



Bilingual Programmes in Primary Schools

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Abstract

Many studies have shown that most pupils attending bilingual programmes develop much higher levels of foreign language proficiency than pupils in regular foreign language lessons. In this paper, we will first illustrate similarities and differences between teaching strategies used in regular English lessons and in bilingual programmes. Then we will summarize the results of studies examining questions that teachers, parents and school administrators are often concerned about. These questions include the following: Do pupils in bilingual programmes show deficits in the development of their native language or in the development of subject knowledge? Are bilingual programmes also suitable for children from migrant backgrounds and for children who are at risk of poor academic achievement? Finally, we will discuss how children who attended a bilingual programme in primary school can be supported in secondary school.

Keywords: bilingual education, primary school, L1 acquisition, L2/foreign language acquisition, subject content

1. Bilingual primary school programmes in Germany

The number of schools adopting a bilingual teaching approach is steadily increasing in Germany. In these schools, content subjects such as maths, science, music, physical education or art are taught in a foreign language (FL). In Germany, bilingual programmes are currently offered by more than 2% of all primary schools (fmks, 2014), and their number is steadily increasing. For example, bilingual programmes starting from grade 1 onwards have been introduced at 27 state primary schools located in the federal state of Bavaria since 2015 (Stiftung Bildungspakt Bayern, n.y.). The general aim of such bilingual programmes is to foster both FL

learning and content learning (including a high level of intercultural competence), without negatively affecting pupils' first language (L1) skills or their subject knowledge (e.g. Coyle et al., 2010; Frisch, 2021; Steinlen, 2021).

1.1 Different CLIL programmes

Throughout Europe, the umbrella term *Content and Language Integrated Learning* or CLIL is nowadays used to refer to “all types of provision in which a second language (a foreign, regional or minority language and/or another official state language) is used to teach certain subjects in the curriculum other than the language lessons themselves” (Eurydice, 2006, p. 8). Although subsumed under the term “CLIL”, bilingual programmes differ greatly in terms of their intensity, i.e. the amount of time students are taught content through the medium of a FL, as Figure 1 indicates:

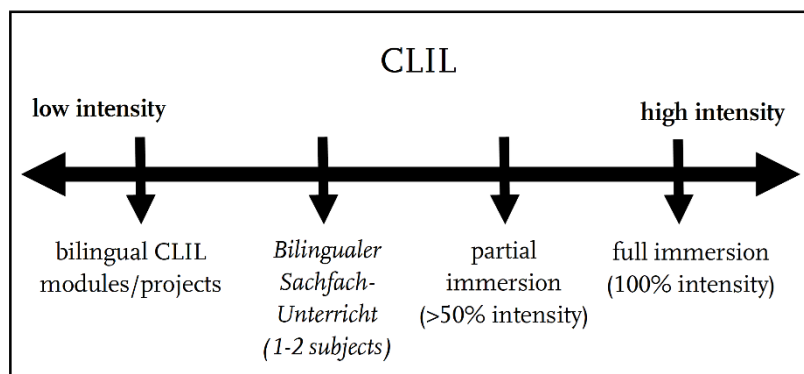


Figure 1: Continuum of FL intensity in bilingual programmes (adapted from Kersten, 2019, p. 40).

Low-intensity bilingual programmes include individual bilingual modules or projects, in which, for example, the topic ‘water’ is taught in the FL over a limited period of time, usually lasting for only a few days or weeks. In Germany, the term “Bilingualer Sachfachunterricht” usually refers to secondary school programmes in which one to two subjects (for example, history or geography) are taught in the FL for a period of one or more years. High-intensity bilingual programmes are represented by

immersion (IM) programmes, which usually last over a period of several years. In partial IM programmes, at least 50% of the curriculum is taught in the FL, and in full (or total) IM programmes, 100% of the curriculum is taught in the FL. The latter ones may turn into partial IM programmes in later years in order to provide additional teaching in the pupils' L1 (e.g. Genesee, 1987). In Germany, total IM programmes are not possible because, according to the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK, 2013), the school subject German must be taught in German. This means that in primary schools in Germany a maximum of 70–80% of the teaching time can be conducted in the target language, which corresponds to the amount of time the FL is used in partial IM programmes (e.g. Steinlen, 2021).

