Language Development for English-Hungarian Bilingual Primary Teacher Trainees: What Language Skills Do They Need, Anyway?

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Language teaching in Europe has recently moved towards bilingual education. In parallel with the European trends, bilingual education in the primary sector in Hungary has also become highly popular during the past two decades: at present the Association for Bilingual Schools has 75 primary school members, 65 of which have English as one of their working languages (2016). This trend has created a significant demand for teachers who are qualified to teach subjects in English in the lower primary classes from grade one to six.

In the bilingual classroom content matter is taught through the foreign language instead of simply teaching the language. Thus, the role of the teacher is twofold: they need to teach both the subject matter and the foreign language in an integrated fashion, an approach which is called 'content and language integrated learning'(CLIL). This approach requires specific competences and language skills from the teachers, as outlined by Berteaux and his colleagues (2010): Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), the language of classroom management, the language of teaching and the language of learning activities.

The subjects that are taught in English vary from school to school. What is more, students learn different sets of subjects in English in each school year. The range of subjects taught in English includes music, art, science, physical education, ICT, science and cultural studies.

The training program

The faculty of Primary and Pre-school Teacher Training at Eötvös University (TÓK, ELTE), Budapest offers to its students an English-Hungarian bilingual primary specialization, which prepares trainees to teach at bilingual schools. The first component of the program is

a two-semester English language development course, which aims at developing the language skills a primary teacher needs specifically for working in a class at a bilingual school. This is followed later by their methodology training for bilingual education.

This specialization gives an edge to the trainees over other teachers: they will be in a more advantageous situation than their colleagues who are teachers of either a language or a subject, in some cases both, but lack the integrative aspect in their initial training. Our trainees approach teaching in a foreign language in a more complex way because they receive training about bilingualism and teaching with the CLIL method.

The language development course aims to develop the special language skills necessary for teaching in a bilingual class. The students, who have joined the course with a minimum of B2 level of English, need to improve not only their BICS, their classroom language, the language of teaching and learning activities, but also their CALP. The course comprises mainly the various academic subject areas (CALP) they are going to teach in the future. For example, they will be required to teach science at the same level in English as in Hungarian.

The list of language skills and competences that a bilingual teacher using the CLIL method needs was collected by Bertaux et al. (2010) had a great impact on the design of the course. Bertaux et al. specified five areas of target language competences for a CLIL teacher, some of which were defined by *Cummins* (1979).

The first area of target language competence is basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS). This competence covers the ability of the teacher to use the contemporary social and academic registers, and being able to adjust them to given contexts.

Secondly, a CLIL teacher should be capable of using cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), which means that they can read texts on subject materials and theory, use the terminology related to the specific subject and are capable of conceptualizing and using the target language simultaneously.

The next competence is needed for running lessons and is hence determined as the language of classroom management. This involves, among others, giving instructions; group, time and noise management or managing interactions within the group of students.

The CLIL teacher should also be capable using oral language for teaching purposes by varying their register, voice tone and volume.

Finally, they need to be able to use the language of learning activities, i.e. to explain and present information, clarify understanding. The teacher also needs to use various forms of talk, such as exploratory, critical, meta or presentational (Bertaux et al., 2010).

Syllabus design: aims of the course

When I started teaching this course, my goal was to design a syllabus that fully satisfies the specific language needs of the bilingual primary teacher trainees by fine tuning the current course syllabus in use. During the past three years I have managed to implement a number of modifications.

In the syllabus design the overarching aim was to develop in parallel with the four general language skills (speaking, reading, listening and writing) conscious, highly accurate language usage. The students should also acquire classroom/teaching language and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), i.e. special language for the subjects they are going to teach in English. The following target language CLIL teacher competencies are listed among the goals of the course:

- reading, listening to and interpreting professional and theoretical texts;
- using subject specific terminology and language structures.
- appropriate usage of the language of teaching, i.e. using spoken language as the tool of teaching by changing register of speech, pitch, tone and volume of speech.
- using language for explanation, presenting information, giving instructions, clarify and checking understanding in English.
- engaging in the following modes of speech: discussion, criticism, meta-language and presentation.

