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Bilingual Teaching: a Definite Asset for French International Schools ?

Yvon Rolland

Abstract

Setting up bilingual teaching in French schools abroad is treated through a bilingual learner facing pronunciation and grammar problems. Bilingual learning has to do with the age factor, and specific dangers like constant interference. Relying on an immersive programme means setting up clear goals. This raises the problem of time parity and subject balance, teacher profiles, testing and the choice of materials. Learning and linguistic theories, the balance between oral and written skills, the problem of literacy, the type of sequence involved, all represent unavoidable issues.

But bilingual teaching is a definite asset. There are specific institutional and education advantages. CLIL presents four basic principles : content, communication, cognition, culture. There are also neuroscientific advantages, especially if motivation is developed.

Positive suggestions are made on an institution basis, then on a language acquisition basis. Besides, the mixture of language theoretical acquisition approaches should be kept, with a particular insistence on communication, cognitive oriented teaching, and neurosciences aiming at humanising this teaching through intrinsic motivational strategies.

Finally, a sequence is suggested. This sequence is in English and is related to Literature as well as cross-disciplinary work. Our learner experiences it and his performance is finally tested.

Key words

Bilingualism, linguistics, obstacles, asset, suggestions, motivational strategies

France has the largest international education network in the world, with 410 schools in 125 countries. Out of the 230000 students attending these institutions, 130000 are not French. English is, of course, the first foreign language taught in the system. The setting up of bilingual teaching is more and more encouraged by the French to face increasing competition coming from British and American international schools abroad. Bilingual teaching implies an instruction in two languages simultaneously or consecutively used, as “to be really bilingual means that one can speak, understand, read and write two languages with a similar facility” (Hagège, 1996, p.218). Our experience will be led through one particular pupil, whose results will be analysed.

The question raised here is whether bilingual teaching is a real issue, or if it should be considered outright as an asset. Our analysis will be four-fold : from examples given in a precise context, we shall first examine the problems posed by bilingual teaching, then after deducing the numerous advantages it can offer, we shall try to make positive suggestions. Finally, we shall give an example of a sequence at the end of primary bilingual tuition and analyse its consequences on our learner.

1. A real issue

Aurélien's case

Pupils in French schools in the zone under study can be Francophone, Anglophone or speak another L1 (Hindi, Tamil, Creole, Arab). This means that the institution cannot offer a particular tuition to all. Seventeen teachers working in the Indian Peninsula and Mauritius area attended a seminar on bilingual teaching and expressed the fear of not being experts either in English or in the content subject. Worried about the language balance and the language and content combination, they wondered what the perfect teacher profile would be like. We will therefore focus on a French boy, Aurélien, aged 9, who represents the average pupil in the institution. His mother tongue is French and his second language English. He started English at the age of five at the French school in Sydney and, since then, has had two hours of English everyday. He passed a test at the beginning of the school year, allowing him to attend a bilingual class at the French school in Pondicherry, India. He has a cognitive tendency to be more visual and kinaesthetic than auditory, more impulsive than reflexive (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, p 195-196). His French is fluent and his English is much better than what it would have been at a French school in France. We shall examine his English phonology and grammar problems related to bilingualism. Some of his English sounds are very similar to French. He tends to confuse lax (short) and tense (long) vowels. Vowels are all voiced, but some are produced with taut muscles in sounds that are elongated (long) and others are used with relaxed muscles (short). Aurélien indistinctively uses either /ɪ/ or /i:/, /ʊ/ or /u:/, /ɒ/ or /ɔ:/, /ə/ or /ɛ:/, /ʌ/ or /ɜ:/, /ɔ:/ or /ɑ:/, /ɔ:/ or /ɒ/. Distinctive features allow us to understand the muscle, tongue, lip positions and the role of the palate. Our nine-year-old boy misuses front and back vowels that are pronounced according to the tongue positions. He does not know that close or open vowels are linked to the tongue and the palate. Lips also influence pronunciation when spread, rounded or neutral. Aurélien does not pronounce diphthongs well. He ignores the progressive glide from one pure vowel to another. His English is also produced without rhythm. His segmentation is obviously based on syllables. Very few syllables are stressed: they are neither produced with a rising voice nor with more muscular energy. What is striking is that Aurélien says, “my father’s reading the newspaper” without stressing /fɑ:/, /ri:/, /nju:s/. Stressed words are neglected as well, lacking prominence. The tonic stress affects the English rhythm and clearly gives meaning and intelligibility. His grammar is confused when it comes to choosing the right tense. If the French “*imparfait*” implies duration and “*passé composé*” result, Aurélien is most confused when he has to use either the past or the perfect tense, with or without their continuous forms: “I read,” “I was reading,” “I have read,” “I have been reading” (Bouscaren, 1998, p. 27). The tense system is related to a mental process that changes from one language to the other. Aurélien’s linguistic problems thus reveal how tricky bilingualism can be. His experience is based on a series of issues we shall analyse.

