsson, Routledge, 2012, pp. 325.

Traditional hierarchy of language skills in performing arts education

Making art

- Focus on functional language, terminology to be able to rehearse, learn repertoire etc.
- Talking about the work of others mainly as means to improve own performance
- Focus on oral skills, with little focus on form or structure

Studying artwork or artists

- Research skills only where required as part of curriculum or programme
- Academic language skills in traditional genre i.e., thesis or dissertation

Proposed model for integrated language skills acquisition

in performing arts education

Language for social integration

- administration, visa, finances
- language for networking, 'chit chat' after the rehearsal
- individual's well-being as root of connected performer
- community's well-being as root of connected performances

Study-related language skills

- reading about, analysing and discussing about work by past and present artists
- reading about, analysing, discussing theory, context and history of others' performance
- language to give, receive and respond to feedback
- ability to structure and express opinion and argument about your own and others' work in community of performance practice

Professional language competence

- language to sell yourself and your work to funders
- language to introduce yourself and your work to public and audiences
- language for teaching and coaching as part of portfolio career and self-development
- versatile communicators and listeners, able to adapt to different professional situations depending on need

3 External context and stakeholders

Moving on from the theoretical background, in order to develop a workable policy it is important to consider the environment in which the school is operating, in this case higher education and performing arts in Flanders and in Antwerp. This chapter plots the immediate context of the school, including factors that act as constraints, alongside suggestions of how various stakeholders may provide inspiration, opportunities and potential co-creators of the present policy.

3.1 SWOT analysis

This chapter starts with a SWOT analysis to provide an overview of how the external context and stakeholders can affect the school's future language policy. It summarises the existing strengths and weaknesses in the school's language policy, plus possible future opportunities for development versus threats to future success.

The analysis is based on evidence gathered during the data-collection phase of this project, in particular from interviews with stakeholders outside the RCA, alongside research literature and internal school documents, plus investigations into comparable performing arts schools outside Flanders and Belgium.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
-the school's international profile and high number of international applicants as testimony to school's excellence -adaptability and versatility of staff and students -cultural richness and potential for exchange -no language test required for entry (attractive vs. a lot of international schools) -growing tradition of bilingual communication (emails, brochures / teaching and exam regulations at RCA- and AP-level)	-unclear communication to students about language policy and support on offer -lack of clear language policy in school -lack of detailed language level entrance guidelines -lack of free or affordable language courses, especially Dutch for non-native speakers, and (academic) English courses
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
-Ability to attract international students of a high level and enhance reputation of RCA -International students who learn Dutch are more likely to stay and contribute to Flemish/Belgian cultural scene -Particular opportunity for teacher training programme to attract and retain students to train as teachers here and perhaps stay in Belgium to work as teachers. -Dutch-speaking students who develop language skills also enhance their career options -Shift to ADAPT[14] offers a chance to provide more structural language support via student centre. -Time between a student applying and starting school could offer opportunity to improve language skills if orientation and clear information were provided.	-gap between school practice and federal language policy -other performing arts schools abroad (or, in future, in Belgium) with clearer language policy and/or more developed provision for language support -cliques / lack of social integration between language and cultural groups -provision of information bilingually and/or only in English (dance) can lead to the impression that Dutch is less important in school

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14 ADAPT is the name given to the transformation process of the structure of the RCA's parent organisation – AP university college that is in development presently.

The current project reacts to the issues presented in the above SWOT analysis in two ways. First, by exploring ways to enhance strengths and capitalise on opportunities to enhance student experience and well-being in the learning community. Second, by exploring ways to minimise weakness and avoid threats.

Although the brief for this project was to present an overview and suggestions for language policy that are most pedagogically sound for the school and members of the community, in the Flemish context, the law around language in higher education constitutes a key constraint which may limit the school's room for manoeuvre. For this reason, this section starts by setting out a brief overview of relevant legislation as discussed with colleagues within AP, focusing on pedagogical and language-learning aspects. Then the chapter considers other concrete issues of context and stakeholders that limit or enhance policy opportunities.

3.2 Legislation on language policy in higher education in Flanders

"Basisregel - De onderwijstaal in de hogescholen en de universiteiten van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap is het Nederlands."

Codex Hoger Onderwjis – Onderwjistaal in het hoger onderwjis

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"Scholen kunnen zelf veel bijdragen om zich om te turnen tot een lerende organisatie […] Toch is het niet zo dat je de hele ommezwaai naar lerende onderwijsorganisaties alleen kunt overlaten aan de scholen. Flankerende overheidsmaatregelen zijn noodzakelijk."

Iedereen Schoolmaker: Investeren in samen leren, by Bert Smits and Yves Larock

[15]

NB. It is beyond the scope of this project to check the legal conformity of proposed solutions in detail. Sections 3.2 and 3.2.1 are intended as an analysis of the law from a purely pedagogical and linguistic point of view; any details regarding the accuracy of the information or conformity of potential solutions should be checked with the appropriate legal team before making final decisions.

The higher education law in Flanders ('codex hoger onderwijs'[16]) is built on the baseline assumption that classes are taught in Dutch: Art. II.261. § 1. "De onderwijstaal in de hogescholen en universiteiten is het Nederlands" (Translation: The language of instruction in university colleges and universities is Dutch). At present, there is no official provision for schools to officially register a whole programme as multilingual. It is possible for institutions to have a

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[15] B. Smits and Y. Larock. (2021). Iedereen schoolmaker: Investeren in samen leren. Lannoo Campus. p. 135.
[16] https://www.vlaanderen.be/taalwetwijzer/onderwijstaal-in-het-hoger-onderwijs

whole programme recognised as 'anderstalig' – or 'in another language', for example as in the case of the existing English-language Masters programmes at RCA. Here permission is granted on the basis of an application and there is a Flanders-wide system of quotas to limit the number of non-Dutch programmes.

The only other room for flexibility is that an officially Dutch-language programme can include a maximum of 18.33% of teaching in another language if the rest of the programme is taught in Dutch.[17] The legislation outlines four contexts for classes taught in a language other than Dutch. Of these four, cases 1 and 3 count as exceptions to the "18.33%" rule mentioned above.[18]

> *1° courses that have a foreign language as the subject, and which are taught in that language;*
>
> *2° courses that are taught by guest professors who are speakers of another language;*
>
> *3° courses in another language that, on the student's initiative, and with the consent of the institution, are followed at another institution of higher education;*
>
> *4° courses for which the explicitly motivated decision shows the added value for the students and the decreasing field and the functionality for the programme.[19]*

The next section explores these 'exceptions' in relation to RCA, and the context of multilingual communication in contemporary performing arts. Cases 1, 2 and 4 in particular are highly relevant for the whole RCA context as they encompass core aims of performing arts education, in terms of both artistic and linguistic objectives.

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[17] *"Als meer dan 33% van het aantal afgestudeerden in een niet-anderstalige initiële bachelor- c.q. masteropleiding meer dan 18,33% c.q. 50% van hun studiepunten verworven hebben in opleidingsonderdelen in een andere taal dan het Nederlands, dan wordt deze opleiding beschouwd als een anderstalige initiële bachelor- of masteropleiding."*
[18] *(Voor de berekening van de grenzen van 18,33% c.q. 50% worden de opleidingsonderdelen vermeld in artikel II.261, §2, 1° en 3°, niet meegerekend.)*
[19] Original Dutch text: 1° de opleidingsonderdelen die een vreemde taal tot onderwerp hebben en die in die taal worden gedoceerd;
2° de opleidingsonderdelen die gedoceerd worden door anderstalige gastprofessoren;
3° de anderstalige opleidingsonderdelen die, op initiatief van de student en met instemming van de instelling, worden gevolgd aan een andere instelling voor hoger onderwijs;
4° de opleidingsonderdelen waar uit de expliciet gemotiveerde beslissing de meerwaarde voor de studenten en het afnemende veld en de functionaliteit voor de opleiding blijkt.

3.2.1 Language legislation and the RCA

This section reflects on the current situation at RCA in relation to the above legal guidelines, and briefly analyses relevant exceptions as a possible basis for medium- and long-term development of the study programmes. At RCA currently, some programmes – like the masters in dance or music – are offered in both English and Dutch, while other programmes at bachelors level are monolingual Dutch-language programmes where English is nonetheless often present as a lingua franca. Data from the observations and interviews in school show, however, that the division between English- and Dutch-language programmes is rather artificial. This is due both to the extremely international community in school necessitating a far richer linguistic patchwork, and also to the fact that (much to the school's credit) emphasis is placed on artistic excellence and pedagogical coherence rather than language background when organising study units or assigning students in group work.

The practical and pedagogical implications of the law for this unique educational context are explored in more detail in chapter five. But, in short, the law as it currently stands would point to two possible directions for evolution in the school language policy: first, for all programmes in music and dance to be fully split into English and Dutch streams – as at masters level – or, second, for the presence of languages other than Dutch to be reduced in school to make way for an increased focus on teaching in Dutch, at least at bachelors level. Unfortunately, both approaches risk having a significant impact on the school's social, artistic and educational excellence. The significant cost of either approach would divert much-needed budget away from more pressing artistic and educational needs in the school. Moreover, as a profession, the performing arts are both international and multilingual, and therefore any policy that limits flexibility and multilingualism will almost certainly move students further away from the professional context of contemporary artistic practice.

In the long-term, therefore, there is a need for policy work and advocacy to develop legislation that better meets the needs of language and arts education in Flanders today (see also section 6.3 – policy advice on the Flemish level). The analysis in this section outlines how the existing law could possibly be a precedent for truly multilingual arts education in future. Second, in the medium-term, in addition to the two possible solutions outlined above, it is important to explore any other options that are pedagogically and artistically sound and that can work within the existing legal framework. The rest of this section therefore outlines three relevant exceptions mentioned in the law, and how these could link to the strategy and vision of RCA in the medium- and long-term.

1) *de opleidingsonderdelen die een vreemde taal tot onderwerp hebben en die in die taal worden gedoceerd;*

This exception means that parts of a programme that have foreign language acquisition as their aim, and which are taught in that language, do not count towards the 18.33% of the programme that can be taught in a language other than Dutch. Lesson observations and student interviews conducted for this project (see chapter 4), demonstrated that at RCA, a good deal of language acquisition for international and also home students already happens in lessons. This relates to (theory) classes that are taught in consecutive English-Dutch sections, practical classes where there is codeswitching and translanguaging – switching between Dutch and English alongside other languages – or analysis or history classes where there is translation of key terms into English or Dutch, alongside numerous situations and lessons where students and teachers are flexible and adapt to use the lingua franca(s) best suited to the group's linguistic make up and task at hand on any given day.

The lingua franca(s) used in class at RCA are generally a second or third language for many if not all students present. Therefore, although few courses have the explicit aim of teaching language skills, in practice all students in a multilingual class environment – both Dutch-speaking and international students – are constantly learning or reinforcing subject terminology in English and Dutch, practising foreign language communication strategies, and improving their active and passive language skills for artistic and academic discourse. Moreover, the integration of Dutch during English-language classes offers a chance for international students to learn Dutch while moving ahead with course content.

2) *de opleidingsonderdelen die gedoceerd worden door anderstalige gastprofessoren;*
The use of guest teachers is standard practice in higher education performing arts including at RCA. Regardless of what language they speak, guest teachers are seen as offering added value by students and staff as this brings students into contact with a wide range of excellent international teachers and practitioners in a very international field.

According to the recent self-evaluation exercise by the dance department, for example, the programme employs 28 colleagues on various contracts alongside an average of 29 guest professors with shorter, temporary positions. Students in a multilingual focus group for the dance department underlined their enjoyment and enhanced learning from projects with international guest professors regardless of those teachers' first language or teaching language. Similarly students in the open session in the drama department gave feedback that their number one 'wish' for language policy would be to have even more workshops with guest teachers including international practitioners.

3) *de anderstalige opleidingsonderdelen die, op initiatief van de student en met instemming van de instelling, worden gevolgd aan een andere instelling voor hoger onderwijs;*

This relates to courses taken as part of exchange programmes such as Erasmus, with a focus on language policy related to the individual student. Such programmes are very enriching and naturally have a great impact on the individual's ability to learn a foreign language but do not have a great relevance when it comes to school-wide adjustments to bring the programmes in line with language legislation.

4) *de opleidingsonderdelen waar uit de expliciet gemotiveerde beslissing de meerwaarde voor de studenten en het afnemende veld en de functionaliteit voor de opleiding blijkt.*

In interviews, there were anecdotal reports of other study programmes in Flanders that refer to this exception as a core component of course design, for example in computer programming or graphic design, where students need to use English vocabulary or textbooks. At RCA, vocabulary and language for a number of subjects also has to be multilingual, whether English for contemporary dance, French for ballet, Italian for music theory, or use of academic theory and teaching texts that only exist in English.

However, the context of RCA and performing arts goes beyond a question of vocabulary or course materials. As mentioned above, the performing arts is a highly international professional domain. Students and staff consulted for this project underlined that in the performing arts profession, professional competency in multiple languages is the norm, and learning to work in multiple languages is an essential and substantial part of preparing students to be professional artists. When considering how an international programme can fit with the Flemish law, it is important to remember that embracing a multilingual and flexible approach will not detract from the school's identity as a Flemish or Belgian programme. Rather, if Belgian and international students can train together in an international, multilingual environment, this actually enhances the future reputation of the school – and of Flanders – as the alma mater of internationally-renowned artists.

3.2.2 Moving forward with the legal framework

The main basis for future policy work is that (performing) arts are an exceptional case with regards to multilingualism in education and the international nature of the field. Splitting all programmes into English and Dutch-language streams, for example, might fit with the legal requirements, but on balance this would compromise pedagogical and artistic excellence, and the main if not only motivation to do so would be due to the law as it currently stands. In the long-term, there are significant practical, pedagogical, and socio-cultural reasons why none of the scenarios outlined in the law are ideal or sustainable frameworks for performing arts (higher) education. Thus, although the current project explores how to bring these programmes further in line with the existing law, in the longer term it will be necessary to work with other Flemish arts

institutions to advocate for a better legal framework for arts education in Flanders. The policy action points below offer some starting points for this advocacy work:

Policy action point for exception 1:
Many courses at RCA already implicitly have the aim of teaching foreign language skills. Moreover, interviews with students and staff revealed a strong opinion that multilingual competence is a vital tool for professional performing artists.

→ The school should explore whether language acquisition can be developed as an explicit aim in courses where this is already happening. This is pedagogically sound as it will enhance student skills and also promote a culture of multilingual performance discourse. Moreover, based on this exception as outlined in the law, it may also help bring the programme better in line with the legislation. Before implementing significant change based on this exception, further research should be conducted to find out:
- whether there are other universities or university colleges in Flanders that have developed multilingual programmes based on this exception;
- whether there is a maximum number of courses within one programme that can be classed

Policy action point for exception 2:
This exception is particularly relevant for arts education given the international and multilingual nature of the professional performance world. Regular collaboration with world-renowned guest professors is a core part of the programme at RCA and international guest teachers enrich student experience through added artistic value and employability skills.

→ At present, if lessons with guest professors are not taught in Dutch, it seems that they still count against the 18.33% quota for 'anderstalige' – i.e., non-Dutch – lessons. Yet limiting the number of guest teachers who do not speak Dutch in order to ensure that the programme conforms with the Flemish language policy would have a significant negative impact on student experience.

It is fair to say here that arts education is exceptional within the higher education landscape regarding the added value and need for international guest professors. As such, future policy work could therefore advocate for a change in the policy for arts education, so that the exception regarding guest professors – like exceptions 1 and 3 – would not count within the limit on non-Dutch teaching.

Policy action point for exception 4:
More precise communication and explicit discussion of the multilingual nature of the performing arts amongst students and staff will enhance both the reputation and the practical working of the programme.
→ It is interesting that this exception is already cited in the law. It arguably applies to the whole of a performing arts education – not just 18.33% of a student's work. Future policy work could therefore explore whether this existing exception sets a precedent for a more appropriate, flexible legal framework for multilingual arts education in Flanders.

3.3 Looking beyond the Schelde: the wider context of performing arts university colleges in Belgium

Alongside the constraints – or opportunities – of the Flemish law on language in higher education, RCA is of course part of the 'market' of Flemish / Belgian schools of performing arts. It also operates in the context of growing internationalisation in higher education in general – the percentage of international students in Belgium, for example, almost doubled from 5.8% in 2005 to 10.5% in 2018,[20] and similar trends have also been noted in creative arts education.[21]

Different institutions deal in different ways with internationalisation and multilingualism. For this project, information was gathered through informal interviews with relevant colleagues, and consulting the websites of other performing arts schools in Belgium including KCB (Flemish conservatoire of Brussels), KASK – the conservatoire of Ghent – LUCA School of Arts in Leuven, and PARTS private dance college, also in Brussels. The wider international context was also considered through online research and meetings to seek examples of good practice from schools outside Belgium.

The list below summarises information about the language policies in performing arts schools in Flanders, based on information gathered during the 2020-21 school year:

- at present, no Flemish public school contacted has a 'binding' language test or proof of language level required as a condition of entry to performing arts degree programmes;
- no school has its own official orientation language test;
- no school presently offers in-house language classes;
- each school's approach to multilingualism depends on its student body. Schools with fewer international students place more emphasis on Dutch-language acquisition. Here, international students have more opportunities to hear and practice Dutch, and likely also have higher motivation to learn Dutch to integrate into the majority language culture;
- in contrast, the presence of a majority of international students, or 50-50 situation obviously makes it harder for non-Belgian students to learn Dutch. In these schools, English typically becomes the 'lingua franca', with a variety of levels of competence in English coming into play (of Belgian students, international students, and also staff and teachers).

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20 OECD. "International student mobility." OECD 60 Data. https://data.oecd.org/students/international-student-mobility.htm Retrieved 1 September, 2021.
21 Carr, C., Maxwell, C., Rolinksa, A., & Sizer, J. "EAP teachers working in, with and through the creative arts: An exploration." Pedagogies in English for Academic Purposes, eds. C. MacDiarmid & J. J. MacDonald, Bloomsbury, 2021, pp. 153–168; Murray, N. "Dealing with diversity in higher education : awareness-raising and a linguistic perspective on teachers' intercultural competence." International Journal for Academic Development, 2015, pp. 1-12. http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/73948 2015 Retrieved 1 September 2021.

During research, ideas were also collected from other schools in Belgium that could inspire policy at RCA. The list below summarises these:

- A 'traffic light system' orientation system for new students shortly after the start of their first year. Students receive instructions by email to take an online test of general English. Depending on their results – which are informally coded red, orange, or green – students are given the personal responsibility of following up with self-study or private classes to improve their level of English.
- A more directive orientation system whereby new students have to show a language certificate once they arrive in school (i.e., from an adult education college, or CVO), the interuniversity Dutch test (interuniversitaire taaltest[22]), or an internationally recognised language test such as IELTS, Cambridge, or TOEFL etc.) If their language level is not sufficient they are required to register for a CVO language course and show the proof of registration to the school.
- One private school (PARTS) is interesting to consider as only comparable dance programme in Belgium. Direct contact was not made for this study but according to their website they do currently require English language test prior to entry. If a student has not done the test then they may be accepted on condition that they come to Belgium early to follow an English class[23]
- Anecdotal evidence was also shared by international music students who had attended schools in Wallonia and described being given access to free weekly French classes at a university language centre throughout the whole of their degree programme. There were no reports of this possibility at a school in Flanders.

Policy action point: Please see section 6.1 (Advice for the RCA – Implementing a multilingual approach) for possible collaborations with other schools. Please also see the list of good practice examples in the appendix for a summary of information gathered through desk research and from colleagues internationally. Possible topics for collaboration include:
- Working together with other Flemish conservatoires for policy consultation / lobbying for multilingual provision at Flemish level;
- Work with conservatoires in Belgium to develop and run joint (online) courses in language skills for performing arts students;
- Work with conservatoires in Belgium or abroad to develop tools or tests for incoming students in the performing arts to self-evaluate their language skills and experience;
- Consider developing free or affordable or specially targeted pre-sessional language courses as offered by performing arts colleges abroad, either in-house or with a partner organisation;
- Consider offering year-long foundation programme offering credits in language and, e.g., music with a partner organisation.

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[22] https://www.itna.be/
[23] https://www.parts.be/faq

3.4   AP and RCA: A cross-pollination of language, arts and culture

> *"Gemeenschappelijk binnen AP waar mogelijk; specifiek binnen SOFAS waar nodig".*
> Stefaan De Ruyck, director RCA, during his speech at the 2021 proloog in De Singel, Antwerp.