In other words, through the main language skills the students develop language areas needed for CLIL teaching, as presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1. Language areas developed through the main language skills

Speaking	Writing	Listening	Reading
Conscious language use	Accurate language use	Classroom English and teacher language	Subject vocabulary

Adapted from Árva, 2016

The course is a topic-based one, building around the subjects that have been collected from various school syllabi during the documents analysis of bilingual primary schools. The course topics are based on these subjects and are presented in *Table 2*. In order to create the bilingual educational learning context for the students, the course is introduced by the overall topic of bilingualism.

Table 2. Course topics

Course topics in semester one	Course topics in semester two
Bilingualism	Science
Music	Music
Stories and storytelling	History
Art	Mathematics
Teacher Language	Sports and games

Adapted from Árva, 2016

The course

The aim of designing the modifications to the existing course was to ensure that the students develop balanced language skills and become aware of their CLIL teacher competences through motivating tasks, while working on topics that are relevant to their future jobs. The level of student motivation in these groups has been fairly high, since this is an optional specialization added to the rest of their English curriculum. Their reasons for attending the specialization are manifold and range from professional interest to widening their professional horizon or increasing their opportunities on the job market by becoming able to work in bilingual education. Several of them have attended bilingual schools themselves, are committed to the English language or simply want to further improve their English language and methodology skills through attending the specialization.

Topics and activities that resemble the ones the trainees are going to work with in their future classrooms are a priority. The language development goals presented in *Table 1* are achieved through acquiring some degree of subject knowledge within the topics. In other words, language development in this course is similar to the CLIL methodology of subject based teaching. By the end of the second semester, students should become aware of the fact that the course itself has been a model for bilingual language teaching. This, of course requires a degree of reflection on the activities done in the lessons.

In the following, I am going to present how the CLIL teacher language competences (Bertaux et al., 2010) are developed in the course.

1) Being able to use social registers:
- developing the four main language skills through speaking, listening comprehension, reading and communicative writing tasks;
- vocabulary building.

2) Being able to adjust social and academic registers according to the demands of a given context:

- pyramid discussion (first in smaller groups, than bigger ones), conversations and descriptions.

3) Being able to read subject material and theoretical text:
- reading texts about the topics of the course.

4) Being able to use subject-specific terminology and syntactic structures:
- topic based vocabulary building, presentation, group discussions, projects, preparing and editing written assignments.

5) Being able to conceptualise while using the target language:
- giving presentations, talks and conducting discussions in small groups.

6) Being able to use the target language in group management, time management, classroom noise management, giving instructions, managing interactions and co-operative work, enhancing communications:
- micro teachings in small groups.

7) Being able to use oral language for teaching through varying registers of speech, cadence, tone and volume:
- story telling, identifying and learning story telling techniques, planning and writing a story, watching professional talks, reading aloud stories.

8) Being able to use the target language to explain, present, give instructions, check understanding, level of perception of difficulty and can use exploratory, cumulative, disputational, meta and critical forms of talk:
- watching vide recorded professional talks, giving presentations or talks, participating in small-group discussions, micro teaching, preparing and presenting quizzes in paper and online formats. (Bertaux et al., 2010; Árva, 2016).

Topics at work

In order to give a more specific picture of topic work, here is an example. One of the most complex topics of the first term is story telling, which is explored through a number of stages.
- ➢ Collecting, analyzing and learning story-telling techniques through the video recorded talk of a writer.
- ➢ Vocabulary building for creating stories (e.g. words for specific styles, presenting character, 'vague language', i.e. how to describe a word that you do not remember, onomatopoeic words).
- ➢ Creating a story about a personal experience: structuring, wording, presenting in the group through the stages of the 'pyramid' method.

> ➤ Applying story writing techniques and planning a story.
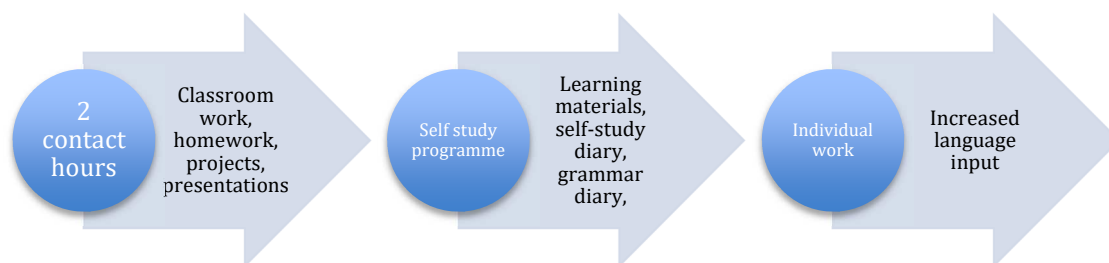> ➤ Reading aloud the story to the group (Árva, 2016).