Bilingualism and the age factor

Children seem to learn implicitly, whereas teenagers learn explicitly. L1 would thus be implicitly mastered, whereas L2 would be more explicitly tackled. Krashen (1981 in Ellis, 1994, p.692-712) distinguishes conscious learning and unconscious acquisition. Anderson (1983 in Ellis, 1994, p.720) explains that explicit declarative learning would be articulated to further implicit procedural use. Mc Laughlin (1987 in Ellis, 1994, p.390) makes a difference

between explicit learning with focal attention and implicit learning with peripheral attention. In Aurélien's case, French was acquired more implicitly than English.

Bilingualism and interference

Bilingual children sometimes develop recurrent linguistic interference, as well as lexical and syntactic distortions, leading to what Ellis calls either "borrowing or substratum transfer" (1994, p.310). The risk is not to achieve a balanced bilingualism, but to keep to an additive bilingualism (the learner adds a L2 without any loss of competence to his L1), or, worse, to a subtractive bilingualism (addition of a L2 leading to the erosion of competence in L1). Hagège (1996, p.85) stressed the importance of reaching a coordinate bilingualism, in order not to get stuck in a composed (learner having two signifiers for one concept) or subordinate system (influence of the L1 cognitive proficiency). In the case of unsatisfactory coordinate bilingual learning, learners suffer from semilingualism, for example by failing in both languages. In the case of late bilingual learning (after 11), there seems to be a longer latency period in the L2 semantic and syntactic treatment (Gaonac'h, 2006, p.71). Besides, children known for literacy problems in their L1 are likely to fail in L2 learning. Interference is also found in more advanced learners facing more complex L2 aspects. Bilingual children are known never to use syllabic segmentation if their L1 is English, or rhythm segmentation if their L1 is French. L2 sounds are more influenced by L1. So is L2 grammar. Aurélien's linguistic problems lie there.

Bilingualism and immersion

Immersion is a key problem in bilingual teaching. But what an immersive programme is remains vague. It generally means giving excessive input to learners who do not interact, hampering the understanding of the course content because of language problems, offering a limited choice of language functions, or even correcting what is related to content only, thus neglecting linguistic forms. The consequences may be the appearance of classroom pidgin and of a harmful effect on learners' confidence. Three immersive programmes are analysed by Gajo (2000, p.25). The first concerns initial full monolingual immersion in L2, with L1 appearing only in the second or third year. Such a class, as adopted in Canada, is not bilingual, and tends to frighten parents. The second implies initial balanced bilingual immersion in both L1 and L2. This is the case in Italy (Val d'Aoste), and is supposed to provoke a lot of interference. Finally, a later balanced bilingual immersion, introducing L2 only in the third year, seems to be a good solution, but requires a homogeneous public. Aurélien's experience is similar to the third one.

Bilingualism, time parity and teacher profiles

Should there be a balance since kindergarten or a balance in the long run, with an adapted amount of language used between the beginning and the end of primary tuition? But this raises the problem of which subject should be taught in which language. Another answer would be using both languages for the whole teaching course, switching from one to the other one according to the content. But this implies having bilingual teachers in the course, and offering an adequately structured programme. Should there be bilingual teachers dealing with all subjects, or monolingual teachers dealing with one subject and full coordination? Aurélien had monolingual teachers dealing with one subject. Should there be native speakers having no particular proficiency in a content subject, or specialists in a content subject having no particular linguistic proficiency? Should there be native speakers specialised in a content

subject having no language training? Aurélien had native speakers having had no teacher or language training.

Bilingualism, teaching materials and assessment

Very few adapted materials exist, which means that teachers have to create everything from scratch. Authentic materials are usually too difficult on a linguistic level and do not fit the recommended curriculum. Native language textbooks do not offer the proper methodology. Aurélien's teachers used authentic materials that were too difficult. Testing is also tricky: should it assess the content subject, the language proficiency, or both? Are not the results necessarily biased? Bilingual certification is another unsolved problem. Should not a diploma be delivered in order to give students access to further education?

Bilingualism and language acquisition obstacles

SLA provides us with a mixture of acquisition theories. Linguistics, phonology and grammar have given birth to formalist theories. Sociolinguistics, notional functional, intercultural, action-oriented approaches have made communicative theories emerge. Language awareness and learning to learn are derived from cognitive psychology. Neurosciences have generated neurolinguistics, the multisensory approach, and emotional intelligence. This also influences ethology. These have a part to play in SLA, which certainly avoids a unique school of thinking. But, can it cope with the common content acquisition approach, which is based on problem solving and cognitivism? The CEFRL puts forward the communication competence based on a linguistic, socio-linguistic and pragmatic dimension. Communication should start from needs and intentions, which give a frame to acquisition. At primary level, fun should also be integrated, but to what extent? Besides, bilingual competence also means more cognitive flexibility, more metalinguistic abilities, and more uncertainty. In other words, what should be favoured: language functions, and speech utterances? Or (as Hagège suggests), more vocabulary? Common linguistics or specific linguistics? Should the five CEFRL skills be equally developed? The last issue is raised by excessive cognitive influence and the risk of teacher-centred teaching, which tends to take numerous problems into account. Aurélien's learning was based on little fun, too much vocabulary, little grammar and excessive written skills. Oral skills were obviously neglected. These can consequently be badly acquired. As Troubetskoy explains, learners can be deaf to L2 sounds, because of the L1 phonological sieve (1986, p.54).