In addition to inspiration from other schools in Flanders, RCA is of course also situated in Antwerp, within the structure of the AP University College, where it is one of the two Schools of Arts – or "SOFAs". Here, language policy can perhaps draw inspiration from the above motto shared by the school direct, reflecting a vision of shared responsibility, pooled expertise, and mutual inspiration, in combination with separate provision for tasks needing arts-specific expertise is needed. Concrete suggestions for developing the cooperation between RCA and AP on language policy are provided below in section 6.2 (Policy advice on the AP level). But in brief, the whole AP community has much to gain from connections and collaboration where possible on language and intercultural work.

First, on the social and interpersonal level, contact with the wider AP community can provide RCA students with contact with other young Antwerp residents from varied backgrounds and help with social integration in the city beyond the school. This contact can also enhance the well-being of AP students, in particular by drawing on the potential to develop language skills and intercultural awareness through contact with the wide body of international students at RCA.

Second, in terms of student support, it is interesting to explore how resources can be pooled to meet overlapping school-wide needs in an efficient, cost-effective way, for example support for academic English to students in RCA alongside home and exchange students following English-language courses in other departments.[24] Similarly, support for lower-level Dutch classes could be pooled by upscaling the existing "Basis Nederlands" course (Dutch for Dummies) and offering it to regular RCA students alongside incoming Erasmus students in AP.
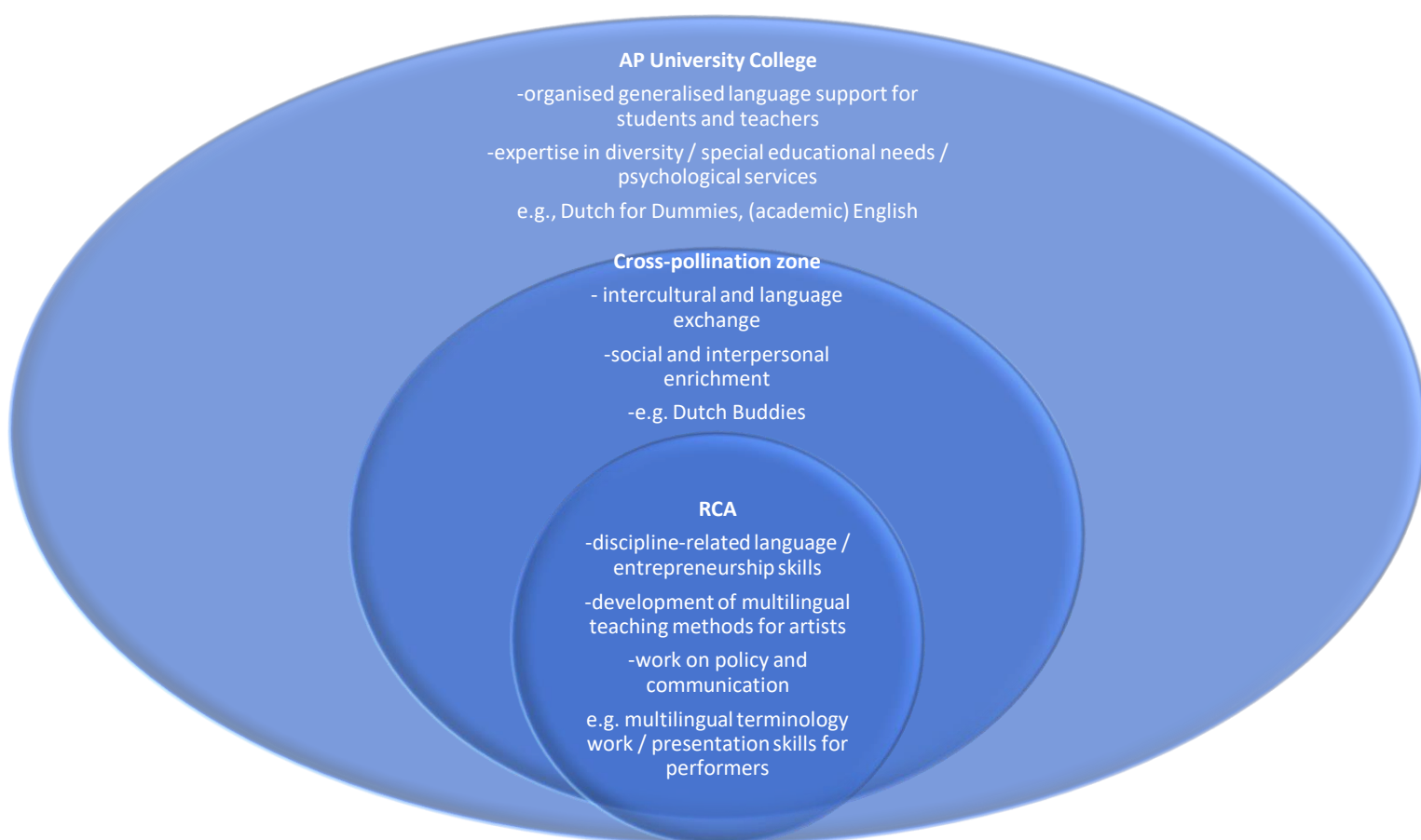
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24 See https://www.ap.be/internationale-lessen for an overview of courses taught in English.

Dutch Buddies – a case study of cross-pollination

Sitting on a café terrace in the early summer sun, a group of students who just a few weeks before had never spoken Dutch, begin to put sentences together. Literally put them together, moving pieces of paper around on the café table, the words assemble: WAAR – IS – DE – REPETITIE? "Where – is – the – rehearsal?"

In this pilot project, co-organised in May-June 2021 by Joanna Britton (RCA) and Eva Faes (AP teacher training department), international students from the conservatoire – all beginners in Dutch – were assigned buddies from the teacher training programme with the aim of getting an introduction to Dutch. The groups came together three times for sessions including walks in Antwerp, trips to museums, and café visits to practice ordering drinks during fun but structured sessions prepared by the teacher trainees for small groups of RCA students. From these meetings, trainees got real-life experience of teaching newly-arrived beginner students, while the conservatoire students were able to come into contact with real 'Antwerpenaars', and learn some basic language skills. The cross pollination went both ways, in fact, as some of the conservatoire students invited their buddies to come for the first time to De Singel and watch a performance. Some of their feedback follows:

> *"I really enjoyed the interaction we had with the teacher...to have a Dutch (speaker) speaking Dutch with me. I learned some very basic things."*

> *"Very friendly and fun, a lot of conversations, learnt new words and overcoming my fear to make mistakes by having to speak a lot which was great"*

> *"Creativiteit en ondernemingsschap: Je belandt in een gegeven situatie en daar moet je iets van maken. Hoe ondernemender en creatiever, hoe beter de resultaten bij de studenten (en jezelf). Uitwisseling: Je leert hoe andere studenten door hun studie heen komen. In mijn geval leerde ik mooie NT2 werkmiddelen kennen die ik graag ga toepassen in mijn Nederlandse lessen."*

> *"Mensen met elkaar in contact brengen, leren van elkaar, dingen doen waar je normaal de tijd niet voor zou nemen..."*

At the same time, as noted above in chapter 2, many of the language needs of students studying performing arts are specific and do not overlap directly even with other humanities subjects. Combined with the fact that RCA students have irregular schedules, at times facing pressure due to practice and rehearsals, it seems that part of the policy can be AP-wide, while a significant part of the multilingualism policy will be specific to RCA (or potentially in collaboration with the conservatoire's sister school, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts). The diagram below offers a possible model for how competences, services and also the benefits related to multilingualism can be shared between the two bodies.

Model for role division about language and multilingualism at RCA and AP?

AP University College
-organised generalised language support for students and teachers

-expertise in diversity / special educational needs / psychological services

e.g., Dutch for Dummies, (academic) English

Cross-pollination zone
- intercultural and language exchange

-social and interpersonal enrichment

-e.g. Dutch Buddies

RCA
-discipline-related language / entrepreneurship skills

-development of multilingual teaching methods for artists

-work on policy and communication

e.g. multilingual terminology work / presentation skills for performers

In light of this vision of cross-pollination and shared community-building, the following section considers how mechanisms for language support offered to students at AP can apply to RCA students – both in the current formation and also with the future development of the centralised student centre.
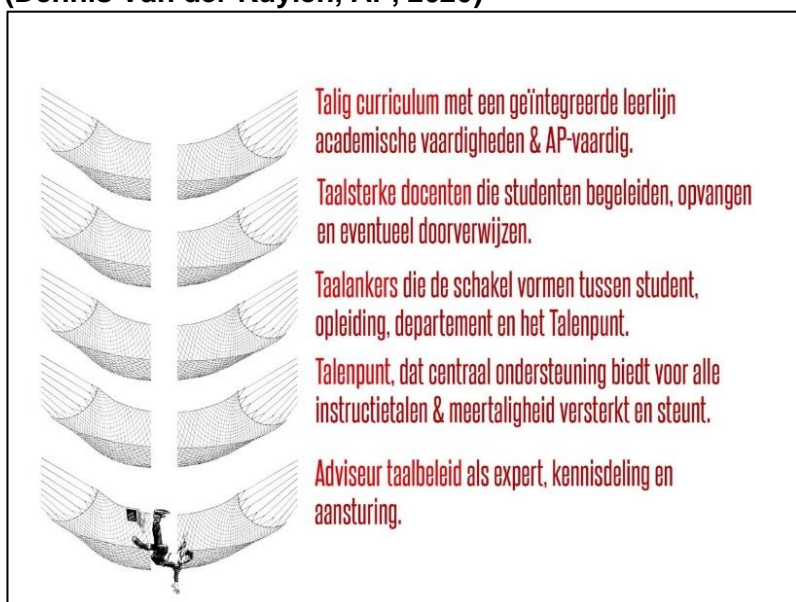
3.4.1 Language support within AP

Several existing structures within AP already offer language support. These are outlined in the following table:

Structure	Tasks
Taalpunt (may be reformed through the ADAPT process / may be integrated in the student centre)	• Coordination of language support in AP • Individual, tailored coaching sessions for students in (academic) Dutch (officially no support for English). • Giving workshops about language in different departments and for teachers; • Possible partners for support on topics of multilingual teaching methods / developing didactic tools for teachers
Teacher training / CLIL expertise centre (Department of Education and Training)	• Pedagogical expertise, particularly for language teaching, Dutch as a Second Language, and working in multilingual environments. • CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) expertise cell as a possible partner for workshops with teachers
Taalankers (language 'anchors') (may be reformed through the ADAPT process / may be integrated in the student centre)	• +/-14 employees working in different departments • Difficult to provide a general job description as every department does it differently • Examples of tasks: develop language policy, offer language coaching to staff or students, work on CLIL in business + management… • Role can serve as inspiration for how language support could be organised within SOFAs.
International office / Dutch for Dummies? (may be reformed through the ADAPT process / may be integrated in the student centre)	• "Basic Dutch" offered once per semester, 4 days / 15 hours course to incoming Erasmus students <u>only</u>. • Language content: recognise Dutch, introduce yourself, basic words for everyday and student life, asking directions, counting, buying things, filling in a form. Interactive with social dimension (group dynamic), • Cultural content: history of language in Belgium, difference between Dutch and Flemish, politics and culture. • Can serve as a model for a course in 'basic Dutch' for regular students also, including new international students at the RCA.
European Project Semester	• Interdisciplinary project involving Erasmus and home students • Support class given (three credits) "English language and presentation skills" • Shows precedent for English support for EN-language programmes. • Can serve as a model for language support in-house in RCA?
STAP / STUVO (may be reformed through the ADAPT process / may be integrated in the student centre)	• AP-level student support + psychological help • cf. 'How things are going' workshops with international students at RCA (organised by AP student psychologist, Leen Carens). • Need for close collaboration due to extra practical and psychological stress faced by international student body.
ADAPT: Transitiewerkgroep testing en remediëring (Transition work group for testing and remediation)	• Exploring how (newly arriving) students are supported, + does work on starting competences • Possible collaboration for developing and applying CEFR-based 'can do' statements for language skills in the performing arts
ADAPT: Studentencentrum (Student centre)	• May bring together different student services including current structures (STUVO and perhaps taalpunt) • Ideal context to integrate structural language support for English and basic Dutch / Dutch as a second language.

The image below is a suggestion for how language policy could function on a university college-wide level, developed by a language policy advisor currently working in 'Taalpunt' – the AP language support centre. This idea of multiple 'nets' shares a vision of inclusivity, where each level of policy and planning is integrated so that through a combination of curriculum design, professional development and language training for teachers, language specialists (or 'taalankers'), a language centre, and finally policy advisors work in harmony to ensure that no student is left behind: that the able majority will develop the skills they need in mainstream lessons, while any students who require extra support, or whose needs are not met by the core curriculum will be able to have different levels.

Proposal for a vision of language policy for AP University College.
(Dennis Van der Kuylen, AP, 2020)

Talig curriculum met een geïntegreerde leerlijn academische vaardigheden & AP-vaardig.

Taalsterke docenten die studenten begeleiden, opvangen en eventueel doorverwijzen.

Taalankers die de schakel vormen tussen student, opleiding, departement en het Talenpunt.

Talenpunt, dat centraal ondersteuning biedt voor alle instructietalen & meertaligheid versterkt en steunt.

Adviseur taalbeleid als expert, kennisdeling en aansturing.

This vision makes absolute sense for the context of RCA also, and the ideas presented in this report are completely in harmony with this. The current reality unfortunately does not reflect this vision in the case of RCA, but it is strongly recommended that this vision can serve as a model of the different levels of language support that AP can offer following the ADAPT process, in particular with respect to diversity and inclusion as a means of ensuring the whole AP community – including students and teachers at RCA – has access to language support if they need it. Following the 'net-upon-net' model above, this could include: support for curriculum development, centralised train-the-teacher sessions related to multilingual teaching methods and language skills for teachers, an in-house contractual position for language support staff within the SOFAs, to offer language support in English and Dutch, or point students to support elsewhere if appropriate, and inclusion of support for (basic) Dutch as a foreign language plus English within the student centre (or taalpunt, if it still exists).

- 'Dutch for Dummies' should be expanded beyond Erasmus students, and made open to all international students when they arrive, including new students at RCA;
- the transition to ADAPT offers a unique chance which must not turn into a missed opportunity. To this end, from October 2022 there should be structural support for Dutch as a foreign language (for regular students) and structural English language support e.g. through Taalpunt or in the student centre;
- advocate for a teachers' centre and/or more teach-the-teacher courses including workshops on teaching multilingual groups and language courses for teachers;
- explore whether the "English language and presentation skills" given as part of the European Project Semester, can serve as a model for English-language support for other students in AP including those in the SOFAs;
- learn and be inspired to replicate good practice from other departments within AP, for example the CLIL project in business and management;
- inspire other departments through good practice at RCA, for example in multilingual teaching, interdisciplinarity, Dutch buddies, taalcafé…
- streamline flow of information about existing AP services to students and teachers in RCA, once the post-ADAPT student service offer is clear.

3.4.2 Schools Of Arts – Royal Academy of Fine Arts

Within AP, RCA is one half of the Schools of Arts (SOFA for short) alongside its sister school, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, which has a similar profile to RCA in terms of international students. The Academy's Dutch language policy is in line with that of other departments, but the school also has a number of programmes that are officially English-language and here the policy is quite different to that of RCA. According to information shared for this research project, and as outlined on their website, they have a strictly enforced language test policy.[25] This policy is outlined in some detail below since, if RCA decided to introduce an official language test as an entrance requirement, this would be the most likely model to follow.

The Academy's entrance requirements for language are as follows:
- The language pre-requisites and entrance exam are the same for home and international students.
- Students register online for the pre-exam ('voorproef') via inschrijven.ap.be. Students are already encouraged at this stage to upload as soon as possible the necessary documents including ID card, diploma and language certificate (if necessary).
- If they don't upload them at the pre-exam, they can do it when they actually register for the course, after the student has passed the entrance exam and once they have communicated that they really want to enrol.
- All new students' dossiers are then checked to see if they meet the language requirements. Language level is also checked unofficially during the entrance exam.

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25 https://www.ap-arts.be/en/education/bachelor-and-master-visual-arts/register

- If students don't yet have a test, they can organise one between the time of applying and the time of enrolling officially. The school is not allowed to organise this test officially or to recommend a specific language centre or test, but there is a test available at Linguapolis, students register for this independently online.

As per the website, to enrol in the English-language programme, students have to show:
- a certificate of graduation ASO (Flemish candidate-students) or VWO (Dutch candidate-students), or
- a certificate of at least one successfully completed year in full time English-language taught secondary education, or
- a pass certificate in one or more courses in English language higher education, with a total study load of at least 60 credits.

If they don't have any of the above, students have to show a language certificate (CEFR level B2). Regarding the test, no official test list is specified. The level test offered by Linguapolis is seen as valid. Some tests that are definitely accepted:
- IELTS-test Trinity ISE 1
- TOEFL iBT from score 87
- IELTS from 5.5
- Preliminary English Test (PET) by Cambridge English Language Assessment
- Bilingual Diploma
- International Baccalaureate in English
- German diploma demonstrating B2 level

If students submit a test that the school is not familiar with, they will consider this on a case-by-case basis to see whether it is truly at B2 level, and this is always double-checked by the department for Research and Internationalisation (Onderzoek, dienstverlening en internationalisering, or "OSA").

It is beyond the scope of this project to analyse whether the policy functions well for the Academy. What is clear, however, is that the above procedure would be the most likely model to adopt if RCA decided to introduce an obligatory English or Dutch language prerequisite for any of its programmes. It is interesting to note that few of the RCA internal stakeholders interviewed for this project were unequivocally in favour of introducing such a test as a binding condition of entry, and a number of staff and students expressed clear opposition for different reasons, most particularly because it risks reducing the field of possible applicants.

Moreover, it is interesting that in the Academy's policy, IELTS and TOEFL are given as possible proof of English for international students who have not completed secondary or higher

education in English. These tests are common entrance requirements to universities around the world for programmes ranging from hard sciences to fine arts. However, as explained in the article mentioned in chapter 2, based on her research at the Conservatorium of Queensland, Jocelyn Wolfe does not regard these tests as the most suitable or useful preparation for students who are studying music:

> "What is important here is that while IELTS and EAP prepare students for an English speaking university environment, they do not specifically address the nature and degree of complexity of specific target languages, such as the language of music study. The courses are designed to improve general language proficiency. As a result, international music students spend a great deal of money and time on English instruction that does not address the particular language demands of their future study."[26]

Wolfe goes on to advocate for a more specialised, tailor-made approach to language support for music students, in particular engaging with the specific linguistic repertoire related to music study – including music terminology, language for analysing art and fragments of music – with the aim of preparing students to write longer texts and dissertations about music later in their studies. It is therefore useful to bear in mind this question of specificity when considering whether language tests or orientation tools should be used at RCA.

The next chapter gives an overview of the results of the internal data collection, while the question of language tests and requirements as a possible direction for the RCA is outlined later in chapter 5.2.2 (Option two: Language Certification).

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[26] Wolfe, J. "You'll have to start early if you want to be on time for the F sharp!" Language and the study of music: Implications for international students studying in tertiary music programs in Australia. [Conference paper]. Student success in international education, ISANA International Conference, November 27-30, 2007, Adelaide, Australia, p. 2.