An efficient way to increase student talking time and also has a beneficial effect on group dynamics by increasing interaction between its members, is the 'pyramid method'. This method is frequently applied in the lessons and means that at first students form groups of four and take turns telling each other about something, for example, their own stories. Then a bigger group listens to the stories which are voted by the smaller groups, and finally the whole class listens to the stories voted by the bigger groups. This way everyone has a chance to speak and share their story at least once.

Other topics require different task types to work on. When dealing with the topics of history and geography, the students need to prepare and present quizzes or a talk accompanied by Power Point or Prezi slides or a poster presentation. The assignment for mathematics is a micro teaching session: students choose a pre-school or primary class one mathematics task to do with their group mates. Recently, online quizzes were added to the list of student assignments.

Self-study to complement the course

Classroom work is complemented by a self-study program, of which the students need to keep a reflective diary. The self-study program comprises listening comprehension work, writing skills development and vocabulary building tasks. The work is carried out individually and independently – only part of the work is supervised by the tutor, who checks the learning diary. The reason for introducing the self-study component was to increase language input, which is extremely limited by having only two contact hours per week.

Figure 1. Self-study programme

| 2 contact hours | Classroom work, homework, projects, presentations | Self study programme | Learning materials, self-study diary, grammar diary, | Individual work | Increased language input |

Work on developing listening comprehension is done within the framework of the self-study programme. Students are given a schedule of various assignments to work independently on. These include mainly listening and writing tasks. The listening tasks are

based on TED (www.ted.com) talks about education and language learning. These tasks are also designed with an eye on the CLIL approach: listening comprehension is developed in parallel with acquiring subject matter knowledge about education, languages and learning. The speakers are academics, teachers or writers of high professional reputation in their respective fields and at the same time they can serve as models of public speakers. The speakers include, for example, Sir Ken Robinson, Sugata Mitra and J.K. Rowling. The listening, writing and reading tasks designed to work on these talks give plenty of opportunities for developing students' language skills.

TED talks also serve the purpose of preparing the students for planning and delivering their own seven-minute talks at the end of the term on a 'Student Ted Day' and use their newly acquired presentation skills in a conscious manner. By having watched and analysed the talks in the self-study tasks they have had the opportunity to acquire a range of presentation skills.

The student ted talks can be about any trivial topic. The task is to apply their newly acquired presentation techniques and produce an effective, enjoyable talk. The emphasis is on speaking 'viva voce' and therefore the use of visual aids or power point slides is limited in this case. As an illustration, here are some of the topics the students have chosen so far: 'The effect of divorce on children', 'A passion for collecting things', 'My favourite recipe', 'Apartheid in South Africa', 'Why I keep on running' or 'Pinterest' and this year about 'Preparing jam', 'Why we should watch Hungarian novels' or 'Solving the problem of a spoilt child in a family'. Each talk is followed by short feedback sessions where the students are able to ask questions about and make short comments on the presentations.

Feedback and future plans

Both the formal and informal student feedback about the course has been rather positive. In the third year of teaching the course, as part of my own self-development project, I managed to increase the proportion of online learning materials, especially in the self-study component. For instance, Ed-ted.com provides a platform for designing online tasks for the talks, students have been using www.quizlet.com in a cooperative way to support each other in learning new vocabulary and they have used mobile devices for creating quizzes (www.kahoot.com).

Edmodo.com has proved to be a learning platform that has been used with success and makes it possible to schedule assignments and manage deadlines more efficiently. Edmodo.com can also serve as a communication platform between the students and the tutor,

and also a space for discussions between the student members of the group.

It is important for the students to familiarize themselves with IT technologies and the application of mobile devices in language education. In other words, I would like to encourage the future teachers to apply IT devices in their future teaching.

Having increased the application of IT devices and online learning tools has been the most significant modification in the third year of teaching the course: I have managed to increase the application of IT devices and online learning tools. My next goal is to fine-tune their usage in the next academic year. An important sign of the acceptance of the course by the students may be the fact that they have volunteered to act as 'mentors' to help the new first-year students to familiarize themselves with the online devices.

References

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