1.2 Four conditions for successful bilingual programmes

In bilingual primary schools, four conditions are met that have been found to be crucial for greater success in FL learning, namely 1) an early start, 2) continuous and intensive exposure to the FL, 3) frequent use of the FL in diverse and motivating contexts, and 4) authentic and enriched FL input provided by teachers with at least almost native-like skills in the FL (e.g. Piske, 2013; Steinlen, 2021).

As far as an early start is concerned, it has repeatedly been assumed that FL learning is more successful when children come into contact with the FL early in life, and consequently, when FL programmes also begin as early as possible. While this is true in many cases, more recent research has not always provided evidence for such a clear link between FL learning and an early starting age (see Piske, 2017 for a review). Pfenninger (2021), for example, compared primary schoolers from Switzerland who attended CLIL programmes differing in terms of intensity and found that the more intensive the programme, the better the FL competences, even when the groups started the CLIL programme at the same early age (see also Steinlen, 2021 and section 4.1 below). In this case, the intensity of the FL programme is more important than age.

Another factor that is essential for successful FL learning is continuous exposure to the FL (e.g. Piske, 2007). Consequently, primary schools

should offer bilingual programmes without any interruption, and in ideal cases, children should be given the chance to attend a bilingual programme before primary school starts and to continue attending a bilingual programme from the beginning until the end of secondary school (Kersten & Rohde, 2013; see section 5 below).

Moreover, the quality of FL input also plays a crucial role. FL learners are more likely to learn to speak a FL well if they receive authentic and enriched input provided by teachers with at least almost native-like skills in the FL. For example, teachers with almost native-like skills use more abstract or superordinate words such as ‘pet’ or ‘furniture’ (instead of ‘dog’ or ‘chair’) as well as synonyms, antonyms or paraphrases. The pupils should also be exposed to different sentence structures, and the teacher should, therefore, not limit her/his input to main clauses (e.g. short SVO sentences or commands), but s/he should also use subordinate clauses (e.g. relative clauses) or passive constructions. Children can only learn the whole spectrum of linguistic structures of a language (e.g. word order, differentiation of subjects and objects, grammatical congruence of subject and verb, etc.) if these structures are represented in the FL input (e.g. Piske, 2013). If necessary, the teacher should also stress key elements of her/his utterances, and s/he should use a clear articulation, a slower speech rate for certain aspects of the message, varying intonation contours and, most importantly, pauses to help the children segment the incoming stream of sound and to support their recognition of key elements (e.g. Kersten, 2021, p. 46).

Finally, pupils in CLIL programmes should have the opportunity to frequently use, i.e. actively speak and write, the FL in diverse and motivating contexts, ideally in different school subjects, which enables them to monitor their speech production, test their hypotheses about and notice gaps in their interlanguage. Scaffolding (see section 2.3 below and the introduction to this volume) is a helpful way to encourage learners to use the FL as often as possible (e.g. Kersten, 2021, p. 47).

1.3 CLIL lessons – the beginning

Starting school is a new experience for every child, regardless of whether they have already come into contact with their first FL in bilingual pre-schools or not. Teacher observations on first graders in bilingual classes in Germany confirm the experiences from Canadian immersion projects: It is amazing how little the children are worried by the new language. Any difficulties that the first graders in bilingual classes may have are rather due to school-specific requirements such as sitting still, tidying up, doing homework, etc. than to the FL itself (Piske & Burmeister, 2008, p. 133).

During the first days of school, the children are introduced to everyday school life and to the new language of instruction, using motivational activities that are well known from the regular early FL classroom: Rhymes, songs, games and many total physical response activities. Additionally, fixed routines in the classroom (see Meyer in this volume), such as a daily morning circle with recurring greeting rituals, form a helpful framework that gives structure to the school day and – as far as the FL is concerned – are easy to recognize for the pupils. In order for the lessons to function, the children must also quickly build up (receptive) basic classroom vocabulary. From the very beginning, vocabulary is learnt incidentally in authentic situations that make sense to the children (Piske & Burmeister, 2008, p. 133).