4 Multilingualism at RCA

4.1 History and context of multilingualism at RCA

> *"My brain was fried. I didn't realise until 6-8 months later how much (the course) had helped."*
>
> *In an interview with an international alumnus who studied in Antwerp at RCA – then called 'Vlaams Koninkljik Conservatorium' – around fifteen years ago, I hear how fast the school has become international – and therefore also multilingual. Back then, my interviewee tells me, they were the only non-Dutch speaking student in their department. Now the balance in that department is about 40%-60% in favour of international students. Two things helped international students learn Dutch in the past. First, they took a very intensive, two-week language course as soon as they arrived in Antwerp. Second, having taken this course they enrolled in school where Dutch was still the lingua franca. Within a few weeks, their main instrument teacher and friends were more than happy to switch to Dutch, giving regular focused speaking practice alongside the rest of the study programme, all of which was offered in Dutch.*

The growing international student body and the multilingualism this brings, combined with an increasing need for higher order academic and artistic language skills, can be regarded as two key factors leading to a need for a clear language policy in the school. Indeed, just ten years ago international students were firmly in the minority. The speed of change is illustrated by the figures below, showing that since 2014 the percentage of international students in classical music has shifted from 27% to 55%, while for dance the shift was from 44% to 70%. (Table excluding drama and teacher training programmes).[27]

Number of home and international students at RCA in classical music and dance between 2014-2021

	CLASSICAL MUSIC STUDENTS		DANCE STUDENTS	
	BELGIAN	INTERNATIONAL	BELGIAN	INTERNATIONAL
2014-15	227	88	21	17
2015-16	218	97	13	20
2016-17	212	100	11	24
2017-18	207	109	12	30
2018-19	195	132	11	33
2019-20	177	156	11	36
2020-21	151	156	13	31
2021-22	131	166	13	31

As described in the anecdote above, in the past Dutch-speaking students were the majority and the teaching environment was largely monolingual, meaning international students were more

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[27] Internal excel: "Bamaflex 2020_12_02_INSCHRIJVINGEN evolutie"

motivated to learn Dutch. This related both to intrinsic motivation – students' individual desire to integrate, make friends and follow courses – as well as extrinsic – or external – motivation provided by the largely Dutch-speaking environment. Teachers and students describe how in the past, even if most Dutch-speaking students and teachers were able to switch to English when necessary, in practice Dutch was the lingua franca and there was ample encouragement to practice in classes with majority Dutch-speaking classmates. This contrasts with comments from a number of students now in interviews and in the student survey that it can be hard to practice Dutch in school as Belgian students and staff are often quick to switch to English, which is the most common lingua franca in school.

The continuing growth in internationalisation, especially in classical music and dance, has been accompanied by a shift to academicization in tertiary performing arts education. Following the first steps to implement the 2003 Bologna Declaration, universities throughout Europe, including RCA, began streamlining their programmes to fit a Bachelor/Master structure alongside implementation of the ECTS credit system. It is interesting here to also note the structural difference in Flanders between academic and professional programmes, with the dance bachelors being a professional programme, at least on paper, while the music and drama BA and MA programmes and also the dance MA at RCA are academic.

In interviews, teaching staff described their perception that over this time, attitudes to academic work and artistic research have shifted, and the level of academic written work increased substantially. This gradual shift towards an academic approach has also had an impact on the language skills students require. Objectively speaking, the hardest language skills for arts students as outlined in chapter two are probably 'art' language (describing art, and engaging with theory and scholarship), and academic writing, especially for students with a performance-focused background. Moreover these skills are relevant for most programmes at RCA. For example, although the bachelor dance programme is officially a professional programme, the inclusion of theory and history classes alongside practical work also in dance means the level and type of critical thinking / language skills required in practice may not differ greatly between the programmes.

> Policy action point: The recent history and changes in school show that the main challenges that need to be addressed in the language policy are:
> - How to adapt the existing language policy to fit the reality and needs of an increasingly international student body and multilingual community?
> - How to formulate a language policy that is fit for purpose for courses that require a higher academic / artistic / theory language component than in the past?

4.2   Facts and figures

Student nationalities and languages

At present, there is no systematic registration of the first languages or home languages of students at AP or RCA. In the student survey conducted for this project, 22 first languages were cited, while based on the countries of origin of students currently enrolled (2021-22)[28] we can guess that students in school presently have upwards of 30-35 languages as first languages. This includes 433 presumed first-language Dutch speakers, 66 presumed Spanish-first language, 16 presumed with English as first language, and 12 presumed to have French as first language. Moreover, a recent centralised survey of students organised by AP showed a significant number of bilingual or multilingual students. Here, 41 out of 174 RCA students who responded – including both Belgian and international students – reported that they have two or more 'home languages'.[29]

Nationalities and languages amongst teaching staff

The profile of regular teachers at RCA is also very international, with teachers of 22 nationalities teaching classes, workshops or masterclasses in school in the academic year 2020-21.[30] Any teacher who teaches in English (excluding guest professors) has to demonstrate a B1 level of English, while staff who teach theory classes have to show certification at C1 level (This situation is specific to the Schools of Arts, as opposed to the rest of the AP University college where all teachers have to show proof of C1 level if they are teaching in English). More detail about the practical use of languages in class is given below based on information from interviews, survey and lesson observations.

Programme profiles

The different programmes at RCA have contrasting profiles and needs regarding language. In recent years, classical music has been more or less 50-50 Belgian and international students but trending towards more international students, while dance is already majority international students. In contrast, jazz and drama still have most or all Dutch-speaking students, and the teacher training programmes are also majority Belgian students.

MUSIC	80 jazz (73 BE, 6 EU, 1 non-EU) 297 classical music (131 BE, 138 EU, 28 non-EU) 25 music postgrad (9 BE, 8 EU, 8 non-EU)
DANCE	44 bachelor dance (13BE, 29EU, 2 EER) 12 master dance (3BE, 9EU)
DRAMA	94 drama students (70 Belgian, plus 24 EU (23 from Netherlands)

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[28] Based on the internal excel: "Bamaflex 2020_12_02_INSCHRIJVINGEN evolutie"
[29] Based on anonymised results from the survey that was carried out internally among the student population as a follow-up to the 'Charter of Higher Education on the enrollment of disadvantaged groups among students' ('Charter van het hoger onderwijs over de registratie van kansengroepen bij studenten').
[30] Internal excel: "nationaliteiten 2020 KCA".

TEACHER TRAINING	70 music teacher training (57 Belgian, 9 EU, 4 non-EU)
	21 dance teacher training (19 BE + 2 EER)
	14 drama teacher training (11 BE + 3 Dutch)[31]

Language entrance requirements

The only courses at RCA with binding language requirements are the drama and teacher training programmes. Here students have to prove a B2 level of Dutch, and the tests accepted are in line with other departments in AP University College as well as those discussed above in relation to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts.[32] In contrast, music and dance have an 'advised' level of B2 English or Dutch for students, however there is no binding test. The regulations on the website state: "For the bachelor programme Dance / for the bachelor, master and postgraduate programmes Music there are no official language requirements. Students are advised a B2 Dutch or English proficiency level for an effective day-to-day communication and high quality written assignments." During interviews and focus groups, students recalled reading this information on the website, and some students who did not already have a language certification said that the lack of binding test was an additional reason to apply to RCA.

Application and audition

In terms of practical procedure, in interviews and focus groups, international students in music and dance departments, including those at BA level where programmes are officially Dutch-language, report that they completed the whole application and admissions procedure in English. This included reading information on the website, as well as contact with teachers or administration by email or phone before applying. All international students I interviewed or met in focus groups confirmed that the audition or open days they attended also happened in English. This flexibility and use of English as a lingua franca is to be commended in that it makes the school accessible to students from a large range of language backgrounds, and open to a larger pool of potential applicants, thus potentially raising the artistic level of the school's intake. The downside of this approach is that this experience leads students to believe implicitly that the school is more or less an English-language institution, meaning students are less likely to plan to learn Dutch in advance, and indeed students are sometimes surprised to encounter teaching in Dutch once they arrive at RCA.

Regarding orientation, teachers and heads of departments report that, where possible, the language level of students is informally assessed during the admissions procedure, for example in an interview if students have a conversation about what they have played, or are asked about

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[31] Internal excel: "Bamaflex 2020_12_02_INSCHRIJVINGEN evolutie"

[32] "CEFR B2 te bewijzen door: -vrucht voltooid leerjaar in het Nederlandstalig secundair onderwijs; behalen van minste 60 studiepunten in het Nederlandstalig hoger onderwijs; het afleveren van het bewijs dat men geslaagd is voor de Interuniversitaire Taaltest Nederlands voor Anderstaligen (ITNA); ander bewijs van een centrum voor volwassenenonderwijs of erkend talencentrum."

their motivation for applying etc. A number of respondents mentioned that when choosing between two candidates, if all other skills are equal they prefer to take the student who has better English. Others also mentioned that if a student's language level is perceived as weak at this stage, this may be mentioned during the audition and they may be advised to take a language course independently, or work on their language skills. Nonetheless, until now, as far as was seen during this research project, there is no evidence of a standardised school-wide approach either to assessing student's language skills during the application procedure, nor for advising candidates on how to work on language skills before coming.

It is good to see that the documentation regarding procedure for jazz and classical auditions starting from 2022 ("Protocol artistieke toelatingsproeven en oriënterende artistieke toelatingsproeven"), mentions that each applicant should submit a "video recording in which the candidate explains in English or English their motivation for applying for the course. This is done on the basis of a number of prescribed questions." It is interesting to consider whether this could be developed into a more standardised part of the admissions procedure, perhaps also encompassing assessment of both oral and written language skills. In addition, although basic information is available on the website and in the Education and Examination Regulations (OER), there is work to be done on communication with students during the application process. Students would benefit from more detailed guidelines regarding starting competences and expectations, for example that international students who stay longer than one year are highly encouraged to learn Dutch.

<u>Policy action points</u>

- Systematically request information about new students (first language(s), language of prior schooling, language level or certificates).
- Streamline the assessment of written and oral language skills during audition or registration process.
- Consider how – and when – orientation related to language level and language support can be shared with new students during the process of application (from first contact with teacher or school / before or during audition / once they have accepted a place / as soon as they arrive in school / during their study programme).

4.3   Relevant internal reports

Two earlier reports have been identified with particular relevance for the present policy. The first, "InArtes", refers to a project within RCA, while the second report "Adviesrapport Optimaal taalbeleid op AP" refers to research focusing on language policy for the AP University College as a whole, which however has many points of great relevance for the RCA. The tables below summarise relevant information from each of these reports.

Report on InArtes 2018 (Kirsten Roosendaal)
The project investigated topics related to intercultural and interdisciplinary work in the RCA. It also investigated topics related to language policy (coaching, lexicon, reflection,) but did not lead to changes on a structural level.

Relevant quotations from the report (translated from the Dutch):[33]
"For successful internationalization, the recommendation is to require a language level at the start of the study or otherwise to offer affordable language support."   "In contrast to the effort required of the students, the teachers are asked to offer their courses bilingually on Digitap."

Relevant extracts from the report's SWOT analysis:
"Strengths: - high presence of international students, talk to students about their ambitions and learning objectives   - teachers adapt to the student in terms of language where possible   Weaknesses   - stimulate more groupwork amongst students, development of soft skills is needed   - working bilingually as much as possible also provides Flemish students with opportunities to learn   - too few options for affordable language support"

Link to current project: points mentioned for follow-up:
"Great flexibility from teachers and added value of multilingual environment are still a great advantage for the school to further build international reputation.   - There still remains the question of language level requirements   - Affordable language support still needs to be developed   - There is still work to be done on mindset / awareness of learning opportunities for Flemish students + general benefits of multilingualism at school   - As explained above, there is still work to be done around explicit integration of entrepreneurship + soft skills in the curriculum / social integration through groupwork   - It would be good to have training for teachers in bilingual teaching (+ further investigation of whether equivalent learning material is provided)."

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[33] *"Voor een succesvolle internationalisering is de aanbeveling wel een taalniveau te eisen bij aanvang van de studie of anders betaalbare taalondersteuning aan te bieden. Tegenover de inspanning die gevraagd wordt van de studenten, staat de vraag aan de docenten om hun cursussen tweetalig aan te bieden op Digitap."*
Sterkten: - grote aanwezigheid van internationale studenten, in gesprek gaan met studenten over hun ambities en leerdoelen, -docenten passen zich op vlak van taal waar mogelijk aan de student aan
Zwakten: -meer groepswerk stimuleren onder studenten, ontwikkeling van soft skills is nodig, -zo veel mogelijk tweetalig werken biedt voor Vlaamse studenten ook leerkansen, -te weinig betaalbare mogelijkheden voor taalondersteuning
Opvolge;- Grote flexibiliteit van docenten en meerwaarde van meertalige omgeving nog steeds een grote voordeel voor het school om internationale reputation verder op te bouwen.
-Kwestie van taalniveau te eisen bestaat steeds
-Betaalbare taalondersteuning nog altijd te ontwikkelen
-Werk nog te doen rond mindset / bewustzijn van leerkansen voor Vlaamse studenten + algemene voordelen van meertaligheid op school
-Zoals uitgelegd hierboven is er werk nog te doen rond expliciete integratie van entrepreneurship + soft skills in het curriculum / sociale integratie door groepswerk
-Vorming voor docenten in tweetalig lesgeven zou goed zijn (+ verder investigeren of equivalente leermateriaal altjid wordt voorzien)

Adviesrapport: Optimaal taalbeleid op AP, May 2018 (by Leen Schelfhout)
Research and policy text on language policy at AP level, with a number of action points that are also relevant to the RCA.

Background (quotations translated from Dutch):
The text refers to an even earlier report from 2017 that already reported a 'lack of an action point around support for English. There is a need in various programmes for support from teachers for translating course material and for 'English for teaching practices'. International students (Schools of Arts) […] also need support.'[34]

The report outlines 12 "areas for action" within the school:
- For students: Language screening; Extra support for professional / academic skills; Dutch as a second language;[35]
- For study programmes and teachers: Professionalisation / coaching in didactics; Specialised language policy for each programme and quality control; Support for (academic) skills in Dutch; Support for English language skills;
- At AP-level: Develop a policy, mission and vision; share expertise internally and externally; develop network; offer multilingual services.[36]

Link to current project + policy recommendations: Much of the information and arguments in the policy document are useful and bear reading again in relation to the present project. The five most relevant include:

1) Screening of English skills for regular students:
- The report notes that currently English screening only happens in some departments, and suggests that "more target groups should be included in the language screening, perhaps this can be organised on a college-wide level."
- Suggestion to develop a "English proficiency test comparable to the screening for Dutch." [37]With the target group including "reguliere" international students – i.e., those registered for a full study programme (RCA, and Academy of Fine Arts) as opposed to Erasmus students.
2) English (and French) language classes:
- the report refers to the Codex Hoger Onderwijs[38] under which the school has an obligation to support students' language skills so they can follow classes.
- It also refers to "students' limited motivation" to participate in external classes "due to the cot and the extra study load."[39]
- It calls for an "English-language Taalpunt to offer language support in English "comparable with the workshops and support" it already offers." (in Dutch).[40]
3) Dutch classes for all international students:
- The report notes that "At the moment there is only support for incoming exchange students, not for the regular students"[41]
- It recommends "Investigate whether, in parallel with support offered to exchange students, the support for international regular students can also be developed."[42]

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[34]"ontbreken van een *actiepunt rond ondersteuning Engels*. Vanuit verschillende opleidingen klinkt de nood aan ondersteuning van lesgevers voor vertalingen van cursusmateriaal en 'English for teaching practices'. Ook internationale studenten (Schools of Arts) […] kunnen ondersteuning gebruiken."
[35] Taalscreenings; Remediëring Ondersteuning professionele/academische vaardigheden; Nederlands aan anderstaligen; Professionalisering/coaching didactiek; Taalbeleid op maat van de opleiding en kwaliteitszorg; Ondersteuning (academische) vaardigheden Nederlands; Ondersteuning vaardigheden Engels; Beleid, missie en visie uitwerken; Interne en externe expertisedeling ; Netwerk uitbouwen Meertalige dienstverlening realiseren.
[36] Beleid, missie en visie uitwerken; Interne en externe expertisedeling ; Netwerk uitbouwen met scholen en organisaties in de stad uitbouwen; Meertalige dienstverlening realiseren (Website, digitap, Bamaflex en andere platformen en documenten vertalen).
[37] "vaardigheidstest Engels die te vergelijken is met de screening Nederlands
[38] *Art. II. 271 § 2*. De instellingen voorzien voor studenten in aangepaste voorzieningen, waaronder een kosteloos toegankelijk en behoeftedekkend aanbod van Nederlandstalige en anderstalige taalcursussen en taalbegeleidingsmaatregelen.
[39] beperkte motivatie van studenten" "omwille van de kost en de extra studiebelasting."
[40] "vergelijkbaar met de workshops en het aanbod van het Taalpunt Aanvullend aanbod nodig van algemene diensten."
[41] "Op dit moment is er enkel een aanbod voor inkomende uitwisselingsstudenten, niet voor de reguliere studenten"
[42] "Onderzoeken of er parallel met het aanbod van uitwisselingsstudenten ook aanbod voor internationale reguliere studenten ontwikkeld kan worden."

4) Extra Support for staff:
- The report calls for more support for teaching staff and administrators regarding language skills, both for English and Dutch
- For teaching staff, there is particular call for training in "Bilingual teaching - Cursus English for teaching purposes - Help in the development of material"[43]

5) Professional language competence:
- According to the report, this refers to "academic or generic language skills that the student needs to successfully complete tasks for their studies." in contrast with "professional language skills that the student must acquire for future professional practice."[44]
- It proposes that support for professional language skills should be "included within curriculum, for ALL students. After all, these are new skills and they are specific to each programme."[45]

6) Communication:
"The development of multilingual services", and "multilingual information and communication channels and the electronic learning environment" (note at time of writing, this is an area that seems solid at least with respect to AP-level and RCA-level internal digital communication with students)

HR / creation of new positions
The project also recommends that AP hires a language policy officer (medewerker taalbeleid), alongside language a policy advisor and language "anchors" (taalanker).

It is very interesting to note that a large part of the job description for the policy officer position relates to language support that is still needed, and policy work that is still not provided systematically by AP, including:
- Ensuring that Taalpunt also offers students support to develop their skills in English;
- Developing a course for "English for teaching purposes" on digitap, plus workshops for teaching staff who are interested in order to support staff to develop their English;
- Teaching Dutch to 'regular' international students.
- Supporting students and teachers develop "department-specific professional and academic skills, for example through language office hours and workshops." (Note – At time of writing, in December 2021, Taalpunt currently does offer these services but generally only for English language skills.)

It is striking that many of the suggestions and conclusions from the previous reports are in line with those of the present project. Indeed, if the resources and will had been present within AP University College to fully implement all recommendations from Leen Schelfhout's 2018 report, then the present research project – and report – would certainly look quite different. Many of the basic recommendations of the present project – such as better provision of English and Dutch language classes – would already be in place, and thus the resources for this project could have focused on further developing and refining Schelfhout's very solid suggestions about the development of students' professional language skills in Dutch and English, and supporting professional development for staff in language skills and multilingual teaching.

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[43] "Tweetalig lesgeven - Cursus English for teaching purposes - Hulp bij ontwikkelen van material"
[44] "de academische of generieke taalvaardigheden heeft de student nodig om met succes studietaken uit te voeren. Professionele taalvaardigheden dient de student te verwerven in functie van zijn toekomstige beroepsuitoefening."
[45] "opgenomen binnen curriculum, voor ALLE studenten. Het gaat immers om nieuwe vaardigheden en ze zijn opleidingsspecifiek."

4.4   The current research project

4.4.1   Methodology

This project used a mixed-method approach, including data collection at RCA (interviews, surveys, lesson observations), and desk research alongside pilot projects to test some possible initiatives. The full timeline of the project can be found in the appendix, but in short, the project can be summarised as desk research leading into data collection finishing with analysis, with pilot projects being organised throughout. In practice, these three methods were used throughout as a form of triangulation – for example, desk research and initial interviews served to develop questions that formed the basis of the surveys. The results of the surveys then fed back into the open sessions and interviews with students and staff conducted during the final phase of the project.

The methods of data collection are shown in the table below.

Methods		
Internal data collection	**Number / response rate**	**Profile**
Interviews with RCA teaching staff	16 in-depth individual interviews plus recurring attendance at departmental staff meetings	Department heads, plus classical / jazz, theory, research, dance, drama, teacher training and researchers
Survey of RCA teaching staff	Responses from 35 staff members about 44 courses	Feedback relating to 17 classical courses, 2 jazz, 7 teacher training, 9 dance, 9 interdisciplinary / theory classes
Lesson observations (online and in person)	13 classes lasting between 1-2 hours, both online and in person	4 dance, 3 jazz and 5 classical, 1 teacher training
Interviews with other RCA staff and members of the student council	10 interviews between 40-60 minutes	7 members of conservatoire administration and quality teams; 3 past and present members of student council

| Online survey of RCA students | Full responses from 104 students | 44 classical, 5 jazz, 5 dance, 15 teacher training, 34 drama, 1 doctorate

Gender: 57 female, 38 male, 9 non-binary or other.

