

JUDIT KOVÁCS<sup>1</sup> – ÉVA TRENTINÉ BENKŐ<sup>2</sup>**Training and Practice: Making the Match – Teacher training for CLIL at ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education**

*CLIL module for kindergarten teachers was introduced in 2006 at ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education, Budapest. For primary teacher trainees, a similar programme was launched a year later. While the kindergarten programme included two one-week-long practice periods in kindergarten, this opportunity was not made available for primary trainees. In order to make up for this shortfall, two tutors of the Department (the authors of the present study) developed and implemented a system according to which each primary teacher trainee can observe CLIL lessons as well as participate in post-lesson discussions in CLIL institutions. The article intends to introduce the CLIL training, the partner institutions and their English language programmes as well as share trainees' feedback concerning the benefits they gained from these school visits.*

**1. Introduction and background**

Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education (ELTE TÓK) is one of the very few teacher-training institutions in Hungary and in Europe that offer CLIL education at BA level for future teachers of young learners aged 3–12 (Maljers et al., eds. 2007; Novotna-Hoffmannova, 2007; Kovács, 2009). CLIL is an acronym for Content and Language Integrated Learning that refers to any educational situation in which an additional language is used for the teaching of subject content with the objective of promoting simultaneous learning of content and the target language (Marsh-Langé eds. 2000; Eurydice, 2006; Coyle et al., 2010). In 2006 a CLIL specialisation was introduced for kindergarten teacher trainees, and a year later a similar programme was launched for primary student teachers<sup>3</sup>. While the pre-school programme included two one-week-long practice periods in a special CLIL kindergarten, this opportunity was not made available for primary trainees. In order to make up for this shortfall and assist trainees' practical professional development, two tutors of the Department of Foreign Languages (the authors of the present study) decided to organise extra-curricular events to offer the students

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<sup>3</sup> The terms *student teacher* and *(teacher) trainee* are used interchangeably

some CLIL teaching practice experiences. They developed and implemented a system according to which each primary teacher trainee can observe CLIL lessons as well as participate in post-lesson discussions with experienced practitioners in carefully selected CLIL institutions. The present study intends to introduce the CLIL teacher training, the partner institutions and their English language programmes, and finally share trainees' feedback concerning the benefits of the school visits.

## **2. CLIL teacher education at ELTE TÓK**

ELTE TÓK offers pre-service CLIL teacher training programmes for future primary and pre-school teachers in the target language (English). Kindergarten teacher trainees can apply for a fully developed CLIL specialisation both as full-time and part-time students. Primary trainees – most often ones specialised in English as a foreign language – can also opt for a CLIL module including a wide range of CLIL and methodology related subjects. The aim of the CLIL programmes is to prepare student teachers to learn how to conduct playful, meaningful and holistic lessons or sessions through English in the subject or development areas of Science, Visual Art, Music, Children's Literature and Physical Education. A pre-requisite for acceptance to the CLIL specialisation or module is to demonstrate an appropriate level of English so the applicants should take an entrance exam. The course starts with a preparatory target language development phase focussing on integrated skills development and pronunciation practice. Then the students participate in a professional foundation course called "The theory and practice of bilingual education"<sup>4</sup> (for its core material see Kovács-Trentinné, 2014) and after that they take further courses in methodology-based studies as it is shown in Table 1.

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<sup>4</sup> The term 'bilingual' is often used in Hungary as a synonym of CLIL.

<b>Subjects of the CLIL specialisation for kindergarten trainees in EFL<sup>5</sup></b>
English Language Preparation for Bilingual Education in Pre-school (1, 2)
Phonetics and Pronunciation Development
Theory and Practice of Bilingual Education
English Children's Literature (1, 2)
Methodology of Bilingual Pre-school Sessions: Visual Education
Methodology of Bilingual Pre-school Sessions: Physical Education
Methodology of Bilingual Pre-school Sessions: Science
Methodology of Bilingual Pre-school Sessions: Music Education
<b>Individual Practice in Pre-school (1, 2)<sup>6</sup></b>

**Table 1: The subjects of the CLIL specialisation**

The most significant difference<sup>7</sup> between the CLIL programmes offered for kindergarten and teacher trainees is in the provision of school-based external teaching practice. While the kindergarten specialisation includes practice in bilingual pre-schools, the CLIL module for primary trainees does not include any specialised CLIL teaching practice. Thus the students following different training programmes might have immensely divergent teaching and learning experiences in this field. While full-time pre-school CLIL trainees have two organised courses of one-week individual practice in one of the faculty's partner kindergartens supported by native speaker mentor teachers, their peers in the primary school programme do not have the opportunity to experience CLIL in real life situations<sup>8</sup>.