Especially during the first weeks of school, the greatest challenge for CLIL teachers is to present subject content in a FL, and they should use facial expressions and gestures, body language, pictures, photographs and objects in such a vivid way that the child can establish a relationship between language and action (i.e. the teachers should contextualize the language they use). In this respect, acting talent on the part of the teacher is of great benefit. The presentation of or interaction about subject content must be self-explanatory so that it should be possible to understand the content delivered even if words are not used at all (Piske & Burmeister, 2008, p. 134).

During the first half of the school year, conversations in the classroom will indeed most often be bilingual because teachers will try to use the FL

exclusively, whereas the children will answer in their first language because of their limited skills in the FL. The teacher will try to provide ample (but not artificially simplified) input by commenting in English on everything s/he is doing. Experience shows that the pupils produce their first short sentences in English after a few months, and many of their English sentences contain German words or structures (i.e. code-mixing), as in *He is angry denn the dog are falling down mit the glass*. In addition, the pupils' utterances show typical developmental errors such as overgeneralization errors (e.g. *And the dog waked up*). During the first years of school, the teacher usually corrects such errors only indirectly by using correct forms in repetitions of children's utterances (Piske & Burmeister, 2008, p. 135).

Although simultaneous literacy instruction in English and German is possible and efficient, pupils enrolled in German-English bilingual programmes often learn to read and write in German first. However, English writing is present from the first day of school, for instance on worksheets, murals or on the blackboard. Observations have shown that some children in grade 1 do not seem to take any notice of the English words at all during the first half of the school year, whereas others copy words from the board or ask their teachers to read words out to them. From the second half of grade 1 onwards, the process of learning to read in English begins, for example, by asking the children to draw lines from English words to matching pictures on worksheets or to copy words from the blackboard into their notebooks (Piske & Burmeister, 2008, p. 135).

Teachers generally consider reading storybooks to children to be a very effective method for promoting literacy skills. The children can also borrow English reading material from the class library. Many children already make use of this offer in 1st grade. The selection of books either results from the respective subject matter or complements the school activities for (seasonal) festivities. Since there is not enough time for extra activities in the subject lessons, reading often takes place in the regular English-as-subject lessons that may supplement bilingual programmes. Such lessons may also be used to focus on specific areas of English grammar or spelling. When using a picture book about autumn, the spelling of *leaf* - *leaves*, for example, can be discussed. The teacher can also

address the irregular plural formation of *goose - geese* or *sheep - sheep* by reading a book about farming. Here attention could, for example, also be drawn to the differences between the initial sounds of *chicken* and *sheep* (Piske & Burmeister, 2008, p. 136).

2. How do bilingual programmes differ from regular foreign language programmes?

In the following, three points will be addressed in order to differentiate CLIL programmes from regular FL programmes, i.e. the curricula adhered to, the functions topics and target language fulfil during the lessons, and tasks used for cognitive activation.

2.1 Subjects and curricula

The most obvious distinction relates to the subjects and the curriculum: In regular FL lessons, the focus is on fostering FL skills which are taught with the help of subject matter. In such a context, the teachers follow the curriculum for the FL (e.g. LehrplanPLUS Grundschule for English-as-a-subject, Bayerisches Staatsministerium, 2014). In CLIL programmes, subject matter is taught through the medium of a foreign language, and the curricula for the respective subjects (e.g. mathematics, art, science, music, PE) constitute the basis for these CLIL lessons (e.g. LehrplanPLUS Grundschule, Bayerisches Staatsministerium, 2014). Only a few federal states in Germany have published more detailed guidelines for bilingual programmes in primary schools which supplement the FL curricula, i.e. Bavaria (Bayerisches Staatsministerium, 2020a, b), Rhineland-Palatinate (Ministerium für Bildung Rheinland-Pfalz, 2018), Saarland (Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur des Saarlandes, 2019), and Schleswig-Holstein (Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur des Landes Schleswig-Holstein, 2021).