Nationality (excluding drama) 31 from Belgium, 25 EU, and 12 non-EU, 2 country unspecified. |
|---|---|---|
| Interviews with RCA students | 17 in-depth individual interviews lasting between 1-1.5 hours | 17 students 7 classical, 2 jazz, 2 teacher training, 3 drama, 3 dance

Including 6 Belgian, 6 EU, 5 non-EU |
Focus groups with RCA students	6 groups, each lasting 1-1.5 hours, June 2021	+/- 15 students for all groups together, including classical, jazz, dance and teacher training.
Open sessions (in collaboration with diversity and inclusion working group).	5 x 2-3 hours sessions	Students and staff from music, dance and drama.
Stakeholder interviews, email contact and collaboration (in AP)	In-depth meetings with 6 key contacts, plus email contact with further colleagues and stakeholders at AP-level plus email contact for further details	Taalpunt, AP teacher training department, CLIL expertise 'cell' student psychologist, quality assurance, Academie Atlas
External data collection		
Colleagues in Belgium	5+ meetings plus email contact with additional contacts	KASK (Ghent conservatoire); Brussels Flemish conservatoire (KCB); LUCA School of Arts (Leuven); Linguistics researchers (University of Antwerpen and Ghent University)
International colleagues	5+ interviews and email exchange	5 colleagues outside Belgium (UK, Poland, Australia, Chile), plus online discussion seminar with 14 UK-based researchers and practitioners

Desk research
- Reading school documentation (evaluations, prior reports on language policy)
- Academic reading
- Research into programmes and performing arts schools outside RCA

Pilot projects
- Dutch buddies (collaboration with AP teacher training, organised 2 times + collecting feedback)
- Dutch class (collaboration with CVO Vitant)
- Taalcafe (workshop during introweek)
- Babbelhour (office hour with teachers to discuss multilingual teaching)

4.4.2 Main findings relevant for language policy

It is of course impossible to summarise the complete findings of a 10-month research project in a short report. The aim here is therefore to present information that is relevant for future policy work, alongside any other specific concerns raised by stakeholders (students or staff) that the school should be aware of.

This section offers a summary of the main findings from the different methods of data collection including lesson observations, staff survey + interviews, student survey, interviews and focus groups. The final section provides a short overview of information related to language policy in the drama department.

4.4.3 Lesson observations

> One Dutch-speaking teacher explains that in class they make a conscious effort to facilitate international students' language development: stimulating students' vocabulary by repeating keywords in Dutch and English; by giving students space to speak their own language at times; by looking for examples of music and art to discuss from the countries and cultures of students in the group. The teacher's approach also varies depending on which students are present: if there are only one or two Dutch-speaking students in a group, the teacher actually makes an extra effort to speak a bit more Dutch to the group, to compensate for the fact that the lingua franca amongst students is usually English.

Eleven lesson observations were conducted within dance, music and teacher training, including both practical and theory classes, delivered online and in person. The observations had two aims. First, to evaluate the type of language and communication used in classes, and second to consider how multilingualism affects the way lessons are delivered and structured.

First, the types of language used by students and staff in learning interactions was observed and categorised. This information is summarised above in chapter two, within the framework of language skills for performing arts students. These categories can also serve as a basis for curriculum suggestions regarding language support in class or within extra language lessons. The main impression is that teachers and students in school use a very wide range of types of language, drawing on vocabulary related to a wide range of topics.

At the same time, some specific language sets and functions occurred, and it is useful for teachers to be aware of these as target language for both Belgian and international students. These included

- Technical terms related to music, analysis, or dance

- Discipline-specific words (related to instrument or dance genre)
- Physical instructions + directions in space for body or instrument technique
- Anatomy and body parts
- Language for negotiating movement and shifts in lesson plan, meta-language to negotiate speed of class, repeating information, checking understanding
- Academic language terms for 'humanities' topics such as philosophy, history…
- Metaphor, adjectives, informal language to discuss emotion and interpretation
- Translation and use of terms and concepts in multiple languages (i.e., do-re-mi vs. A-B-C, or French and English terms for dance genres)

The second aim of the observations was to understand the impact of multilingualism in school, with a focus on understanding the different strategies used by teachers at RCA to structure information and class time, and to accommodate multilingual groups. The information below shows the wide range of flexibility and resourcefulness of teaching staff, and can serve as a record of good practice and methods to be shared and expanded. At the same time, this section ends with some policy action points summarising aspects to adjust and develop further when streamlining the approach to multilingual pedagogy in school.

The lessons observed can be categorised under the following structures. It is interesting to note that no truly multilingual lessons were observed, and in this sample there were also very few occasions observed in class of interaction in a language other than Dutch or English.

- *Monolingual English* – a session given to both international and Belgian students together. There is little or no use of Dutch, usually taught by a teacher who is not a Dutch speaker;
- *Mostly monolingual English with some Dutch* – class for a mixed group of international and Belgian students, taught in English by a Dutch-speaking teacher who offers periodic extra support and translation in Dutch for Dutch-speaking students.
- *Mostly monolingual English with other languages* – class for mixed group of international and Belgian students, taught in English but with use of another language or languages for extra explanation, especially when this is a language shared by the teacher and one or more students.
- *Parallel monolingual classes* – English- and Dutch-language classes are given separately, at different times, but often by the same teacher (with international and Dutch-speaking students in separate groups);
- *Bilingual consecutive translation* – class with equivalent information given in one language followed by a summary or translation. More or less all content is provided in

both languages (as an example, the balance was something like 60% English vs. 40% Dutch, with language switches approximately every 2-3 minutes);

Lesson structures and interaction patterns that were observed included:

- Lessons where majority of time was teacher-talk / discourse / lectures, followed by brief space for student questions;
- Sessions devoted to student presentations and group feedback,
- Classes focusing on practical exercises, analysis, history or performance, with unstructured question and answer between teacher and students
- Rehearsal, coaching or classes where students do practical exercises (alone or in group), followed by individual feedback and/or teacher-led group discussion
- Teacher-led / teacher-narrated practical exercises or exploration (i.e. in practical classes, dance, exercise)

In all lessons there was a notable lack of student-student interaction or whole group discussions. Regarding spoken interaction, there was also often a lack of balance, and often it was the same students in each group who replied or asked questions throughout the session. In some sessions, a large number of students did not say anything (possibly linked to lack of language skills or confidence in speaking). Teachers showed willingness or desire to have more interaction, but sometimes cut this short by using phrases such as "If there are no questions, I'll go on…" or I guess until this point everything is more or less clear?" instead of open questions – or specific questions to check understanding – that might elicit more student reaction.

Although the low levels of interaction in group classes were not mentioned by either teachers or students in interviews or surveys, it is interesting to consider whether at times these are a lost opportunity. In future, drawing on communicative language teaching and multilingual pedagogy, teachers could be supported to develop more interaction in class to offer opportunities for language practice.

A final and important note regards the language skill of the teachers and of the course material. Although it was not an explicit aim of the lesson observations to assess teachers' language level, it seems important to mention that no problems with language production were noted in any of the classes. In terms of fluency, accuracy and accent as well as general communicative competence in English, all teachers made a good impression and were easy to understand for a native English speaker. This likely reflects the policy that teaching staff of theory subjects are generally required to demonstrate C1 English, while other subject teachers need to show B1. Nonetheless, it is interesting that in the student survey (see below), some students shared their perception that some teachers did not have a sufficient level of English to teach, which contradicts the impression during the observed lessons – and indeed teacher interviews – within this project. Indeed, it is interesting that if anything, the level of language was at times rather

challenging, even for an English native speaker, given the use of very specific terminology and subtleties of difference in meaning between some terms discussed in some theory classes or discussions of artistic nuance.

Policy action points:

- Consider how to streamline multilingual practice and language choice within lessons
- Consider how to use more varied interaction patterns. Explore methods to encourage interaction as a means to promote language learning and active language practice (student discussions, questions, use of peer checks, online chat or whiteboard).
- Explore how small group discussions in class can give more students space to talk with less pressure than when they talk in front of the whole group.
- Consider planning exercises that enable students with different levels of language skill and confidence to practice their language skills and participate actively.
- Consider how visual aids can be exploited further to support lesson aims for students.
- Consider how teachers can be supported as they help students learn and expand key sets of vocabulary (anatomy for practical classes, language for metaphor, adjectives for arts and emotion).
- Consider how and where there can be space for multilingual communication, and for students to engage with lesson material in their first language.

4.4.4 Staff survey and interviews

"Ik spreek Nederlands met Nederlandstalige studenten, Engels met Engelstalige studenten of studenten die een taal spreken die ik niet beheers. Ik spreek Duits met Duitstalige studenten die ervoor kiezen om met mij Duits te spreken. Ik spreek Frans met Franstalige studenten die ervoor kiezen om met mij Frans te spreken"
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Het gaat een beetje op zijn Brussels, je past er een mouw aan. Maar wellicht kunnen we er nog veel bewuster mee omgaan.

Quotations from survey of RCA teachers – 2021

Summary of RCA teacher survey and interviews

In addition to lesson observations, the role of teachers in (co-)creating the linguistic environment in school was also explored through interviews and an online survey. The questions in the teachers' survey were designed to delve deeper into the insights from the interviews and student survey. In total, 16 teachers were interviewed while 35 staff responded to the survey, reporting on 44 different courses. These were spread evenly between BA1, 2, 3 and MA levels, and from all sections of RCA, with most courses being in the form of weekly classes, alongside a small number of courses that were project-based with ad hoc or changeable schedules. Teachers who responded to the survey included 27 Dutch speakers plus 8 first-language

speakers of other languages. Interviewees included 12 Dutch speakers plus 4 teachers with another first language.

Although the number of respondents means that the results are not appropriate for quantitative analysis, the data offer a useful way to see trends in teachers' reports of their practice and attitudes, and also raise points for further consideration. This section presents an overview of the information gathered in the survey, together with insights from specific interviews where relevant. The information is organised according to the main themes that emerged from the survey open questions and interviews.

Flexibility and variety

The most striking aspect regarding language use both in the interviews with teachers and with the information reported in the survey is the incredible flexibility and variety demonstrated. This was shown in interviews where several teachers offered to use English or even French or German for the interview if necessary. Similarly, several teachers reported flexibility in their work that could be regarded as going 'above and beyond'; for example, one teacher recounted how they would allow students to do exams in about four or five European languages. Moreover, the teacher recalled the odd occasion in the past when students had asked if they could speak another language – for example a Slavic language or non-European language – when they had managed to find non-Belgian colleagues to interpret, or translate for an oral exam.

The flexibility of staff is also reflected in the survey, with numerous respondents mentioning that they are ready to answer questions in multiple languages: "For foreign students (I use) English, I try to use French for French-speaking students but sometimes also in English."[46] Or, "Sometimes I ask what language they would like to have the class in (I only speak French, English and Dutch).[47] The 'only' in the latter statement is a very telling and touching reflection of the modesty and skills shown by many teachers at RCA – in a typical monolingual school environment, speaking three languages fluently enough to use for teaching can hardly be regarded as limiting!

Developing a transparent language policy

On the one hand, the above comments are testament to the great flexibility and reactivity on the part of teachers who demonstrate that they are able to adapt to the students present. At the same time, it can be a 'double-edged sword' as the ability to adapt can lead to a lack of clarity with regards to the language policy. In the teachers' survey, only one teacher signalled that they give clear information about the language policy: "Students are informed that Dutch is their

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46 "Aan buitenlandse studenten Engels, Franstalige studenten probeer ik toch in het Frans soms en ook wel in het Engels."
47 "Ik vraag soms wel in welke taal ze les willen krijgen (ik kan enkel frans, engels en nederlands)."

base language for teaching in Flanders, but where relevant they can choose to switch to English."

In contrast, eleven teachers reported sharing no information about the language policy with students before or at the start of their course. For monolingual groups this is less problematic (i.e., in teacher training which is a Dutch-language programme). However for groups with a mix of Belgian and international students, most respondents report a rather ad hoc approach, for example, stating "I check if there are non-Dutch speakers there, if this is the case then I teach in English." or "The language that is comprehensible for everyone becomes the language of the class." Or "We use English as the main language, sometimes Dutch as well for written communication. There is no conscious policy about it."[48]

Students signalled in interviews and the survey that not knowing which language(s) will be used in which course was problematic, especially for international students who reported having a shock by sometimes ending up in a Dutch-language course without speaking enough Dutch to follow it easily. Dutch-speaking students, in contrast, would sometimes be frustrated that a class would happen entirely in English although all but one of the students were Dutch native speakers. The lack of clarity regarding language policy also potentially limits teachers' efficacy in preparing courses and also supporting students' language needs and language development throughout the year.

In reaction to this, some teachers express a wish for a more structural solution. One teacher explained that multilingualism had advantages, but that a "lack of transparency" combined with the lack of support "like external classes, or conversation classes for example" is a problem. They go on, explaining "in case we want to remain with this international approach we should definitely create policies to support this aspect." Another expresses a wish for development of teaching practice and need for further training: "Perhaps we can deal with (language policy) much more consciously. It could help to have a workshop that gives more awareness. There are certainly points for improvement, especially in terms of didactics."[49]

Communication about language policy
It is also important to consider how language policy is communicated with students, given that this will make – or break – the implementation of an integrated multilingualism policy in school. According to the survey and interviews, teachers communicate a range of justifications related to language policy. One example is seen in teachers who explain the language policy as a

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[48] Ik check of er anderstaligen zijn, indien dit het geval is geef ik les in het Engels." or "De taal die voor iedereen verstaanbaar is, wordt de taal van de les." "We gebruiken Engels als voertaal, soms ook Nederlands voor schriftelijke communicatie. Er is geen bewust beleid rond."
[49] "Wellicht kunnen we er nog veel bewuster mee omgaan. Een workshop die wat meer bewustzijn geeft, zou wel kunnen helpen. Er zijn zeker verbeterpunten, vooral didactisch."

purely functional choice based on who is in the class on a certain day. For example, one teacher reported telling students "If someone doesn't speak any Dutch, the lesson is given in English."[50] Explained in this way without further clarification, this explanation risks giving students an impression of a rather haphazard organisation of courses, and risks undermining RCA's integrity in terms of pedagogy and language policy. This message could be developed, for example, by explaining that this approach to language choice in practical classes reflects professional practice in the music field, and therefore will help students develop linguistic flexibility and intercultural capital.

Another teacher reported explaining to students that "the lesson will happen in English due to the majority of foreigners".[51] Phrased in this way, the teacher overtly places the responsibility for language choice on the shoulders of the international students in any given group, rather than presenting the decision as part of a wider school policy. Such comments perhaps also interconnect with a small but potentially counterproductive undercurrent, reflected by a small number of Dutch-language students who in interviews expressed the opinion that the use of English in school was due almost entirely to international students who, they believed, did not make enough effort to learn Dutch, disregarding the numerous other factors. Again, developing and communicating a transparent language policy should help counter such arguments and promote better social integration between different language groups in school.

Types of language skill
Building on the skills framework in chapter two, the language skills most frequently rated as 'extremely important' were general spoken interaction (by 26 teachers), following practical instructions (24 teachers), and use of technical terminology (21 teachers). This hierarchy of needs was also reflected in the interviews with staff, where most teachers underlined the wish for smooth general communication with their students, alongside the need for specific terminology related to whichever subject they taught.

At the same time, both in the survey and in interviews, the profile of important skills depended greatly on the course at hand. In the survey, for example, the teacher of one practical course rated only two skills as extremely important: understanding technical terminology and following practical instructions. In contrast, the teacher of a theory class rated only the 'opposite' two skills as 'extremely important', namely: "Express personal point of view about artistic choices and nuances" and "reading and understanding academic texts". Language support therefore cannot focus on only one area, but needs to take into account the needs of students in all different types of course.

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[50] "Als iemand geen Nederlands spreekt, wordt de les in het Engels gegeven"
[51] "Dat de les in het Engels door gaat omwille een meerderheid buitenlanders"

At the same time, as already outlined in chapter 2, although purely academic language use is generally only needed for a small number of courses, the challenge here is greater, as summarised by one teacher in the survey: "Writing is the hardest task for speakers of other languages", and indeed it is probably fair to say that academic writing is the hardest task for most students regardless of background.[52] As such, language support in future will need to find a balance between teaching the hardest, most time-consuming skills (academic writing and artistic language), and teaching those skills that are most relevant for the largest number of courses and situations in school (such as general communication, technical terminology and following practical instructions).

A final remark concerns the role of entrepreneurship and professional language skills. All teachers interviewed for this project underlined the important of their own plurilingualism in the professional field, in different ways. Colleagues from dance – or dance education – pointed to the fact that contemporary dance is overwhelmingly an English-speaking field, and so it is essential for students to develop full professional competence in English. One dance teacher in the survey explained "I explain that I will often use English words and phrases due to my very intense use of English throughout my life"[53], while the ability to engage on a deep level with North American colleagues and performance tradition – for work or further study – was seen as essential within jazz. Numerous teachers also pointed out that other languages are also important for developing a career in Belgium, for example when using Dutch translations of terminology for teaching contemporary dance to children, or using French for organising professional contacts for music projects in Brussels and Wallonia. The ability to teach or run a rehearsal in English or German was seen as a particular advantage for classical musicians.

In the survey too, some teachers expressed a desire for better – or more explicit – integration in school of professional skills and entrepreneurship, including multilingual communication for professional purposes. One respondent to the survey summarised this as follows: "Most students are not aware of the importance of knowing languages. This advice should be provided in a targeted, marketing-oriented manner through certain courses (marketing, management)".[54] Developing courses that focus on professional communication for performing artists would be a welcome addition to RCA's curriculum. One teacher in the survey even extended the definition of communication beyond language, explaining "This is a course where language is definitely not the only or most important form of communication. There is a mutual

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[52] "Het schrijven is voor anderstaligen de zwaarste opdracht".
[53] "Ik leg uit dat ik vaak Engelstalige woorden en zinsneden zal gebruiken vanwege mijn zeer intense gebruik van het Engels doorheen mijn leven"
[54] "De meeste studenten zijn zich niet bewust naar de belangrijkheid van taalkennis. Best dit advies marketing gericht optimaal te verstrekken via bepaalde cursussen (marketing, management???)"

understanding and unspoken responsibility within the sessions to support and guide everyone in their individual and diverse communication skills… Other languages and ways of communication are available/encouraged/accepted and supported." Making the bridge between verbal and non-verbal communication is essential in the performing arts context, and developing a multilingual approach to teaching entrepreneurship and professional communication skills – encompassing both verbal and non-verbal aspects – can potentially RCA make a world-leader in training performing arts graduates to the very highest standard.

Co-creation of multilingual learning environment

The majority of teachers report giving classes in English and/or Dutch. Some teachers report using translation as a strategy for teaching and understanding – for example: "When someone doesn't understand, or if I don't know the word in English, we help and inform each other,"[55] or "(We tell students that) the course is taught in English but that we will take the necessary time to translate to other languages as required." Another teacher explains that they consciously try to adapt their means of teaching and assessment to a multilingual group with different levels of language proficiency: "I try to set up my exam so that there is not much writing. That it is more about terms / names, they can use short sentences (instead of writing long texts), I let them fill in certain sentences, use drawings, etc."[56] All these forms of good practice are to be commended and deserve to be shared more widely in school.

A minority of teachers also report consciously making space in class for students' first languages, and drawing on this richness to enhance the lesson experience not only for the international students but also for Dutch- and English-native speakers. One said, for example, "I suggest that students translate their chosen fragment to their first language."[57] Another also explained their rationale for doing so, explaining that they asked students to read quotations aloud in their own language, or to have a whole-group approach to translating a video from another language, "and in this way I try to also include the mother tongue of the students, where it's possible."[58] Such practice is to be commended, as an excellent tool for social integration and psychological well-being of international students but also for stimulation of intercultural capital of all students.

The table below – showing responses from the Dutch-language survey to the question "Which language or languages are used in class, for powerpoints, for exercises, for exams" – shows the spread of language use in school, according to teachers. The orange 'Mix of Dutch and English'

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55 Wie iets niet begrijpt, of ik ken het woord niet in het Engels, helpen, informeren we elkaar."
56 "Ik probeer mijn examen wel zo op te stellen dat er niet veel schrijfwerk is. Dat het meer gaat over termen/benamingen, ze mogen kort zinnen gebruiken (ipv. lange teksten te schrijven), ik laat ze bepaalde zinnen aanvullen, gebruik tekeningen, enz.
57 "Ik suggereer dat studenten hun gekozen fragment daaruit kunnen vertalen naar hun moedertaal."
58 "Op die manier probeer ik ook de moedertaal van de studenten te betrekken, waar het kan..."

is the most common response for all purposes, pointing to a very flexible, often bilingual environment. At the same time, it is clear that Dutch (blue) and English (red) are also frequently used separately. Moreover, the almost complete lack of 'other languages' (green), points to an interesting area for future development, i.e., making space for students' other languages in school.