### **3. CLIL teaching practice at external institutions**

In the pre-school specialisation students can choose from three partner kindergartens that are all situated in Budapest. Daisy Kindergarten, launched as one of the first English-Hungarian bilingual kindergartens in Hungary by Szoloto<sup>9</sup> Foundation, is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> district. Pitypang

<sup>5</sup> EFL = English as a Foreign Language

<sup>6</sup> Teaching practice: 2 × 1 week in an English-Hungarian bilingual kindergarten. In year 1: observation and reflection and in year 3: teaching and reflection

<sup>7</sup> There is another difference in the provision of English children's literature studies

<sup>8</sup> Video recordings and micro-teaching sessions were used to provide some experiences

<sup>9</sup> Szoloto Bilingual Educational Non-Profit Ltd. is a K-8 education company operating a Hungarian Ministry of Human Resources accredited bilingual education programme

Kindergarten, the European Language Label award winning BGAC's<sup>10</sup> pre-school programme, is situated in the 13<sup>th</sup> district while Maria Montessori English-Hungarian Bilingual Crèche, Nursery and Kindergarten can be found in the 21<sup>st</sup> district. The different programmes of the kindergartens are introduced in more depth by their principals and teachers (Bozzayné, 2014; Horváth-Erdélyi, 2014; Hierholcz-Molnár, 2014; Noé, 2014) in a conference publication (Márkus-Trentinné eds. 2014). The first two practice kindergartens provide bilingual and bicultural co-teaching with native speakers of English paired with Hungarian kindergarten teachers, while the Montessori kindergarten offers the integration of special Montessori methods and tools with bilingual instruction.

While students with pre-school orientation have two external practice weeks planned in their specialisation, primary teacher trainees selecting the CLIL module have no CLIL teaching practice at all in their programme. Therefore, the Foreign Languages Department at ELTE TÓK was seeking opportunities to provide some kind of external practice for English language trainees at schools where CLIL is a priority, and where there is openness to participate in teacher training. Three institutions were selected as ones meeting the requirements: Boys and Girls Activity Center (BGAC, Budapest), Angolpalánta Learning Centre (Fótújfalu), and Szabó Magda Hungarian-English Primary School (Budapest). All of them are private foundations where parents pay for the tuition.

BGAC which has set up an extended kindergarten network with 12 groups of children, in 3 different sites, employs only native speaker teachers. They might come from different English speaking countries representing various accents. Being exposed to the language bath, young children could easily adapt to the challenge. The programme has worked so well that parents wished this form of education to be continued, and thus were happy when the foundation opened a school-section four years ago: a specific afternoon programme from 12.30 till 5 p.m. each day. They adapted a special US programme which had not been launched outside America before, and made BGAC the only licence-holder in Europe. Children attend a regular only-Hungarian primary school in the morning. English starts at lunchtime. From then only native English speaker teachers are with the children according to a well-planned system. Each afternoon is devoted to a specific curricular field, including art and craft, children's literature, sports, science, or gardening. Language is used for content purposes through tasks and activities.

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<sup>10</sup> BGAC = Boys and Girls Activity Center of Hungary. Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) is a special US programme. Boys and Girls Activity Center of Hungary (BGAC) is the first in Europe to receive the rights of starting a programme in cooperation with BGCA.

Angolpalánta Foundation has been running kindergarten programmes for 6 years in a friendly environment, in a small town north of Budapest. Children are hosted in a spacious building with a well-equipped garden for outdoor activities. English is combined with Montessori pedagogy. Its success is based on the shared values both pedagogical trends represent: a high level of learner autonomy, task-based character and creativity. They answered the parental demand to continue the programme in a different way: they organised an English-Montessori daytime learning circle for children aged 6–9. The children are private pupils at different primary schools. This arrangement allows them to attend the learning centre every day and develop in each school-subject according to their own pace while enjoying the double benefits of the CLIL (English) and the Montessori programmes.