2.2 Function of topics

In bilingual and regular FL programmes, similar topics may be introduced to the pupils, for instance, units on animals, on the human body, or cultural topics. The crucial difference between the programmes is due to the different objectives and thus the different functions of

language and subject matter in bilingual and regular FL programmes: For example, in regular FL teaching, the topic ‘animals’ may be chosen because it is a motivating topic reflecting primary school children’s interests. In addition, this topic may be suitable because it will be addressed in the next unit of the textbook anyway, or it may tie in nicely with the fact that the same topic is also addressed in the subject science (which, in regular programmes, is taught in the majority language, in our case German). The main reason for the choice of this topic, however, is that it provides linguistic input, which is used to support children’s listening, speaking, reading and possibly also their writing skills in the FL. The topic thus functions as a ‘vehicle’ for targeted FL practice.

In contrast, the subject ‘animals’ may be chosen in the CLIL classroom because it is one of the topics included in the curriculum for the subject ‘science’. In other words, this topic is part of the curriculum of a non-linguistic subject, and the pupils’ commitment to the content, which is taught through the medium of a foreign language, is authentic. In this case, then, the FL acts as a vehicle to transport subject matter, and the topic determines the choice of linguistic material (Burmeister, 2006, p. 201f).

2.3 Cognitive activation

Cognitive activation can be achieved in cognitively stimulating learning environments in which prior knowledge is activated, challenging tasks are used, and content-related discourse is practised (e.g. Kersten, 2021). In regular FL lessons, cognitively stimulating tasks are employed to foster the acquisition of different FL competences such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, mediating, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. In CLIL lessons, on the other hand, challenging tasks have two main aims, namely the explicit acquisition of subject-specific competences and the implicit acquisition of the FL. Thus, in a CLIL context, the cognitive challenges faced by the pupils are even higher than those faced in regular FL lessons because comprehension and appropriate use of subject-specific vocabulary and structures are essential for understanding and learning subject matter (Bayerisches Staatsministerium, 2020a, p. 11).

Of course, the pupils' learning process has to be supported when they communicate orally and in writing about rather different topics in the FL. Scaffolding, i.e. temporary contextual support, allows FL learners to comprehend the input or to construct their own output at a level somewhat beyond what they could do on their own. Nonverbal scaffolding, which is particularly successful when there is a clear and unambiguous connection between language and action, relates to the teacher supporting the pupils in understanding what has been said by using facial expressions, gestures, body language and pantomime or by employing films, images and realia (Bayerisches Staatsministerium, 2020a, p. 116). Verbal scaffolding includes the consistent and continuous use of the FL and is used when the teacher notices that the pupils did not understand what was said. S/he does not rush to switch to German then, but tries to repeat what was said, to paraphrase or to use synonyms. Verbal scaffolding may also be output-related, for example, when the teacher offers key vocabulary, sentence starters or pre-formulated sentence chunks, either verbally or on the blackboard, to help pupils create their own messages in the FL. Finally, content scaffolding supports learners to understand content concepts. This may include the activation of previous knowledge, different activities involving hands-on materials or manipulatives, or a review of key vocabulary and key content concepts during lessons, keeping in mind that CLIL learners need more time and opportunities to practice and revise content (e.g. Massler & Ioannou-Georgiou, 2010, pp. 62-64).

3. Learning goals of CLIL lessons

The learning goals of CLIL lessons are often characterized by referring to Bloom's (1956) revised taxonomy of thinking skills (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). The six levels (see Figure 2) build on each other and are arranged from lower-order thinking skills (LOTS, i.e. remembering, understanding and applying) to higher-order thinking skills (HOTS, i.e. analyzing, evaluating and creating). According to previous research, there is a tendency for CLIL teachers to focus on LOTS instead of HOTS, which can hinder the development of demanding cognitive tasks and creative learning processes (e.g. Campillo-Ferrer et al., 2020).