Extract from the Dutch-language teachers' survey

Welke taal of talen wordt gebruikt
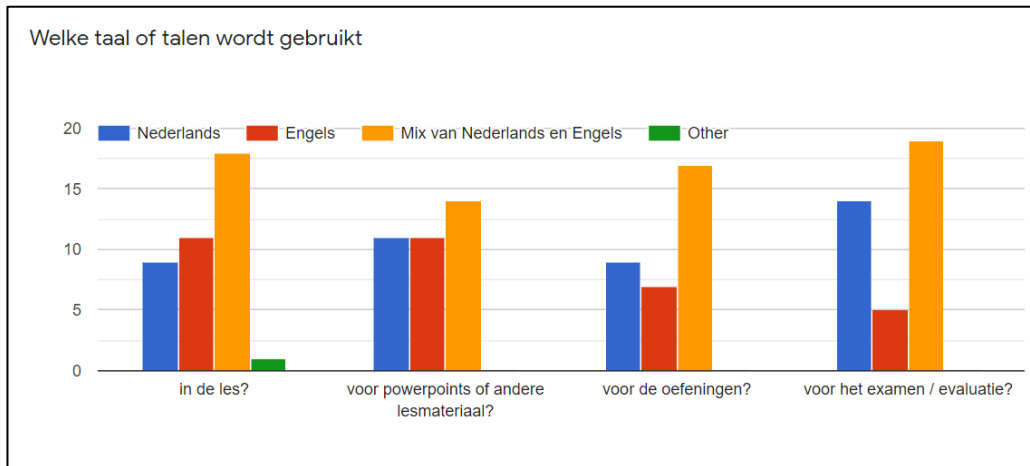
Policy action points:

- Develop and communicate a transparent language policy in order to minimise preconceptions related to language choice in school.
- Collect information about students' first language(s) when they enrol and share this information with teachers so they know which language(s) to use for each group before the semester starts.
- Make sure that all students have clear information before the start of semester about which language will be used in every course, and how. This should refer to language use in class, for communication, for powerpoints and other original syllabus materials, for extra reading or research, and for evaluation.
- Promote student autonomy by explaining which language skills are important for different courses – e.g., academic writing or reading, spoken language for discussion, or subject-related terminology.
- Consider how to celebrate and further develop the flexibility and variety present within teachers' own linguistic repertoires.
- Facilitate teachers sharing good practice regarding multilingual teaching, and strategies to make space for students' first language in class and in independent study.
- Ensure students have support to acquire a range of language skills, both academic and communicative, to be able to complete all courses successfully.

4.4.5   Student survey, interviews and focus groups

"This is art by itself. People getting to know other people with different cultures and music fields. This is what makes us artists. We are united. Music is an international language and it's magical."

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"The sharing of experiences and cultures between students, but also the exchanging of methods with different professors. Sometimes a subject is taught differently between countries, and that gives us, the students, a more broad approach to the matters."

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"I think it's important for students to know what subjects they're taking, and what languages they'll be taught in, what languages they're expected to speak in, and answer. That is sometimes unclear"

Comments in the 2021 student survey on multilingualism at RCA

This section contains an overview of the data relating to current students in dance and music (for drama results see below), from both BA and MA programmes. This data comes from the online survey as well as 17 in-depth interviews and focus groups.[59] The online survey of dance and music students received 70 full and 48 partial responses. Of those who specified gender, 51 were female, 38 male, and 3 non-binary or other. Of full responses: 28 were BA students, 37 MA students and 5 others, with 62% of respondents from classical music (BA and MA). 43% of respondents were from Belgium, and 22 other countries are represented, including multiple answers from Spain, Holland and the UK. 44% of respondents had Dutch as a first language; 10% English, 9% French, and 12% Spanish. In terms of second language skills, the most common languages cited are French (58%), German (59%), English (60%) and Dutch (3%).

The response rate for the online survey was 15%, based on a rough school population of 60 dance and 420 music students. Thus it is not statistically representative as the sole basis for making decisions but nonetheless provides a significant body of data about the current situation in school, and can be used to identify trends and point to sub-groups with specific needs.

Extra data collection

To complement the survey, extra data collection was organised for profiles with fewer responses, for example, an extra focus group with dance students, extra interviews with non-European students in music plus bilingual students from dance and the teacher training

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[59] Where appropriate, survey results have been filtered to focus on specific groups. All figures are rounded to nearest full percentage point, and the percentages cited below refer to the survey of dance and music students, and have been calculated as a proportion of all full responses to each discrete question.

programmes. It is important to remember that the results of the survey are likely to skew slightly in favour of students with better language skills in English or Dutch, as students with poorer comprehension will be less likely to complete the survey or start it in the first place. For this reason, the research was also complemented by a one-day informal survey at the RCA reception desk in September; during this day, all students who came into school were briefly approached and invited to mark their country of origin on a map, and, if they had time, to discuss multilingualism in school (cf. image on the title page).

4.4.5.1 Student profiles

Language levels amongst students

In the online survey, no student reported a total lack of English knowledge. The majority (77%) estimated that they had an intermediate or advanced level (between B1 and C2) when they started at RCA. In contrast, 82% of international students at BA level said they had no knowledge of Dutch when they started, and only 16% said they were intermediate or advanced. If reflective of the whole school, this suggests that a significant effort will be necessary to help students reach a level where they can study through Dutch by second or third year. It also points to a very real need for Dutch classes and likely motivation for students to learn Dutch if courses are provided. This motivation was indeed confirmed by the interviews and focus groups – where almost every student expressed interest in learning Dutch – and also by the high level of interest in an online announcement in September 2021 about possible Dutch classes in school (with over 60 responses from music and dance students).

In terms of language tests, 66% of respondents have never taken an official language test. 22% have done an English test such as TOEFL or IETLS that might be acceptable for entrance to higher education (and only 18% of undergraduates), while 10% have done a Dutch test (8% of BA students). This suggests that introducing a language entrance test will involve an additional effort in both time and money for the majority of students applying to study at RCA (and, importantly, is a requirement that currently does not apply in other music schools in Belgium).

During the additional in-person survey of students arriving at the RCA reception over one day, it is interesting to note that out of about 20 students talked to, one student was approached who spoke no Dutch, but also did not really have enough English to engage with the discussion (i.e., any questions beyond where they were from and what they were studying). This experience perhaps reflects comments made by teachers in interviews that a small but relevant minority of students start at RCA with language skills significantly below the required level. It is interesting to ask whether it is ethical to accept such students, since to begin with at least, it will be very challenging for them to study successfully or maintain social and psychological well-being. At the same time, in focus groups at least two students from the second and third year explained

that they had indeed arrived at RCA with almost zero language skills. Speaking fluently – one in English, one in Dutch –, they described how, with the help of friends, (external) language classes and self-study, and constant immersion in Dutch- or English-language lessons, they had been able to acquire sufficient language skills to pass exams and integrate socially. Without systematic language support, this experience will not be accessible for every student however it is inspiring to know that students can acquire language fast when highly motivated and supported by friends and teachers.

Reasons for studying in Antwerp

66% of students stated that they came to study in Antwerp because of a specific teacher; 37% because they heard it was a good school, 26% because they liked the programme content, 21% because a friend recommended it, 22% because they already lived in Antwerp. The ability to study in English at RCA was only mentioned as a factor by 9% of respondents. However when this issue was broached in focus groups and follow-up interviews, the fact that many classes are in English is overwhelmingly seen as an advantage. In particular, international masters students stated in interviews that they would not come to RCA if there was not an English-language programme. In addition, students are also motivated to come because no Belgian performing arts schools requires a certificate in Dutch or English before entry. Thus the data does not confirm whether students would apply here if they <u>had</u> to study in Dutch, it seems likely that requiring a language certificate, or asking students to learn Dutch might indeed reduce the attraction of RCA for at least some applicants.

Dutch Language Skills

The majority of students surveyed whose L1 (first language) is not Dutch say they do not have confidence in their Dutch skills. This is unsurprising given that 82% report having no knowledge of Dutch when they started at RCA. Still, as might be expected, a number of (other language-speaking) students are confident in passive Dutch, with 37% very confident or quite confident in their ability to understand practical lessons, workshops and rehearsals (versus 43% unconfident), and also in speaking with other students socially or during a rehearsal (41% very confident or quite confident versus 55% unconfident). However, students were far less confident in using Dutch for core academic skills and more active skills such as understanding or participating in theory and history classes (68% are quite or very unconfident), using Dutch terminology about their instrument (70% are quite or very unconfident), and discussing nuances of art and artistic choices, or writing an academic text (83% are quite or very unconfident). Amongst students with Dutch as a first language, although they were generally confident in their language skills, a small number (10%) still said they felt neutral, or quite unconfident about academic writing in Dutch.

English language skills

Amongst international students, there was far greater confidence in English than in Dutch. In particular there is very good confidence for understanding practical lessons, workshops and rehearsals (95% very confident or quite confident versus 4% unconfident), and also in speaking with other students socially or during a rehearsal (92% very or quite confident versus 4% unconfident). 87% also expressed confidence for understanding theory classes, however fewer were confident about participating in theory classes (10% quite or very unconfident). 24% did not feel confident about academic writing versus 58% who were confident. A small minority (7-10%) also said they were very or quite unconfident with other skills in English including participating in practical classes in general, using technical terminology in English, and discussing nuances of art and artistic choices. Nonetheless, it is interesting to think how students who do lack confidence in certain areas can be supported through extra courses or in-class materials.

Policy action points:

Admissions:

- Before introducing any obligatory English or Dutch test for applicants, the potential impact should be considered very carefully. Important to remember: the vast majority of undergraduate students do not have such a certificate, and other music schools in Belgium also do not have this requirement.
- Further analyse the situation and support for the small number of students who have sub-standard Dutch or English. Options include: requiring additional language test at audition; entry conditional to attending language course before arrival, and/or obligatory language course during first year.
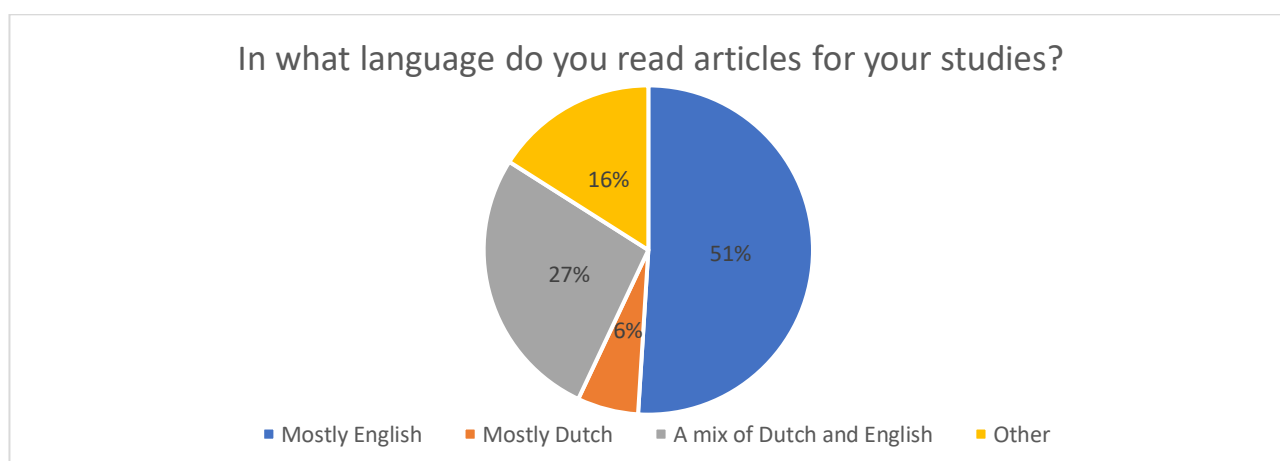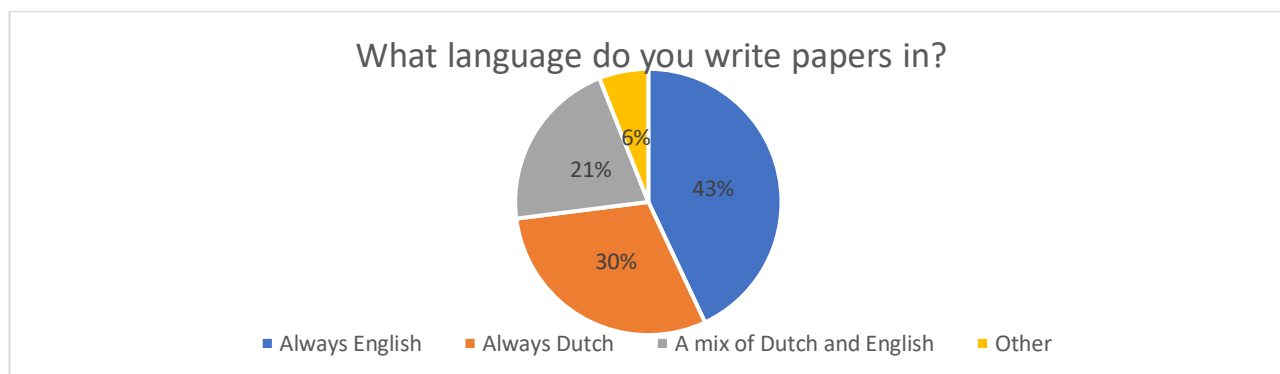
Language support

- The vast majority of international students speak no Dutch when they arrive. Consider offering a short, intensive Dutch course on arrival – i.e., AP's 'Dutch for Dummies' course.
- A significant proportion of international students signal that they have some passive Dutch skills. Consider how multilingual teaching methods and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) could help students develop skills further.
- International students lack confidence in Dutch for writing, using terminology or participating in theory classes. Consider offering extra language classes for students to develop these skills if they wish.
- Ensure that policy also provides and publicises remedial Dutch support services for native Dutch-speaking students, for example in academic writing.
- Students have a wide range of levels and experience with English. Language support needs to be efficient, and personalised, e.g. a range of optional modules for students to choose (e.g., academic writing, strategies for learning terminology, debates and discussion on artistic and theory topics).

4.4.5.2 Perception of language use in school

Language use by students

Students are very conscious of multilingualism within school. The lesson observations and also interviews with teachers gave the impression that only a minority of students only use one language for study purposes, and this is confirmed by the survey data below from students:

What language do you write papers in?
- 43% Always English
- 30% Always Dutch
- 21% A mix of Dutch and English
- 6% Other

In what language do you read articles for your studies?
- 51% Mostly English
- 6% Mostly Dutch
- 27% A mix of Dutch and English
- 16% Other

In particular, the widespread use of both English and Dutch for academic writing (94% of students reporting that their academic writing is in English, Dutch or both) makes it clear that students need access to equivalent language support for both languages.

In addition to formal study and in class, in the survey and in interviews students frequently describe informal instances of multilingual communication in school that cannot be accounted for in a specific policy. For example:

- Students see the RCA environment as a 'organic way' to learn basic phrases in multiple foreign languages through everyday contact and friendship with students who speak other languages;
- Voice students seek out students who speak less common languages (e.g., Spanish, Russian) for extra language coaching on repertoire;
- Students read academic resources in multiple languages, from libraries, archives and online sources both in Belgium and in their home country;

- Students being glad to speak their own first language(s) – if not Dutch or English – in lessons and wherever possible in school, in particular with first study teachers, or during chamber music or other rehearsals;
- Students use and learn sets of vocabulary in different languages to access discourse related to a specific subject (e.g. English for contemporary dance, French for classical dance, English for jazz students, Italian for classical music);
- Students appreciate being able to write papers in four languages (English, German, French or Dutch), although some wish other languages were permitted as well.

Despite these and other examples of organic multilingualism, in the survey 21% of students said they did not believe there is enough space in school for languages and cultures other than English and Dutch. A number of international students in interviews spoke of their joy and enthusiasm at engaging with art and writing from their own language and culture – for example, writing a thesis about a little-known composer from their home country, bringing articles and texts in their own language to discuss in a theory class. This cross cultural learning benefits both the student themselves – by allowing them to continue learning about their own language and culture while developing Dutch or English skills at RCA – but also enriches other students by providing the opportunity for deeper learning and comparison between cultures. It is interesting to consider how this student-led approach to inclusion could be expanded, for example by including more comparative exercises and explicitly encouraging students to work on art and culture in their own language and culture alongside the Western canon.

Language use by staff and teachers

The linguistic openness of (administrative) staff should be commended, as 84% of students agree or strongly agree that it's easy to get practical information from the conservatoire in a language they speak, including 77% of students whose first language is not Dutch. This is reflected by the impression given in interviews where administrative staff described making efforts to communicate with current or potential students in a wide range of languages or using translation tools where necessary. Teachers were also perceived as being patient with non-Dutch speaking students (83% of all students agree or strongly agree, including 91% of students whose first language is not Dutch).

In terms of teachers' own language skills too, the majority of students agreed that teaching staff express themselves clearly in English (77% agree or strongly agree),and that they use a range of expressions to express nuance and artistic concepts (68% agree or strongly agree). Nonetheless, a small number of comments were made (three students in the survey, plus two students in interviews) that a few teachers had a lower level of English, making it harder to

follow classes. These students suggested this led to less respect for the teacher in general. ("In general, it's a shame to hear teachers struggling with their English during classes because then you have less respect in some way"[60]). As explained above, during the lesson observations and teacher interviews conducted for this project, no problems were noted regarding teachers' language level – in fact, to the contrary, the flexibility and high level of communicative skills in English were noted during all observed classes. The comments by students may either to relate to guest professors or teachers of practical subjects (who have B1 rather than C1 certification), or the comments may reflect inaccurate perception of teachers' language skills, or perhaps prejudice due to accent rather than a lack of fluency or accuracy. Moving forward it is important to consider how the discussion on multilingualism can be promoted in school, for example discussing the value of communicative competence over linguistic accuracy in certain contexts. Moreover, policy should keep in mind how teachers can be supported to maintain and improve language levels – including work on accent if desired – if they are teaching in a language other than their first language.

Language use in class

One topic raised in interviews and lesson observations was classes that are given in both English and Dutch. As noted above in the section on lesson observations, multilingual lessons happen in various ways, including courses which are given live in one language, with a recording/video provided as translation; courses where the live lesson is mainly monolingual and translation offered where required; monolingual lessons with materials and handouts in the other language, or courses that are given in both languages at once (i.e. with material repeated / translated live during the class). When asked about classes that use both languages in class, 45% of students in the survey (both Belgian and international) found it useful to have lessons given in Dutch+English together for learning terminology in different languages. 22% said they like it because they find it helpful to hear the material twice. However, 22% of respondents think they lose class time due to bilingual teaching, while 26% would prefer classes to be given in only one language if possible. Some of the disadvantages cited included:

- Switching between languages can reduce clarity of content, or cause the train of thought being cut off.
- The use of dialect or harder words can make it even harder to follow a lesson.
- Although it is nice for teachers to use other languages (i.e., besides Dutch and English) to communicate with students, one comment suggests that use of correct, basic English might be more efficient and safer.

It is essential to bear these comments in mind if the school decides to introduce more multilingual class time.

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[60] "In het algemeen is het jammer om docenten met hun Engels te horen struggelen tijdens de lessen omdat je er dan wat minder respect voor hebt op een of andere manier".

Given that the official teaching language for BA programmes is actually Dutch, it is also important to consider how students feel about having lessons in English. 71% said they like the opportunity to have students from different language backgrounds in the same class. 63% think that having lessons in English helps them learn terminology in English, and 55% think it's good because they will need English for their careers. However, 23% would prefer to have all theory classes in Dutch, and a small number (5%) would prefer to have all classes in Dutch if possible. When developing language policy, it is therefore interesting to consider how the benefits of multilingualism and English language skills can be publicised in school, alongside offering materials and classes taught in Dutch.

Language use for course materials

Here, 81% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the course materials in English are clear and easy to follow. However, some open comments in the survey – reflected also in several student interviews – suggested that it is confusing for students when the language used in course materials such as powerpoints or syllabus does not match the language used in class. A number of students also reported inconsistency between the different language versions of course materials, and international students had the perception that they were sometimes disadvantaged by this. One comment, for example: "in (one subject) this difference is very clear, and this creates an unfavorable (study) ambience for the international students who do not speak Dutch." Or "it is sometimes disheartening to see that it is in only one language, specially if that is emphasised because it makes the lessons unwelcoming and the teacher unapproachable." It would be a good idea to examine course materials to see if there truly is a difference, and also work on communication of a clear policy regarding language used in course materials to ensure that all students have an equal ability to study and feeling of belonging.