The third venue is Szabó Magda Hungarian-English Primary School, in the 2nd district of Budapest. This school has been running CLIL programmes for 9 years in an elegant residential section of Buda. The building is nice and cosy, and reflects the two main principles of the school: it is child-centred, and it is English. There is only one class on each year which makes it possible for the teachers to create a close relationship with the students. There is no teachers' staffroom either, teachers are available during the entire schoolday. In the lower primary P. E., Art and Craft and Science are taught through English, while the CLIL curriculum of the upper classes includes History, Geography, Biology and Civilization. The students' performance is over-average in various fields, not exclusively in English. They are among winners of national competitions in Hungarian literature as well as in other areas.

#### **4. Co-operation between ELTE TÓK and the selected CLIL schools**

CLIL primary student teachers visit two of the above institutions each year. The schools follow the routine of welcoming students for an introductory talk. Then some CLIL lessons are observed. A final session is devoted to student teachers' feedback which provides opportunities to exchange ideas with the experienced CLIL professionals. Trainees participate in these school visits with pleasure and highly appreciate them. This gave us (the authors of the present study) the idea to focus on students' feedback in a more purposeful way and share their experiences. The following opinions come from a group of ELTE TÓK students (primary teacher trainees) who attended an Open Day at Szabó Magda Bilingual School. Topics trainees mentioned and commented on were the following:

- (1) School atmosphere
- (2) Teachers
- (3) Pupils
- (4) How Open Day was organised
- (5) Things I have learnt

- (1) They described school atmosphere as calm, stress-free and hospitable. They highlighted the openness of the school, e.g.: open to using IT and hosting guests. The small class-sizes provide more space for pupils' needs, and the school building, and surroundings are nice, child-centred, and the decorations reflect CLIL.
- (2) Teacher trainees found the CLIL teachers highly committed and inspiring. They mentioned that tasks were different from the usual 'paper and pen' ones, instead, they saw challenging, motivating, game-like and hands-on activities. There is no error correction. Not the language but skills are in focus. Teachers give much independence to learners. The trainees also appreciated the opportunity to be able to discuss their experiences, ask questions and talk to experienced CLIL teachers after the lessons.
- (3) Teacher trainees' experiences included: pupils at school are risk-takers, fluent speakers of English, they have no inhibitions. They speak because they have something to say, they speak their minds, and, most importantly: they seemingly enjoy being at school. The student teachers were absolutely delighted to see the children's level of English. They found that even very young learners were able and happy to communicate with them using the foreign language. They concluded that CLIL was a beneficial way of language acquisition.
- (4) Student teachers mentioned that the CLIL lessons they saw were highly professional. The school was well-organised for the Open Day: guests got a note pad and a pen at the entrance. Students were welcome to coffee and lunch. They also highlighted that the round-table discussion at the end of the Open Day was organized not only with Szabó Magda School teachers but some pupils were also invited to share their experiences and views on CLIL.
- (5) Student teachers reported that they appreciated the opportunity to see how CLIL works in real classroom situations. They got the experience of what CLIL can offer, first of all the joy of learning in a special teacher-student relationship which is different from the one they had experienced in regular-programme schools. They also mentioned how well the use of digital devices could fit in the lessons, for example: in one of the lessons

students were asked to send their answers to the teacher in the form of e-mail, or had to answer the quiz questions on their tablets. They also commented on the high professional level of giving instructions, and using subject-matter terminology as well as on the meaningful and challenging tasks.

## 5. Conclusion

According to the tutors' experiences and on the basis of the trainees' opinions the CLIL teaching experience has proved to be definitely positive, and its introduction in the CLIL training was necessary. Theoretical knowledge on CLIL itself does not assist the development of CLIL teaching skills. Classroom experience is essential; its effect can be replaced neither by microteaching nor by video recordings. CLIL teacher training owes a lot to the schools that are willing to undertake the hardship of hosting trainees, and the university department should seek practical ways of teacher training through organising extra curricular activities for trainees unless the CLIL school-based teaching practice is included in the primary training programme.

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