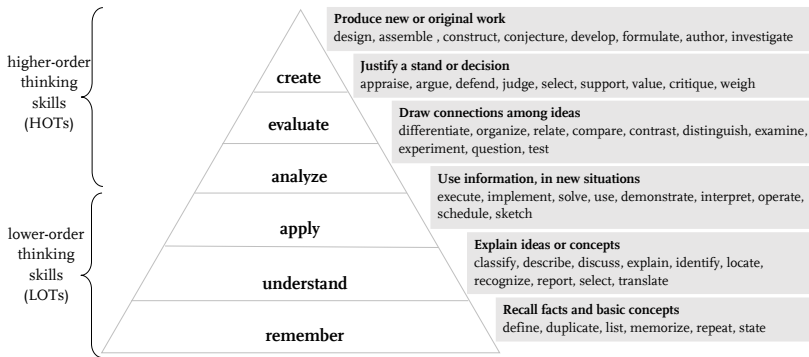


Figure 2: Bloom's taxonomy (adapted from Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001)

This raises the question as to how HOTs can be fostered in CLIL lessons. In this context, it is, first of all, very important that language and content are not separable. Each subject comprises concepts (i.e. the content of the lessons, subject content), language (e.g. technical terms but also structures such as nominalisations) and procedures (i.e. subject-specific skills, e.g. describing, interpreting, comparing). In an example taken from Ball (2016, see Figure 3), the objective of a CLIL lesson for 12 year-old pupils is to learn about the basic features of the planets in the solar system and eventually (as the principal scientific objective) to differentiate amongst the planets with regard to their relative sizes, distance from the sun and inherent features.

In this lesson, you will *differentiate between the planets in the solar system by interpreting, transcribing and producing descriptions using adjectives, comparative and superlative forms to express relative distances.*

Conceptual focus – content you will learn

Procedural focus – skills you will practise

Linguistic focus – language you will need

Figure 3: Objectives of a CLIL lesson (adapted from Ball, 2016)

According to Ball (2016), the objectives are appropriate for the cognitive age of the pupils in terms of their conceptual weight, and they are based on the curriculum for the subject science. These objectives are also a

useful summary of what CLIL attempts to do because the activity teaches *conceptual content* (“differentiate between the planets in the solar system”) by means of *procedural choices* (“by interpreting, transcribing and producing descriptions”) and by using *specific language derived from the discourse context* (“using adjectives, comparative and superlative forms to express relative distances”). CLIL teachers may use these three types of learning dimensions as planning tools for their lessons.

4. How effective are bilingual programmes?

Parents, teachers and school administrators are usually concerned about the following four questions: A) How do bilingual pupils’ foreign language skills develop in the long run?, B) Do bilingual pupils show deficits in the development of their native language?, C) Do bilingual pupils show deficits in the development of subject knowledge?, and D) Are bilingual programmes suitable for all groups of children, including those who are at risk of poor academic achievement? The following sections will attempt to answer these questions.

4.1 Foreign language proficiency

As regards the FL proficiency levels reached by children in FL programmes of different intensity, research has shown that bilingual pupils usually develop much higher levels of FL proficiency than pupils do in regular FL lessons (e.g. Wesche, 2002; Steinlen, 2021). However, it should be noted that the FL proficiency level pupils reach depends on the intensity of the FL programme, as illustrated in Table 1, where the abbreviation EFL refers to regular English-as-subject programmes, Bili-20, Bili-50 and Bili-70 programmes provide 20%, 50% and 70% of the teaching time in the foreign language English, respectively. The figures in grey indicate an assumed level of FL competence because data are either unpublished or not available.

	EFL	Bili-20	Bili-50	Bili-70
Reading	A1	A1/A2	A2/B1	B1
Writing	A1	A1	A2	A2 (B1)
Listening	A1	A1/A2	A2/B1 (unpubl.)	B1 (unpubl.)
Speaking	A1	A1/A2 (no data)	A2/B1 (unpubl.)	B1 (unpubl.)

Table 1: English proficiency levels at the end of grade 4 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2018)

According to the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK, 2013), pupils should attain the FL level A1 in all four skills at the end of primary school when attending regular English-as-subject lessons (EFL). As studies that have examined English proficiency levels at the end of grade 4 indicate, most children indeed appear to reach this level (e.g. BIG-Kreis 2015; Steinlen, 2021), provided that the teachers hold relevant qualifications for their subject, i.e. that they were trained to teach English at the primary school level.