Other students pointed out that when studying in a foreign language, it is even more important to have support in the form of clear, full written notes. This was the case both for Dutch-speakers and speakers of other languages, with comments such as follows: "It would be easier if we still had a printed Dutch course to fall back on."[61] Or "Theoretical lessons given in English to Dutch-speaking students would be easier to follow if there were a Dutch-language course to fall back on."[62]

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[61] "Het zou eenvoudiger zijn als we wel nog een gedrukte Nederlandse cursus hadden om op terug te vallen."
[62] "Theoretische lessen die in het Engels worden gegeven aan Nederlandstalige studenten zouden eenvoudiger te volgen zijn moest er een Nederlandstalige cursus zijn om op terug te vallen."

- Ensure that equivalent language support – through extra classes or coaching – is provided for academic writing in Dutch and English.
- Explicitly encourage international students to engage with sources in their own language.
- Embed multilingual exercises and activities in the curriculum to expand intercultural learning for all students (going beyond English-Dutch and European languages where possible).
- Develop and communicate policy regarding course materials. Ensure that translated materials are equivalent if not identical to the original, and encourage students to signal if class content, or extra materials, are not provided in an equivalent way.
- Develop language policy and publicise benefits of multilingual teaching for performing artists. (Bear in mind the small number of students who are Dutch-first language speakers who would prefer to be able to follow everything in Dutch.)
- Encourage maximum use of written / visual aids for all subjects.
- Develop strategies to remind students and staff questions are encouraged, and that it is always possible to translate or repeat content where necessary.

4.4.5.3 Perception and communication of language policy

Communication about language policy

Once the school has developed a clear language policy, it is essential that this is communicated clearly to all students, staff, and applicants to RCA.

At present, communication regarding language choice for written work seems to be clear, with 90% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that they know what languages they can use to write papers and exams. Regulations about language use for papers and exams also seem quite clear (90% also agree or strongly agree that they knew this information). However, there is room for improvement regarding other communication about language support and regulations: only 37% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they know where to go in the school for extra support with writing or research skills while 33% disagree or strongly disagree that the language regulations of the conservatoire were clear before they arrived at RCA.

Regarding language use in class too, the survey results reflected that policy is less clear: 31% of students slightly or strongly disagree that they always know what language courses will be taught in before the semester starts while 30% slightly or strongly disagree that they always know what language will be used for course materials before the semester starts. 23% also did not agree that they understood what language level was expected from them before they started studying.

It is interesting to read students' answers to the open questions about language policy in the survey. One student offered a very clear and reasonable expectation of policy: "I think it's important for students to know what subjects they're taking, and what languages they'll be taught in, what languages they're expected to speak in, and answer. That is sometimes unclear".[63] Another student pointed to a disparity between the existing policy and what actually happens: "I think what is written on paper does not apply to reality in many situations." Finally, when asked whether they knew what language would be used for each course, one student explained: "No, I didn't know which language a course was going to be given in." They went on to quite accurately describe the ad hoc language practice outlined by a number of teachers in the survey and interviews: "I also did not know that this is something that was decided in advance, because in practice it does not seem to be the case at all. The teachers (usually) ask at the beginning of the lesson if there are students who do not understand Dutch. If this is the case, then hopefully they will teach the course in English! But if there are no speakers of other languages in that class the next week due to, for example, an absence, then of course it should not be a problem to switch back to Dutch.[64] This flexibility in itself is impressive, however the lack of communication of the policy could be confusing. Moreover, the fact that the language is not made clear in advance, or the fact that the same group switches from week to week may disadvantage some students, particularly those who do not have either Dutch or English as a first language, or Dutch-speaking students whose level of English is weaker.

On policy more broadly, students also talked about the mindset needed to make a multilingual school work. Talking about Dutch-speaking members of the community, one Belgian student commented: "Some people find it difficult to speak multiple languages. For them, this is clearly a disadvantage. I think this is about both students and teachers, especially the older generation... They think they can communicate with (almost) everyone in Dutch, but that doesn't work."[65] The suggestion that some teachers avoid speaking English was not substantiated by any of the lesson observations or teacher interviews, however the comment about age here may reflect the speed of change in school. An international student also suggested that if policy is unclear, or if teachers do not have an explicitly positive attitude to multilingualism, this also leads to more division socially: "Some theoretical subjects' teachers are very impartial and do not speak English at some moments of the class or separate classes for Dutch speakers and non-Dutch

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[63] Ik denk dat het belangrijk is voor studenten dat ze weten welke vakken ze krijgen, en in welke talen ze zullen les krijgen, in welke talen er van hen word verwacht ze spreken en antwoorden. Dat is soms onduidelijk.
[64] Neen, ik wist niet in welke taal een cursus gegeven ging worden. Ik wist ook niet dat dat iets is dat op voorhand vastgelegd werd, want in de praktijk lijkt dat absoluut niet zo. De docenten vraagt (meestal) aan het begin van de les of er studenten zijn die geen Nederlands verstaan. Indien dit het geval is, zullen ze de cursus hopelijk in het engels geven! Maar als er dan de volgende week geen anderstalige studenten in diezelfde les zitten door bv een afwezigheid vind ik dat het uiteraard geen probleem mag zijn om terug over te schakelen op Nederlands.
[65] "Sommige mensen vinden het moeilijk om meerdere talen te spreken. Voor hun is dit duidelijk een nadeel. Hier gaat het volgens mij zowel over studenten als ook over docenten, vooral de oudere generatie.... Ze denken dat ze in het Nederlands met (bijna) iedereen kunnen communiceren, maar dat lukt niet."

speakers, which makes the division even bigger between the students." Opening an honest discussion about multilingualism and language policy should hopefully facilitate smoother communication and empathy amongst all members of the school community – both those who just arrived and those who have been there for many years.

> Policy action points:
> - Work in the short term to improve communication of existing language policy, including information about which language is used for which course / group, what existing language classes and language support is available.
> - Once language policy has been refined and clarified, work to communicate this clearly with all members of school community to ensure that teachers and students understand both the policy and rationale behind it.

4.4.5.4 Language support

Availability of language support

As seen above, a significant number of students lack confidence in some aspect of language skills. In the survey, most students said they received enough support in general, but some students also did not believe they get enough support for oral (35% disagree or strongly disagree) and written skills (23%) or research skills (20%). It is interesting to note that these percentages are higher amongst international students, with 40% believing they did not have enough support for oral language skills, and 33% regarding written skills. In contrast, only 10% of international students felt they needed more support for research skills. It is important to mention here the positive feedback from students in interviews and focus groups regarding the specific research courses within classical music. Nonetheless, in interviews, some students mentioned that it felt like they were introduced too late to research skills and writing, and they would like to have some of this training earlier in the programme rather than only in the year when they are writing their bachelor or masters papers. It is also interesting to consider in general how all students can be supported to develop oral language skills for study and professional purposes.

Alongside Dutch and English classes to support their studies, students also mentioned a number of other language-related topics that they would be interested in. These include:
- Other general language courses (French, German and Italian in particular),
- subject-related classes including vocabulary for music in English and Dutch, language skills for opera singers (beyond pronunciation)
- professional skills such as language for teaching dance in another language, public speaking, writing mails to organisers and cultural centres, CV or motivation letter for cultural jobs.

Special educational needs

Respondents did not see a particular link between needs of multilingual studies and special educational needs. There was mention that students with dyslexia (or other writing-related learning difficulties) would benefit from more non-written formats for assessment, including video assignments (as used during Corona). Although this doesn't have a specific impact on the multilingualism policy, it is useful to bear in mind that varied approaches will also be more inclusive for students with lower language levels as well as those with special educational needs. On the other hand, in focus groups some students were concerned that a shift to more multilingualism could disadvantage those with dyslexia or other special needs that impact their ability to use foreign languages. Moreover, a number of questions and comments from students and staff during interviews and informal interaction suggested that there is a lack of clear communication about the policy and support at RCA and AP for students with dyslexia or other language-related needs.

Language classes

As outlined above, at present there are no language courses offered to students within RCA with the exception of language coaching for singers. In the survey and in interviews, multiple students expressed support for the development of (free or subsidised) language courses. Comments from the survey included:

- "I think official subsidised language courses, not only Dutch, would be a very welcome addition to the curriculum."
- "I believe that there should be a full language learning program for a language of our choice."
- "As an international student, I would love to be able to learn Dutch as part of my studies, but my Bachelor studies left me no time or energy to seek external lessons. I am positive that most international students would take a Dutch course if it was part of our curriculum!"
- "Given the multilingual nature of the country I think the school should be able to provide language tuition for arriving foreign students. At least basic courses in Dutch. Also for foreign students who don't speak English or Dutch to a fluent level they should absolutely have access to FREE classes in these to help them with their academics."

The school does not provide language classes as part of the core study programme at present,[66] so it was useful to investigate whether students are aware of the other options available to them and whether they make use of these options. These include classes at CVOs (adult education centres) or Linguapolis (the university language centre, where RCA students can gain credit under certain circumstances).

Dutch classes: 44% of students said they don't know that Dutch classes are offered at CVOs, 65% didn't know that they can get credit for taking a Dutch class at Linguapolis. While 62% of non Dutch-speaking students report that they have not taken any kind of Dutch class, 38% report having learnt Dutch either at Linguapolis, at a CVO or private tutoring/exchange. 15% report that the reason for not taking classes is because they don't know where to take a class, while 33% say they cannot afford lessons, and 7% only want to take classes on campus. As shown in the table below, most students are interested in general Dutch classes but there is also interest in language for academic and professional purposes

Survey: would you sign up for any of these Dutch classes if they were available?
*(x-axis = number of students)*
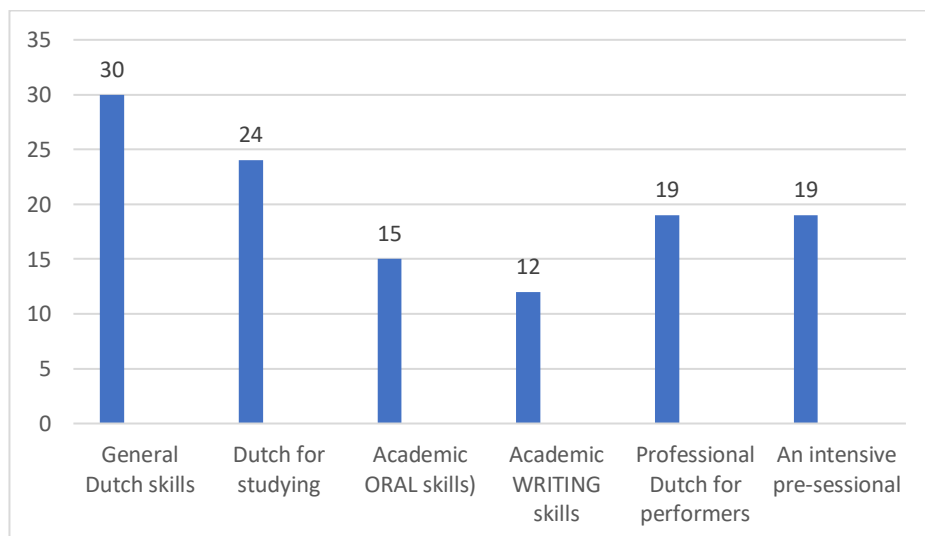
English classes: 95% of students have not taken an English class since in Antwerp, and most (79%) believe their English is good enough already, or they are not interested (13%). However, a small minority don't know where to take classes (7%) or can't afford them (4%), only want to take classes with other RCA students (6%), or only want to take it for credit or if there is time for it alongside studies (4%). This data supports information shared by teachers in interviews that a small but significant number of students would benefit from English support. In addition, although many students do not require English classes, they would still be interested to develop

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[66] A pilot Dutch course with one group is starting in RCA in February 2022, organised in collaboration with CVO Vitant. This course will be financed by students at a low rate (70€ per semester).

their skills, in particular for professional and academic language skills, as shown in the graph below:

Survey: would you sign up for any of these English classes if they were available?

(x-axis = number of students)
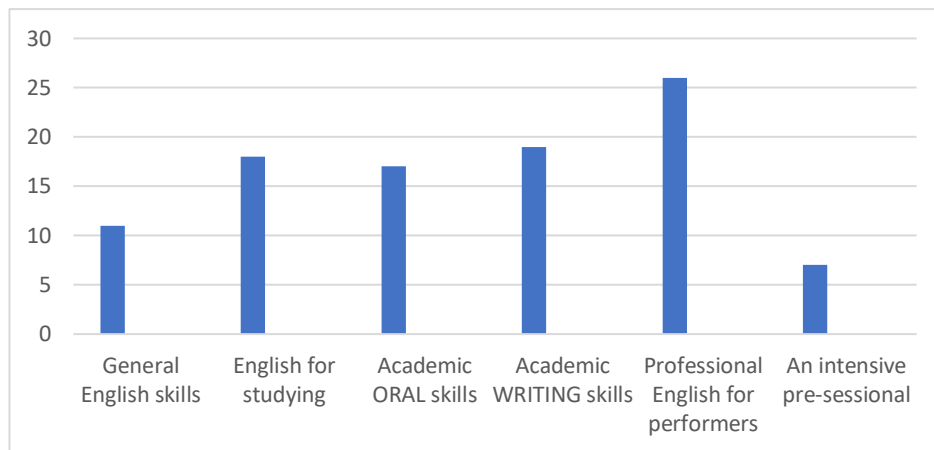
When asked about price, 41% of students said they would only take classes that were free, 41% would pay maximum 100€ per semester, 14% would pay over 100€. For context, AP students pay between 320€ and 395€ for a semester of classes at Linguapolis, versus around 100€ maximum for a course at a CVO.

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Policy action points:

General language support
- Introduce language support or exercises for academic writing and research earlier in the programme.
- Introduce optional classes or coaching for students who want to develop oral English or Dutch skills, whether for study or professional purposes.
- Ensure that language policy / multilingualism does not disadvantage students with special educational needs.
- Offer more non-written formats of assessment where possible to benefit students with additional learning needs and speakers of other languages.

Language classes
- 33% of international students say that price is the reason they don't take Dutch classes; if the school organises language classes they should be free or very cheap.
- Work to promote benefits of Dutch classes amongst international students, and encourage students to make use of all options (Linguapolis, CVO, Atlas, self-study).
- Some students report that they have not taken English classes because these are not available in school, or because they cannot afford to follow external classes. Free English classes or coaching should be offered in school to support weaker students in core language skills for study.

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4.4.5.5 Attitudes to multilingualism

Attitudes to multilingualism: benefits

Feedback from the survey and interviews and focus groups suggested that students see many benefits related to the different forms of multilingualism in school. Whatever policy decisions are

made, it is important that these benefits are not lost or forgotten. These benefits can be broadly divided into the language skill sets as reported in chapter two, including social / soft-skills, artistic, and academic language skills.

On an (inter)personal level related to soft skills and networking, students expressed appreciation of:

- gaining new perspectives and learning to be more open to different cultures as well as different types of communication and cultural codes;
- ability to learn more about one's own culture as you compare it to other cultures;
- opening horizons beyond English/Dutch, and beyond Europe;
- chance to make social connections and develop intercultural capital and empathy: "It makes you curious to find out more and maybe even delve into it. And it allows for gatherings and similarities to be found in each other, rather than differences." [67]

This personal development can also feed into an artistic and professional advantage.

- In the Belgian context, connecting to more languages and cultures is seen as a way to enrich the national arts scene.
- Access to international perspectives on art, arts education and communication lead to exchange and deeper level of learning and artistic reflection;
- several students pointed to the broad connection between languages, culture and art: "This is art by itself. People getting to know other people with different cultures and music fields. This is what makes us artists. We are united. Music is an international language and it's magical."
- The presence of different languages is also linked to the fact that music is seen as a universal language, and that it is natural for artists to speak more than one language as this reflects the international character of the arts.

On an academic level too, students say it helps to learn different languages because:

- It allows them to access information in different languages for their research.
- They have the chance to learn from teachers who have different cultural backgrounds which broadens their horizons,
- learning alongside classmates who come from different teaching traditions brings them into contact with even more approaches.
- Can lead to better understanding of another country's musical/artistic tradition, for example a student who explained that learning about Spanish and Latin cultures could bring them closer to Cuban rhythms or Flamenco music.

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[67] "Het maakt je nieuwsgierig om meer te weten te komen en je misschien zelfs te verdiepen erin. En het zorgt voor bijeenkomsten en gelijkenissen te vinden in elkaar, in plaats van verschillen."

- In interviews, some students (particularly those in final years or at masters level), reflected that the multilingual and international character also benefits them if it improves the school's reputation. One student reported that that the presence of different cultures and languages in school suggests that the level of study is high and this is why it attracts people from all over the world.

Ideally, this advantage should also translate into a professional advantage <u>after graduation</u>. In many interviews and also in the survey, students highlighted the fact that they will need languages after graduation. "The musical world is multilingual and therefore a school that has students from all over the world is beneficial.". or "In the arts world so many languages are used anyway, so it's good that we already come into contact with that at school."[68] So learning new languages and cultures will help students access more opportunities in the professional world, regardless of what direction they go in. Having an international student body also gives alumni an pre-established network of other performing artists in other countries.

Attitudes to multilingualism: challenges

Although a small number of students asserted that there are no disadvantages to having a multilingual school, most also pointed to problematic aspects alongside the benefits. There are a number of specific challenges related to multilingualism, some inherent, and some that could be alleviated through clearer or different policy.

In the survey, students pointed out that having a mix of language and cultures has an enormous impact on potential for <u>artistic and academic growth</u>. Analysis and ideas about art are not easy to express in any language, and students explained that this difficulty is compounded when neither the teacher or student is a native speaker: "In some instrument lessons, the teacher is not a native speaker and therefore, in my opinion, certain nuances are lost."[69] Moreover, a student's well-being is also essential for them to fulfil their artistic potential: "Feeling at home in school is really important in order to develop yourself and your abilities."[70] Students suggested that a lack of language skills could limit their 'integration", create more "divisions" within school, feelings of "rejection" by Dutch-speaking teachers and classmates. Another student pointed out in an interview that it is hard for international students to practice Dutch, as Dutch-speakers are not always used to practising with non-native speakers. This was also seen as creating an 'artificial bubble' within school as compared to the rest of the city and country.

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[68] "In de kunstwereld worden er toch sowieso verschillende talen gebruikt, dus het is goed dat we daar op school dan al in contact mee komen."
[69] Bij sommige instrumentlessen is de docent geen native-speaker en daardoor gaan naar mijn gevoel bepaalde nuances verloren."
[70] "Het gevoel van thuis horen op school is heel belangrijk om jezelf en je vaardigheden te ontwikkelen."

Indeed, international and Belgian students also pointed out the <u>social challenges</u> of multilingualism: danger of social isolation, divisions and the formation of language cliques – the danger that students stay in their comfort zone "een comfortabele zone". The inability to share and compare cultures poses a problem in terms of international students particularly feeling lonely. In interviews, numerous students both from Belgium and abroad said that they disliked the social division and cliques in school due to language difference, and that this was a missed chance for intercultural learning. Students suggested that this was an extra problem for people who are naturally reserved by character, as well as those who do not belong to one of the main language groups in the school (seen by students as Dutch, Spanish or English-speaking). "When I arrived 4 years ago, I found myself being very lonely between the Spanish-speaking group (which is big in our school) and the Flemish one. At that time I couldn't speak neither Dutch or Spanish and the number of people using English during free time (cafeteria, breaks) was really not that (big)." Several students who had a first language other than Dutch or English pointed out that following classes and other conversations in a foreign language is tiring. One reflected that this could also lead them to miss out on "the 'common conversation' that happens out of the lessons between the students" meaning that "you can miss a lot of informations about things that are not really school-related but still important for your integration."

The importance of this subtle form of "in-between" contact and communication that happens outside formal lessons or rehearsals was highlighted by several international students in relation to <u>professional skills</u>. International students described how not being able to bond with classmates after a class, to share a joke during a break from a rehearsal, or follow the conversation during a jam, in the changing room or in the bar put them at a disadvantage for making new connections, and joining or developing new projects – skills which are an essential part of the modern performing artist's linguistic toolkit. Moreover, it prevented them from learning about local social cues and conventions which are essential knowledge when seeking gigs outside school.

In terms of solutions, a couple of students pointed out that they would like to have more (social) activities in school to promote integration and links between students of different cultural and language backgrounds. One student summed it up nicely, explaining that the school faces: "the challenge of integrating the incoming students into the already-existing society (that is, the Dutch one) without removing their own identities."

Policy action points:

- Consider how students can be supported to learn about local Belgian social and cultural cues, and develop language skills for networking, and participating in the "in-between" conversations.
- Work with students, student advisor, international relations staff and student psychologists to maximise well-being of students in order to facilitate integration, language learning and ability to perform and learn.
- Work to develop a school culture where people are encouraged to 'dare to speak' Dutch (and English). Also encourage native or proficient speakers to be patient, and teach them ways to support beginners and less proficient speakers.

4.4.6 Drama survey, interviews and focus group

- Studenten echt aanmoedigen om eigen taal / moedertaal mogen gebruiken in vrije performances → deel van hun eigen stem te vinden
- Lessen of coaching organiseren te leren spelen met verschillende (NL) accenten + dialecten
- Meer engelstalige en internationale docenten / projecten waar de voertaal is Engels
- Opleiding toegankelijk maken voor dove mensen
- Facultatieve taallessen organiseren op school (FR, EN enz) MAAR altijd rekening ermee houden met wat verplicht word (mbt dyslexie / specifieke onderwijsnoden enz.)
- Toelatingsproef toegankelijker maken voor mensen die geen (of niet perfekt) NL spreken.

Most popular suggestions from students regarding language policy in the drama department. Developed during group discussion during open session in the drama department, November 2021

The results of the research into drama are presented separately, given that drama is the only department at RCA where all courses are officially Dutch-language, and where students are expected to be native-level speakers of Dutch. Nonetheless, much of this section should be of interest for stakeholders from the rest of the school, both in terms of concrete policy action points and also in terms of the nuanced attitudes to Dutch language issues that are reflected in this section but are relevant to students and staff elsewhere in the RCA.

The survey of drama students was distributed separately to that of music and dance students, and received 34 full responses. Of these, 16 were cis female, 11 cis male, and 7 non-binary or other. Information from the survey is analysed below, complemented with insights from interviews with four students majoring in acting, 'kleinkunst', 'woordkunst' and the drama teacher training programme.

Multilingualism within drama

Although the drama department is largely seen as a monolingual environment, there is a significant presence of students who speak languages other than Dutch, both at home and in school. This can be seen in the tables below: alongside students who report growing up

bilingual (with English the most common additional home language), a significant number of students speak a Flemish or Dutch dialect or 'tussentaal' (a language variety between standard language and dialect). Overall, only a minority of students report that their sole language at home or in school is "Algemeen Nederlands" (or "AN", meaning Standard (Flemish) Dutch).

What languages do you speak with your family
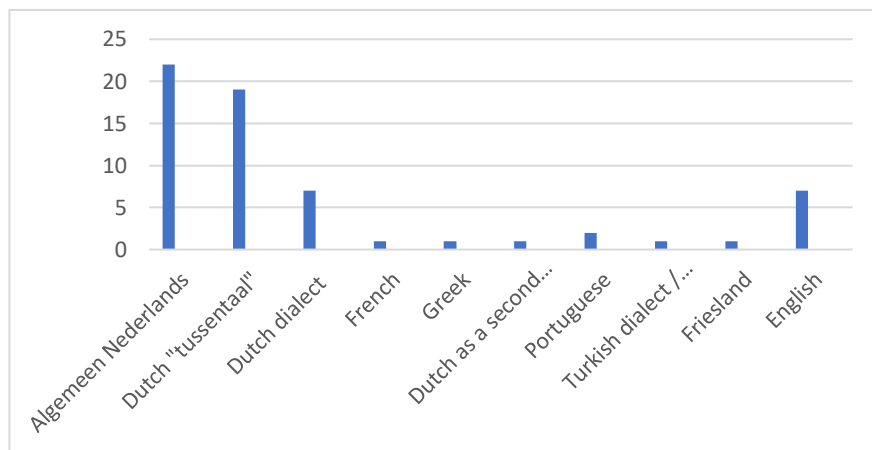
What languages do you speak in school
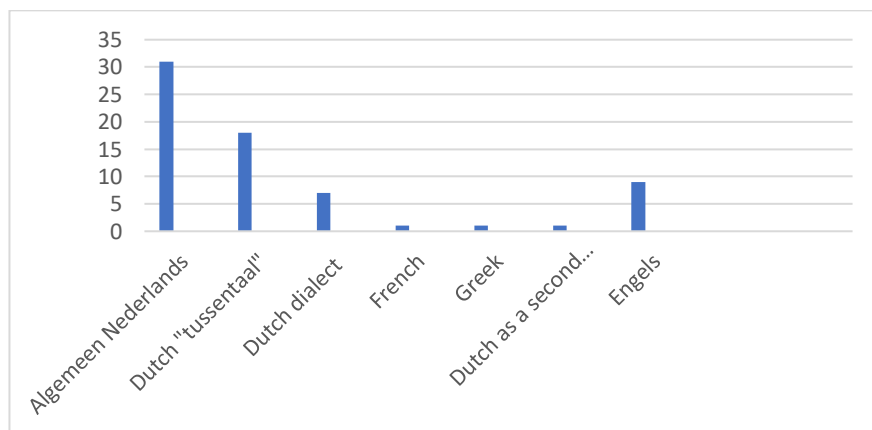
Despite this variety, most respondents to the survey (75%) report that it is not a barrier ("drempel") for them to speak AN. Nevertheless, in interviews and focus groups a number of students expressed that learning AN had been a challenge for them. A small number of students question whether having perfect AN is still a relevant and necessary skill in order for students to graduate, and would like to open a discussion over the rationale behind the language policy. Many students said they would like to have more space to come into contact with other languages and language variations, and indeed, in the survey, only 35% of students agree or completely agree that there is enough space at school to use Dutch language variants other than "AN", while 89% think that it is an advantage to come into contact with different Dutch language variations during their training. Some students in interviews and focus groups even wondered if it would be interesting to receive acting coaching for other Dutch and Flemish accents to open up more professional opportunities, as has been standard practice in English language acting training for many years.

In interviews and the focus group, students also reflected on the role of Antwerp dialect in school. On the one hand, students felt that in courses where accents were evaluated – and where "AN" was the standard – students who spoke with features of local Antwerp accents often received no negative feedback on this whereas students with other traits of regional Flemish accents were penalised. This was seen as a reflection of the prestige of Antwerp-Flemish in the media and Belgian arts scene in general. At the same time, one student from Antwerp agreed that in school, features of the Antwerp accent were often regarded as a norm alongside AN. Although this meant that students from Antwerp might get better grades for their work, they missed out on receiving detailed or useful feedback to improve their own use of "AN".

Other students reported incidents where their accent or dialect led them to feel different or even stigmatised, either in class or social situations. More than one student reported how on arrival at the school they were discouraged from writing original material in their own (Flemish or Dutch) dialect, and that this had a lasting impact on their creative choices and identity. It is interesting to consider how the programme can encourage students to develop a full repertoire of linguistic excellence in Dutch – including AN, Flemish and Dutch accents and dialects – and avoid explicit or implicit negativity towards dialects that may be detrimental to students' creativity, motivation, and artistic development.

This issue also links to the issue of racism, colour and ethnic identity. Here readers are encouraged to refer to the excellent research done in 2021 at RCA by the diversity and inclusion working group which makes it clear that this is an area requiring significant work, including in the drama department. In particular, it is essential to consider how issues of race and racism intersect with language use and prejudice or stereotyping of students of colour, as these issues also impact the potential for creative growth and linguistic exploration of students. In an interview for this project, one student reflected that personal narratives related to language and identity – particularly regarding racism and ethnic identity – are often not linear or easy to present in a simple or gentle way for an audience. This student felt that there was a pressure to distort and compress these narratives into a coherent form, and that there was a need for more space for nuance and flexibility in the way language and form are discussed for students' creative projects.

Language support
88% of drama students strongly agree or agree that they already receive sufficient support for written language proficiency. However, with regards to artistic subject terminology/theory, students are a little less certain, and only 59% agree that they receive sufficient support here. Moreover, it seems that for students in drama – as for students in general – more

communication is needed about extra support in writing or research skills, as 64% of students disagree or completely disagree that they know where to go for extra language support.

This lack of support was also reflected by a student in an interview who reported struggles due to the lack of extra support with Dutch language skills, an issue that is relevant for bilingual students alongside first language monolingual speakers of Dutch. For this student, receiving feedback that mostly or only focused on grammar or language errors rather than on the "content, metaphors, character" or their creative choices led to a feeling of "fighting with the language, and how it is dealt with", and they did not feel they had received sufficient support, leading to decreased motivation, and an impact on their mental well-being. It is interesting to consider how the programme can work to promote inclusion of students who need extra help, for example if they have not completed all of their schooling in Dutch, if they come from a less academic background, or those with special educational needs such as dyslexia.

Regarding use of other languages for study purposes, a number of students pointed to the fact that they found it challenging to follow some theory or practical classes in English, especially given that they are in an otherwise Dutch-language section, and that there is no English language support available. In the survey, 10% of students reported that they would prefer to have only lessons in Dutch. On a more positive note, a number of students were in favour of the inclusion of English in school. One student noted that given the growth of English theatre in Flanders, it was valuable for students to improve their English, and felt the programme should also teach skills such as working with subtitles in theatre projects, translating texts for performance, or even language and accent coaching to do projects in English or French. Another student explained that for both creative and academic purposes it was useful to access literature in other languages, especially English. They felt there should be more support in academic English to write BA or MA papers so that the work can be shared with artists and scholars internationally. Yet in addition to the comments about English, during interviews and the focus group, students expressed a belief that English remains privileged, and there is a perception that original songs or texts written in English are regarded more highly than those in Dutch or Flemish dialects or other languages, in particular compared to inclusion of community languages commonly found in Antwerp such as Turkish or Arabic.

The place of drama within a multilingual RCA and multilingual Antwerp
In general, students reported that they did not have much contact with international students from the other sections within RCA. Nonetheless in interviews and focus groups, students expressed particular enthusiasm for projects that were taught in English or where there was space for other languages. In the survey, 86% of students said they would like to receive more lessons from international teachers, even if these are not taught in Dutch. These reflections were echoed in the interviews and focus groups held with students from drama. Interdisciplinary

projects – such as NextDoors week, or the Lesfeest, and collaborations with the Royal Academy of Fine Arts – were seen as particularly valuable, as these offered the chance to work with international students and make use of other languages for creative purposes. This ties in to the general perception of theatre and performing arts as an increasingly international – and interdisciplinary – field, and such opportunities are likely to improve students' versatility and professional chances after graduation, whether they want to work or pursue further study in Belgium or abroad.

A further point of feedback here is the potential for development of policy and classes that bring students into connection with the rich contemporary or popular arts scene of Antwerp. In interviews and the open session, students expressed a desire to go deeper in linguistics to learn about contemporary Flemish dialects alongside 'youth' language, slam poetry and spoken word. An overview of the feedback on this question from the survey can be seen below, where the most popular responses were 'inclusive language use in theatre' and 'superdiversity in language and media'

Are there other language skills or language topics you would like to learn about?
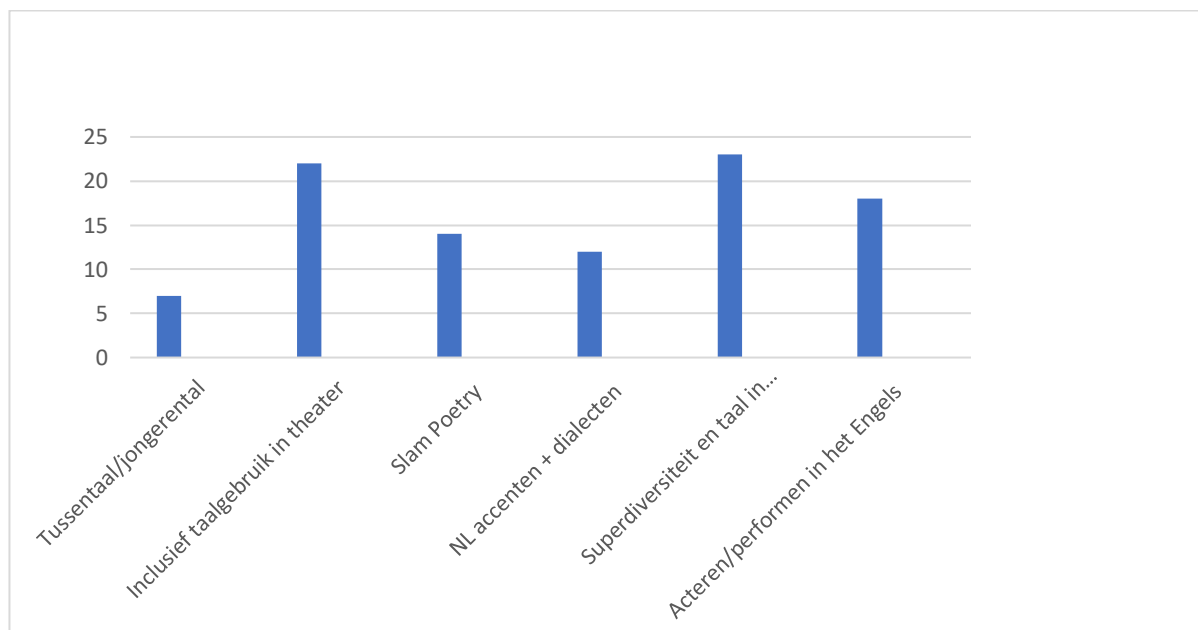
Policy action points:

- Consider how to encourage and support use of languages other than Dutch within class and evaluations.
- Foster students' creativity, contact and knowledge of their own and other Dutch/Flemish dialects and "tussentaal".
- Streamline attitude to "AN" so that students receive feedback on their accent only in courses where this is a stated learning goal.
- Work to counter positive bias towards Antwerp accent, to ensure that students receive fair feedback, and that students from Antwerp receive feedback necessary to develop their use of AN.
- Develop screening process and extra support for students who need support in Dutch language.
- Ensure that language support enhances creative process and opens artistic doors; make judicious use of feedback on grammatical accuracy or dialect choice.
- Collaborate with other departments to advocate for better support in academic English for students who want to read artistic, theory and academic sources and write in English.
- Consider how to develop language skills as part of professional preparation and entrepreneurship. i.e., increased use of guest professors and projects in English and other languages, work experience or exchange with other-language theatres in Belgium, interdisciplinary projects with non-Dutch speaking students from dance or music, or work on professional skills such as translation or acting in English, French or other languages.

5 Moving forward

5.1 Deep change vs cosmetic change

In developing a strategy to make the most out of multilingualism at RCA, a two-pronged approach is needed. First, efficient, focused efforts should be made to implement key concrete changes that will bring the most benefit in the short-medium term. It is essential for these efforts to have full commitment from those in authority, backed up with the necessary (minimum) financial and logistical support. Second, in the longer-term, it is essential for the project to be underpinned by a commitment to deep change rather than cosmetic change. Deep change here refers to the gradual work on mindset and community feeling to promote good practice for multilingual communication in all contexts in school, rather than making small changes for short-term gain, or conducting research for the sake of saying that 'we are working on this' or that the topic is 'under discussion'.

As can be seen above from section 4.3 (Relevant internal reports), policy work on this topic has been conducted in AP and RCA since at least 2017, and language policy and support have been set as a goal in internal and external evaluations more than once. Clear progress has been made in some areas, for example in working to systematically provide bilingual communication both internally and externally, or by asking students to submit a motivation video to assess their English when they apply to study music. The pilot semester of in-house Dutch classes in collaboration with an adult education college for this project can also have a marked positive impact if it is supported and continues to run.

However, many needs have already been communicated multiple times but have not thus far materialised, most obviously English-language support for students and training in multilingual teaching for staff, alongside Dutch classes within AP for regular students. During a recent discussion about the ADAPT process,[71] a promise was made that Dutch classes will shortly be available for all regular students. However, English-language support was described as being "in the pipeline" but it was confirmed that this is not a priority for the start of the new phase, and there is no plan to make English support available at the new student centre in 2022, at least. The fact that an essential student service is once again being put on the back burner can be only described as disappointing, to put it mildly. But more broadly, this points to a harmful pattern of institutional inertia: reports are commissioned, results collated but not implemented, and later another report or project is commissioned on the same or a related topic, without resulting in concrete or structural change. It would be delightful if the current report does not

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[71] 16 December, online Q&A

meet the same fate, but for this to happen there has to be institutional will (and money) plus a shift towards deep change.

Moreover, for deep change to be possible, a truly 'integral' and 'integrated' language policy cannot focus on language alone. It must also consider the topic of cultural difference, and build on the feedback culture at RCA. This topic was explored by Jan Staes, a researcher and teacher trainer at RCA, who was interviewed for this project. Staes' work led him to question, for example, whether students from some (language) backgrounds are less likely to ask for feedback, or to engage in dialogue around the feedback they receive. According to Staes, this difference can be due to a lack of language skills (technical terms, or English or Dutch language in general). But, Staes argues, this also relates to the fact that "not only receiving but also asking for feedback by students is a pedagogical concept and an option rooted in a rich system of information transfer through language in Flemish higher education. It demands certain competences, not least the confidence of the student."[72] Feedback is a core part of the learning and development process for performing artists, so language support must go further than concrete skills such as vocabulary or grammar. For teachers too, in a multilingual teaching environment it is even more important that they are aware of differences and have pedagogical tools to check students' understanding, and to explore and make explicit any language/culture gaps related to teaching, learning and performing, as well as bridging these gaps.

This report thus argues that increasing intercultural awareness will increase self-esteem and learning efficacy of both home and international students, and help them be successful during their studies. Moreover, this also increases students' chances of success after their studies as they enter an international work context, thereby also enhancing the reputation of RCA and AP, and of Flemish arts education more broadly. Moreover, ensuring the active inclusion of students from all backgrounds through appropriate language support will also help all students develop agency and empower them to be curious, to engage with feedback, ask questions, and listen with embodied confidence and autonomy, within a community of multilingual learning practice. Truly making the most of multilingualism will thus give all students at RCA the opportunity of world-centred education,[73] and also enable RCA to become a global flagship of modern, multilingual, international arts education.

It is very important to realise that critical thinking, being encouraged to ask critical questions, self-reflection and autonomy in general are not an optional extra here. These are an essential ingredient for successful deep change. For alongside commitment from management, and sufficient financial and logistical support, true structural change will also require the autonomous

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[72] Jan Staes, email 10/01/2022
[73] See https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Gert-Biesta/publication/352809159_World-Centred_Education_A_View_for_the_Present/links/60f17f540859317dbde6aee9/World-Centred-Education-A-View-for-the-Present.pdf

engagement of individual teachers, students and all community members and stakeholders. This can be supported, e.g., through teacher training, language classes, exchange or buddy systems and other concrete changes. However, as Staes also underlined in relation to his project on feedback culture at RCA, a real shift in institutional mindset requires patience. 'Multilingualism ambassadors' within school will have to initiate short doses of frequent, repeated discussion, over time, with all members of the community. Deep change cannot happen overnight, and it cannot be the project of just a few impassioned 'movers and shakers'. This change has to be sprinkled throughout the school, with teachers, administrators, students and other stakeholders slowly being informed and turned into ambassadors themselves.

The attitude with which these conversations take place is also key. It is essential to consider the power dynamics and complexities surrounding the politics of language in Belgium, and take into account the privileging of English as a world language and lingua franca. It is easy to assume that the responsibility for making multilingualism work largely falls with community members who speak minority languages, who should make a one-sided effort to integrate. We must remember that students and teachers who are first-language or highly proficient speakers of Dutch and English are equally responsible for creating space where less fluent speakers can learn. In particular, it is worth exploring how 'native' speakers in school can work to deconstruct the hegemony of (English) language or the urge to seek 'perfection' or 'accuracy' over authentic, meaningful exchange. To counteract this, the school should develop a shared philosophy, based, for example, on the assumption that:

-making a vibrant, healthy multilingual space is not easy;

-everyone is already doing the best they can right now with the tools they have;

-all languages and cultures are equal and equally welcome in school;

-frequency of use ≠ importance or quality of a language.

-clear and explicit communication is key both to expectations and problems

The diagram on the next page offers a possible model of shared responsibility for this work.