Research has also shown that in CLIL programmes with lower FL intensity (e.g. Bili-20 programmes), children may obtain level A1/A2 for reading (Böttger & Müller, 2020; Steinlen, 2021), A1 for writing (Steinlen, 2021) and A1/A2 for listening (Böttger & Müller, 2020). No data are available regarding the proficiency level for speaking, but we assume that 4th graders may also obtain A1/A2 in Bili-20 programmes.

The FL proficiency levels reached by pupils in more intensive (i.e. immersion) contexts are higher: In Bili-50 programmes, for example, the levels A2/B1 may be reached for reading (e.g. Möller et al., 2017; Steinlen, 2021) and A2 for writing (e.g. Steinlen, 2021). Data we collected for listening and speaking have not been published yet but indicate A2/B1 and A2, respectively (Steinlen & Piske, i.prep. a). The FL levels reached in Bili-70 programmes are even higher: 4th graders may obtain B1 for

reading and A2 for writing (Steinlen, 2021), and B1 and A2/B1 are expected for listening and speaking (Steinlen & Piske, i.prep. a). In general, there is only a difference of about 1.5 years between Bili-50 and of 1 year between Bili-70 and monolingual English pupils with regard to English reading comprehension and fluency skills (e.g. Gebauer et al., 2013; Steinlen, 2021; Zaunbauer et al., 2012).

4.2 German skills

One important aim of CLIL programmes is “additive bilingualism”, i.e. that the acquisition of the FL does not negatively affect the development of the pupils’ L1 (e.g. Piske, 2015), and indeed, age-appropriate results in standardized L1 German reading and writing tests have been reported for different CLIL programmes (e.g. Böttger & Müller, 2020; Gebauer et al. 2012, 2013; Möller et al., 2017; Steinlen, 2021).

The available evidence suggests that deficits may initially occur in very intensive CLIL programmes, particularly regarding pupils’ command of morpho-syntax, but these deficits seem to balance out after one or two years (e.g. Genesee, 1987, but see Yadollahi et al., 2020; Zaunbauer & Möller, 2007). Whereas L1 literacy skills appear to develop age-appropriately in all types of bilingual contexts, such evidence is still not available for oral skills.

4.3 Subject-related skills

In primary schools in Germany, effects of bilingual teaching on the development of subject competences have so far only been examined for mathematics and science, but not for art, music or PE. The results of studies employing standardized math tests indicate that pupils in CLIL primary school programmes scored equally well as (or even better than) their peers in regular programmes, despite the fact that the language used in these tests (German) did not correspond to the language of instruction (English, e.g. Böttger & Müller, 2020; Zaunbauer & Möller, 2007, 2010). Similar results have been reported for science (see also Frisch, 2021; Kuska et al., 2010; Möller et al., 2017). Frisch (2021) and Möller et al. (2017) also tested CLIL pupils’ FL competence in science at the end of grade 4 with the English version of the TIMSS (Trends in International

Mathematics and Science Study), i.e. the language of instruction corresponded to the language of the test. Not surprisingly, the CLIL pupils performed lower than native English pupils in English-speaking countries (Möller et al., 2017). In addition, the pupils obtained lower scores in the English TIMSS than in the German one, probably because the TIMSS tasks, which require reading and writing skills, largely dispense with contextualizations and visualizations, which are important in CLIL lessons (Frisch, 2021, p. 45). However, as regards the German version of the TIMSS, CLIL pupils outperformed their peers in the regular programmes.

In sum, findings obtained in Germany so far indicate that CLIL pupils are well able to acquire subject knowledge in a FL, and that they are also able to transfer and express knowledge acquired in the FL into their native language.