Model of shared responsibility for developing a successful multilingual learning context

- Provide necessary support in the form of language courses for students and training for teachers.
- Explicit communication around expectations + orientation to ensure students do not enrol on a course that they will not able to succeed on,
- Minimise frustration and unnecessary work for staff due to inefficient or uninformed multilingual teaching context.
- Support staff and coordinators by providing clear language policy to communicate to prospective and current students plus clear procedures / person responsible to refer to in case of questions / problems

RCA+
AP

TEACHERS
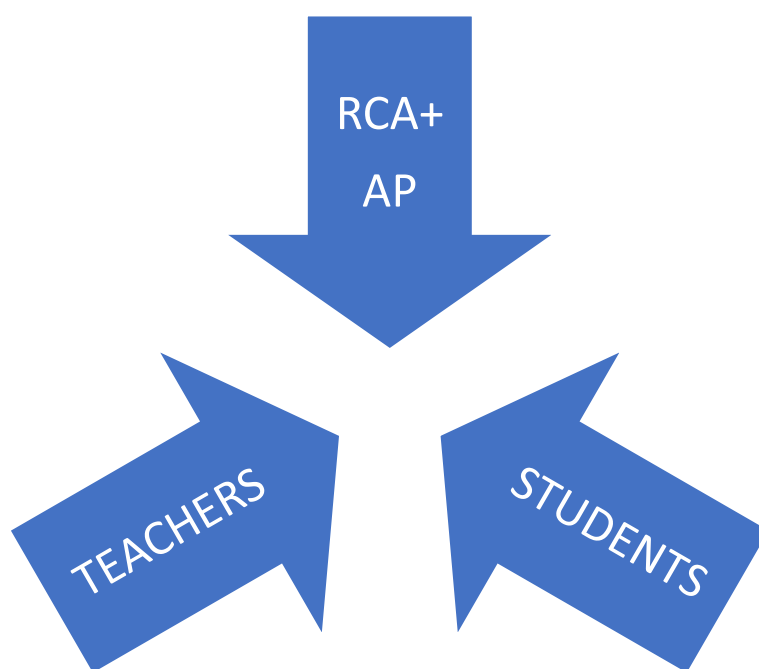
STUDENTS

- Continue to build on flexibility and open mindset towards students with different language backgrounds + levels.
- Commit to integrating chances for students to develop skills entrepreneurship and (multilingual) communication as preparation for professional life.
- Endeavour to help all students (including those proficient in NL or EN) to learn to the best of their ability in class and at home without undue confusion / loss of time in classes due to language use.

- Commit time and energy to developing new language skills, if necessary in addition to regular study programme.
- Consciously cultivate and seek out meaningful interaction with students from other countries + backgrounds to benefit of school community and also as preparation for working life in international field

5.2   Food for thought: three options for structural change

Bearing in mind the need for deep change, as explored above, this section outlines three key options for concrete policy changes in RCA. These three have been chosen because these emerged as the most logical options based on the research, and given the context including the legal situation. These are presented as 'food for thought' that need to be discussed and critically analysed within the ongoing evolution of the language policy of the RCA.

5.2.1   Option one: Splitting and doubling

Description: Programmes are officially split into separate English- and Dutch-language programmes, i.e., through addition of English-language BA programmes in music and dance.

Pros:
- Transparent for all students during the application process
- Will allow foreign students to focus on English alone during their studies
- Will bring the current reality in school in line with current legislation, given that a number of courses are already taught in English, particularly in dance
- Should reduce possibility of investigations by authorities or students complaints being upheld
- May help increase internationalisation with potential for further expansion
- Officially English-language programme is appropriate for the large number of students who speak little or no Dutch when they arrive

Cons:
- Moving away from multilingualism will decrease all students' opportunity to develop professional skills, versatility, and ability to work internationally both in Belgium/Netherlands and abroad
- Likely to increase social division and cliques between different (language) groups in school
- May further decrease numbers of Dutch-speaking students and reduce embeddedness of RCA in Antwerp and Belgium
- Will further reduce international students' motivation to learn Dutch, making them less likely to make connections and put down roots, thus lowering the longer-term return of investment in this student group if they all leave Belgium after their studies
- May not be possible to split the programmes anyway, depending on the federal quota for bilingual programmes in performing arts
- May also be impossible due to the cost of translating / training / verifying language level of teachers

- In practice it might not make a great difference, as where necessary, classes (e.g., theory classes) are already offered in two languages
- Makes less sense at present for jazz given that it is a small department with a relatively low number of international students
- Very impractical to divide many other classes (i.e., instrument-specific literature classes, chamber music, group workshops, masterclasses, most of the dance programme).

Summary:
- To split students into officially monolingual programmes would bring the school into line with the current legislation. If this is necessary, and the only way to conform, then it may be beneficial as a potential complaint or issue with the law could be damaging to RCA's reputation. However, in every other way this would be a great shame, and would likely damage the professional, artistic and social fabric of the school leading a significant loss of intercultural richness.

5.2.2   Option two: Language certification

Description: Students are required to provide a certificate proving that they have a B2 language level before they can enrol at the school, similar to the model of the Academy of Fine Arts.

Pros:
- The system is frequently used elsewhere (incl. in the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, and also in Belgium at PARTS)
- Would ensure that most if not all students who are accepted to the school have the starting competences required to be successful in their studies including use of academic language
- Would limit psychological and social isolation (and mental-health threat) faced by the small minority of students whose language skills are far below the required level
- There exists an easy model to follow within AP (in the Academy)
- It is standard practice on international level, bringing Antwerp in line with schools in the UK, Netherlands, Germany, France…
- It could help reduce current obstacles to community feeling in school by offering a clear lingua franca (Dutch and/or English)
- Probably would cost less than full doubling as in option one (for the school the added cost is simply to check tests + certificates on application).

Cons

- Talent may be lost through students choosing to go elsewhere in Belgium if they do not have language certificate
- There is an economic impact for students having to pay for tests even if their language level is clearly sufficient[74]
- Based on interviews it is generally not desired by students or staff
- Research shows that generic / academic language tests might not accurately reflect students' ability to follow a specialised university course such as music
- Generic tests measure a specific set of linguistic skills, so may filter out some students (with good knowledge and communicative skill but low grammar and vocabulary) who could be successful with appropriate academic language support.
- It may not be possible to accept certificates for English language skill without also splitting the course (offering all BA's in English).
- If splitting is not an option, then entrance would be tied to Dutch language skills. This would severely limit field of applicants and would directly oppose the stated aims of RCA and AP regarding internationalisation (music in particular)

Summary: If this is a way to bring the school into line with Flemish legal policy while still maintaining some level of multilingualism in practice then this may not be a bad option. During interviews, some teachers – especially those with experience of study abroad in Germany or France, for example – felt that this would be a simple and transparent way to ensure that students have the correct starting competences. However, there is another way to do this that maintains many of the benefits and avoids a number of the disadvantages, namely screening and orientation, as outlined below.

5.2.3   Option three: Integrated multilingualism

Description: A multi-faceted approach including an (obligatory but non-binding) language or orientation test taken after students are accepted by the school, coaching or interview to point students to classes or other support, provision of affordable English and Dutch classes, plus integration of tools from Content- and Language-Integrated learning and language support for staff and teachers.

Pros

- Pedagogically sound if applied in an explicit and coherent manner

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[74] At the time of writing, the price for the Interuniversity Dutch test offered by Linguapolis is 85€; for the English-language test equivalent costs 130€. IELTS offered by the British council in brussels costs 243€, TOEFL costs 270 USD. Sources: https://www.ets.org/ , https://www.britishcouncil.be/exam/ielts/dates-fees-locations, https://www.uantwerpen.be/nl/centra/linguapolis/taaltesten/

- Builds on what is already happening in school
- Will promote well-being and cohesion within multilingual community in school
- Makes use of outstanding expertise within AP in the form of Taalpunt and from colleagues in the teacher training department
- Exciting innovative approach with the potential to make RCA a leader in Europe / the world as a consciously and creatively multilingual performing arts school.
- Use of non-binding screening and orientation allows school to admit students based largely on artistic merit while screening them and pointing to appropriate classes and support

Cons

- Requires all or most of the essential elements to be present for it to work properly (screening and orientation, affordable language classes, and professional development for teachers in multilingual teaching methods)
- Requires further work to explore e.g. possible language tests and orientation tools
- Will require committed work and shift of mindset from staff, school and students,
- Less simple than the other options, requiring specific effort to implement a range of measures and to brand it and communicate clearly internally and externally
- Requires budget for training, development of language test, implementation of CLIL, extra language support for students who have lower level… without sufficient budget, the school runs the risk of maintaining status quo despite good intentions

Summary: If the financial backing is there, if the heads of department and relevant colleagues in AP management are on board with this, and if staff show the emotional will to make it work then this mixed method approach has the potential to be a very exciting development and make RCA into a world-leader in forging a multilingual approach to performing arts education.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Advice for the RCA - Implementing a multilingual approach

If the school decides to move forward with the third option above, in addition to bearing in mind the philosophy of deep change as outlined in chapter five, there are some practical measures to bear in mind. The flowchart on the following page outlines <u>one</u> possible model as a starting point for implementing a multilingual approach, from the point of view of the student journey.

This can serve for inspiration for making the most out of multilingualism. In order to implement this, support is necessary on the AP-level, and also the Flemish level, as outlined in the rest of this chapter.

CHOOSING SCHOOL

-multilingual approach and language expectations are made clear via website and other communication

-marketing: integrated multilingual approach is a selling point for students to come to RCA

AUDITION PROCESS

-informal structured screening of students' oral and written skills allows school or teachers to filter or properly orient students with obviously low level of language skills.

-other students are pointed to information about preparing to study in school including about language classes. If necessary they are oriented towards courses, self-study or other support.

BEFORE STARTING

-student receives clear information about language policy and expectations

-student has option to sign up for extra language classes, including affordable in-house Dutch class

ARRIVING AT SCHOOL

-student submits language certificate if they have this

-attends in-person screening with 'taalanker'

-pointed to language support resources

-benefits of learning Dutch are made clear to international students from the start

-'taalcafe' workshop in introweek opens conversation about school philosophy

FIRST YEAR

-integrated language-content learning where possible allows them to follow classes and be introduced to Dutch where appropriate

-clear consistent information regarding language use and assessment is provided for each course + OER

-all course materials are available in more or less identical form in English and Dutch

-extra support available for English from AP, and through affordable Dutch classes

- taalbuddies, Next Door week and other projects help community members co-construct dialogue around multilingualism and intercultural agency

-focus on language needed for integration into studies and social life, subject-specific vocabulary, introduction to academic thinking and structuring an argument

SECOND - THIRD YEARS

-integrated language approach continues.

-Where possible international students learn to follow at minimum practical classes in Dutch

-Affordable Dutch classes continue for those who want them with an eye to full proficiency at the end of the programme (access to teacher traniing)

-Focus on higher order language skills such as professional and artistic language plus gradual increase in challenge of academic discussion and argument

END OF SCHOOL

-students are multilingual, with high level artistic / academic proficiency in one language and professional proficiency in one or more additional languages

-students have the skills they need for professional life (whether teacher training, performance, further training, research or portfolio career)

6.2 Policy advice on the AP-level

In working together with the central administration and other departments in AP, it is essential to consider how the school can develop a process of exchange, both receiving support, but also by sharing the good practice and expertise from RCA.

There are two obvious areas of expertise that AP can draw on related to RCA's years of experience navigating a multilingual school body. First, there is RCA's expertise in intercultural and multilingual systems, based on years of experience of an international student body. Building on the existing know-how and the work of the current project can allow RCA's innovative multilingual approach to be an inspiration within AP, and also contribute to the University College's strategic goal of 'being a driver for innovation together with regional and international partners'.[75]

Second, building on more specifically on knowledge and language skills, it is interesting to consider ways in which the international student body within RCA can help promote multilingualism within AP. For example, there could be support for language exchange with AP students in teacher training or business programmes who are learning Spanish or other languages that would draw on the language skills of RCA students while allowing them to come into contact with local students and improve their Dutch. Such exchanges also contribute to the AP strategic goal of 'building a community of active citizens with social impact.[76]

At the same time, there is some support from AP that is essential in order for RCA to move forward in developing a ground-breaking multilingual programme. These are outlined below divided into 'must-haves' and support that would be 'nice to have'.

> **MUST HAVE – Language support**
> The new student centre must offer multilingual support (or coordinate in collaboration with CVO or language school). This should include, starting from the academic year 2022-23:
> - Basic support in Dutch, French and English for all students.
> - Basic NT2 classes for new regular students (based on Dutch for Dummies)
> - Classes and coaching in academic English (e.g. for students following an EN-language study programme.)

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[75] "De driver voor innovatieve ontwikkeling, samen met haar regionale en internationale partners." https://www.ap.be/ap-dna
[76] "Actieve burgers met maatschappelijke impact, die zich kunnen aanpassen aan een voortdurend veranderende samenleving." https://www.ap.be/ap-dna

MUST HAVE – professional development in language skills and multilingual teaching

All teachers at AP, including those at RCA, need a place where they can go for language support themselves (for example, a teachers' centre in parallel with the new student centre). They need access to training in two key fields:

- language skills for teaching in English and Dutch
- workshops and training around multilingual pedagogy / CLIL methods.

AP has the required expertise to provide this training, but the funding and structure is currently not in place for the amount of professional development required.

MUST HAVE – work on starting competences and orientation of new students

AP should support RCA in establishing guidelines for starting competences, and offer support and orientation to (incoming) students. For example, this could be in collaboration between RCA and the transition working group on testing and remediation. This will ensure that the RCA orientation and guidelines are in line with those of AP, while paying attention to the specific needs of performing arts students. Concretely, AP can support the development of an orientation test or other tools for new RCA students.

NICE TO HAVE

-Continued support for standardising information and communication about language requirements for new students,

-Further collaboration on diversity/well-being of international students.

6.3   Policy advice on the Flemish and Belgian level

In addition to support and collaboration within AP, making the most out of multilingualism will also require collaboration within Flanders, in particular with the schools of arts in Brussels, Ghent, and Leuven. This can be divided into work on conservatoire-level, and policy work on the federal or national level.

6.3.1   Flemish level – arts schools

The key area for collaboration here is admissions policy, orientation tests, and language courses. First, regarding communication and regulations for new students. As explained in section 3.3, at present no performing arts school in Flanders requires new students to provide proof of language level as a condition of entry. If RCA were to change its policy here, therefore, there is a risk that potential applicants would instead apply to another school in Belgium where no language certificate is necessary. Therefore, before making any changes to the policy it is a

good idea to discuss this with the other schools to see if there is a will to develop a Flanders-wide approach to communication and admissions.

Second, regarding tests and language courses, as outlined in the literature, existing generic language tests are not necessarily the best option for assessing the language skills or aptitude of students in the performing arts. Moreover, there is a lack of materials and tailored courses focusing on the language skills needed by music and dance students. To this end, it is interesting to discuss with other conservatoires (and also arts schools in general) if there is interest in collaborating on a Flemish, or even national level, to develop materials or even language courses for teaching English and/or Dutch. In particular, online courses or blended learning – with a mix of online and in person teaching - are an interesting option given the time pressures on performing arts students, and also the context of the pandemic.

6.3.2   Flemish level – policy work

As outlined above in section 3.2 above, regarding the language law, any solution that fits fully with the existing policy is likely involve high level of compromise on the pedagogical and artistic levels. Ultimately, this needs to be addressed on the Flemish level, most likely in collaboration with the other performing schools in Belgium.

A possible argumentation here is that international students are a real bonus for Belgium and Flanders. At the same time, educating them for 3-5 years is a large investment of infrastructure and finances. The current system requires programmes to be essentially monolingual. This means that if students come for an English-language programme, they are not obliged to learn Dutch. This reduces motivation to fully integrate within school and wider community, and perhaps makes it less likely for international students to choose to stay in Belgium or return for work in the future. At the same time, if the school only offers Dutch language programmes, this will significantly reduce the amount of international talent that applies and comes to Belgium.

In terms of advocacy, therefore, the school should work together with other performing arts schools in Belgium with a long-term view to campaigning for a change in policy to allow officially 'multilingual programmes' in performing arts.

6.4 Implementing the vision: Language policy in 2022 and beyond

This section briefly outlines a four step plan to move forward with language policy at RCA. Details of the specific projects mentioned can be found in the appendix.

a) Policy work and decision The first step will be to discuss the information in this report with relevant stakeholders in RCA and AP. A definitive policy / vision should be decided on and announced. Then a strategy should be developed together with the AP/RCA communications teams to publicise the policy within school. Work here may include:

- draft and finalise vision statement and RCA multilingualism policy;
- streamline internal communication of policy to staff + students;
- prepare external communication about language policy, i.e., via website;
- start applying language policy to school-wide context as well as to specific courses and course information.

b) Embed existing pilot projects. In addition to structural change and policy, work should continue on four pilot schemes that were launched during this research project:

- Dutch classes with CVO Vitant;
- Dutch buddies collaboration with AP teacher training programme;
- Teach the teacher – workshops for RCA teachers;
- Taalcafe workshop during introweek.

c) Develop language support and training. In the short- to medium-term, the school should work together with AP and the ADAPT process to provide extra support and training for staff and students, and develop tools to support the policy, including:

- implement language screening and intake sessions for new students;
- develop orientation tools, possibly in collaboration with other schools of arts;
- expand language coaching in school;
- continue research into multilingualism at RCA.

d) Extra projects and student-led initiatives During this project, a number of proposals have been collected for smaller-scale initiatives on multilingualism in school. It is important to remember that although small-scale projects can help promote cohesion and multilingualism in school, none of these steps on its own can replace a proper policy or structural change in collaboration with AP, and on the Flemish level together with other schools and policy-makers.

6.5   Final remarks and vision

AP's five strategic goals for 2021-2025:

1. building a community of active citizens with social impact,
2. reaching maximal learning success for every single student,
3. offering a unique and leading portfolio,
4. being a driver for innovation together with regional and international partners,
5. having the strength and means to realise current and future strategic goals.

Imagine an arts school whose graduates who are known internationally not only for being excellent performers, but for being excellent and versatile communicators. Where language and communication skills are an integral part of training resilient young artists who can access job markets in Belgium, the Netherlands and beyond. Where every graduating student has prepared a website, biography and personal artistic vision in at least one or two languages. Where students develop skills to discuss their own practice and the theory and art of others with confidence. Where students learn how to network with their fellow students, teachers and other artists, and how to present themselves and their work to different audiences with flair, whether on stage, in the classroom or rehearsal room, or when pitching to funding bodies.

Imagine a school where every student has a clear vision of their current language ability, understands what skills they will need to complete their studies successfully, and how to develop these skills with maximal success. Where every student is confident to ask questions, and request extra feedback or clarification to help them become the best artist they can be. A school where teachers have all the support necessary to function in a multilingual context – whether by improving their own language skills, training in multilingual teaching methods, or support for translation and editing lesson materials. Where teachers learn tools to help students talk about language and support meta-awareness of multilingual communication.

Imagine a truly multilingual performing arts school, with a fully integrated language policy, that takes an additive rather than subtractive approach to languages, ensuring that new language and communication skills add value to existing pride and proficiency in one's first language or home culture. A school where everyone gets the training and support they need, regardless of their first language or financial status, any different needs due, for example, to dyslexia or autism, and with respect for their home culture(s) and educational profile. A school that explicitly and equally honours linguistic and intercultural capital from every country and background.

RCA has all of the assets to make this vision a reality, to develop a "unique and leading portfolio" of training that ensures the school is a true "driver for innovation", as outlined in the AP

strategic goals. This report has demonstrated that when it comes to language, the RCA community is blessed with ingenuity and adaptability of staff, and good will of students: whether through administrative staff reaching out to multilingual colleagues to answer questions from potential candidates in a language they don't speak; a teacher who thinks nothing of switching between two or even more languages within the same class or rehearsal; or local students who become informal points of contact in their friendship group, translating letters from the city or going along to translate when their international student friends go to visit an apartment. RCA is home to an incredibly rich variety and diversity of languages and cultures thanks to students who take the leap to come and study here, sometimes many thousands of kilometres away from home. International students – and staff – bring many perspectives to RCA, and this linguistic and cultural diversity offers a fertile space for exchange and personal development for the whole community. This diversity also enriches the local arts world and arts education, especially if students are supported to learn the language and cultural skills they need to work as performers or teachers in Flanders or Belgium if they so choose.

However, in order to make the most of these assets, the school needs to develop a clear policy, with structural support and funding to implement it. Making the most of multilingualism will not be an easy job, and this cannot be done through a few 'quick fixes'. It will take deep change rather than cosmetic changes – commitment, continued efforts to develop and communicate clear policy, financial support for training for staff and students in core language and meta language skills, pedagogy and intercultural awareness. If this potential is fulfilled, however, then thanks to the linguistic and interpersonal pedagogical capital of its staff and teachers combined with the school's position in a superdiverse city in a multilingual country, as a truly international and multilingual school, RCA absolutely has the potential to become a ground-breaking leader within the global landscape of higher education in the arts.