4.4 “At-risk” pupils

Educators, policy-makers, and parents are often concerned about the suitability and effectiveness of bilingual programmes for pupils who are at risk for low academic performance, for instance, those with a migration background who often speak languages other than German at home, students with reading/writing problems, attention problems, poor L1 ability, or from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. It is often believed that such pupils are likely to struggle even more in a bilingual programme in which they are taught through two languages, than they would in a monolingual programme in which they are taught in their L1 (e.g. Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2021).

The results of a small but growing body of studies indicates that pupils with a minority language background may perform equally well as comparable majority language pupils in bilingual programmes, and this applies to their FL proficiency as well as to their German literacy skills (see e.g. Steinlen, 2021). Similarly, disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds or attention problems may not necessarily jeopardize pupils age-appropriate development in bilingual programmes, and pupils with low levels of intellectual academic ability or with other special education

needs may fare equally well as comparable pupils in monolingual programmes, as long as they are adequately supported inside and outside the classroom according to their needs (e.g. Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2021, see also Steinlen & Piske i.prep. b).

5. Pupils from bilingual primary school programmes in secondary schools

It is well known that bilingual education is most effective if children who are enrolled in a bilingual programme in primary school continue to attend a bilingual programme from grade 5 of secondary school onwards (e.g. Kersten & Rohde, 2013). However, in Germany bilingual programmes starting in grade 5 are still scarce in state secondary schools. In Bavaria, for example, there are more than 250 secondary schools offering bilingual programmes (Bayern Bilingual, n.y.), but usually they start only in grade 7 or at the end of grade 6. This means that the majority of the pupils who attend primary school CLIL programmes in Bavaria and the other German federal states will receive regular English-as-subject lessons from grade 5 onwards.

Steinlen et al., (in press) followed 5th graders in secondary schools who had previously attended one of 21 CLIL primary schools in the federal state of Bavaria. The results of the survey suggest that these pupils have very positive attitudes towards the English language in general, and to CLIL lessons at primary school and the regular English lessons at secondary school in particular. Their English teachers in secondary school assessed their linguistic competences (i.e. speaking, listening, vocabulary and pronunciation) to be superior to pupils in their classes who had previously attended regular English lessons in primary school, although this did not apply to grammar and writing.

The English teachers were also asked to identify practices to adequately support former pupils from bilingual primary school classrooms in regular English-as-subject lessons in secondary school. Many teachers used differentiation techniques, e.g. additional materials and tasks. Almost half of the teachers had conducted a language assessment test at the beginning of grade 5. Many teachers also stated that they used pupils who had previously attended a CLIL programme as experts and involved

them in the teaching process when more complex topics were introduced or a quick correct answer to a question was needed. In general, teachers' appreciation of the children's extended level of knowledge is also mentioned as a way of reducing transition problems, especially from bilingual to regular FL programmes (see also Kersten & Rohde, 2013).

6. Conclusions

In sum, pupils attending bilingual programmes usually develop much higher levels of FL proficiency than their peers in regular FL lessons. Depending on the intensity of the bilingual programme, pupils can obtain up to level A2/B1 in terms of their FL listening and reading skills. Differences between regular English lessons and bilingual programmes relate to the curricula (i.e. for English-as-a-subject vs. for mathematics, science, etc.), the relationship between topic and target language (i.e. either a topic is used as a vehicle to practise the FL or the FL acts as a vehicle to convey content), and cognitive activation in tasks, which, in CLIL activities, always involve a conceptual, a procedural and a linguistic focus. In particular, beginning CLIL lessons are characterised by contextualisation, scaffolding and fixed routines that help the pupils to process the authentic and enriched linguistic FL input provided by the teachers. In secondary school, children who attended a bilingual programme in primary school can be supported by differentiation techniques and by teachers who appreciate the children's extended level of FL knowledge.

In conclusion, bilingual primary school programmes are suitable for all children, independent of their background because such programmes offer many opportunities for high-quality inclusive education and enable children to quickly develop a relatively high degree of FL proficiency without negatively affecting their age-appropriate development in the majority language German or subject knowledge. A wider selection of CLIL materials (especially textbooks) that provide an appropriate blending of authenticity and classroom needs for any age group would probably positively motivate more primary schools to implement a bilingual programme.

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