Bilingualism and the mastering of literacy

One only learns to read once, but in which language? Which L1 is to be used? In a monolingual tuition, literacy is overcome at the age of five or six. In an EFL teaching, FL literacy is said to be efficient at the age of seven, when oral competences have already been mastered. But if there is early balanced bilingual teaching, how can literacy be achieved? Gaonac'h (2006, p.140) warns us against early introduction of L2 in terms of content subjects and literacy if L1 is not properly mastered. Wolff (2005, p.20) confirms the failure of young Canadian immigrants, when they had not learned to read and write in their L1. Psycholinguists have analysed learners' cognitive profiles: already complex in a monolingual class, they will be all the more awkward in a bilingual class.

Bilingualism and type of teaching sequence to be favoured

Gajo (2001, p.77) gives three examples: the reflexive sequence is favoured for a language teacher setting up both interaction and language awareness in an independent, but less contextualised project, which is also particularly suited for impulsive pupils. The immersive sequence is favoured for a content subject teacher combining natural interaction, content knowledge, a coherent learning to learn approach, an adapted language in a subordinate and a fully contextualised project. Finally, the pragmatic sequence is favoured for a language and content subject teacher focusing on provoked interaction in a coordinate, half contextualised project. Will not this sequence be determined by the content subject more than by the linguistic dimension? Narcy-Combes (2005, p.55-57) distinguishes content and language abilities, which, once more, raises the teacher profile question. Another problem is the cultural, and intellectual effect on teaching. The French system is influenced by the learner-centred approach, induction, thinking, and demonstration in mathematics. Other education systems favour deduction, and knowledge instead, thus neglecting intuition and heuristic research. Aurélien certainly attended the French system. But this one has to welcome students coming from other systems and to take on supplying teachers having experienced another teaching culture.

We have analysed Aurélien's bilingual school experience to understand the numerous issues he has to face. Yet, we must not forget though, that bilingualism can also be a definite asset.

2. A definite asset

Specific institutional advantages

French international schools belong to an educational system in which bilingual teaching has existed for some time (with the reappearance of regional languages), and which favours multiple theoretical approaches. Formalist, functional and communicative, cognitive and communicative, language awareness, multisensory and action-oriented approaches are all developed. Of course, the list of functions, the grammar frame, and the materials all have to be adapted to meet the needs of a public situated in a multilingual environment in which English is more vivid than in France. Pupils start learning English as an L2, as early as kindergarten. Bilingual teaching in schools abroad requires the existence of a parallel monolingual tuition, so that learners can switch to the latter, if necessary. Learners are also prepared to take International certifications if they wish to. The CEFRL (Common European Frame of Reference for Languages) is also integrated.

Educational advantages

If full bilingual teaching in all content subjects is achieved, bilingual tuition will be very positive. In this respect, CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) could be the answer. "This refers to any educational situation in which an additional language is used for the teaching and learning of subjects other than the language itself" (Marsch, 2000 in Wolff, 2005, p.12). CLIL promotes four interactive key-principles: "Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture." The communicative approach, which is strongly recommended for language teaching, is an asset for content subject teaching, in that the class situation becomes a real communication context in which L2 is used. Dalgalian (2000, p.32) explains the numerous advantages of this early teaching: a more performing phonatory organ, a double lexical system, two distinctive grammar and syntactic registers, a double series of language strategies for two different codes, a semantic conscience separating words and concepts, a more powerful memory span, and a double way of communicating leading to a double

identity. We can add: a wider cultural context, a better internationalisation, and more developed multilingual interests and attitudes. In the case of Aurélien, we must admit that these advantages have to be more exploited.

Neuroscientific advantages

Neurosciences add that the brain develops on the L1 mental representations. Early bilingual teaching benefits from stronger perceptive abilities due to greater brain plasticity, a less mature laterality, the less obtrusive L1, a less integrated mother culture, a weaker inhibitory anxiety, a more powerful input capacity, and an ability to sort out data in a coordinate way (Ellis, 1994, p.494). Gaonac'h situates the favourable age for L2 acquisition, between 4 and 7 (2006, p.74). This would help to avoid the deafness risk previously mentioned. Hagège mentions the asset represented by being able to control two simultaneous conceptual systems, and having a linguistic conscience able to distinguish the two codes (1996, p.25). He praises a coordinate bilingualism implying two distinctive mental representations. Gaonac'h explains that in learning his L1, the child starts building up cognitive strategies on which linguistic strategies can develop (2006, p.87). For an L2 learning, the same child will develop the latter more quickly. A good mastering of L1 literacy is an asset for L2. Wolff explains the advantages of CLIL teaching, which aims at favouring reading and writing skills, but we mustn't forget that primary teaching also implies the initial mastering of oral skills and the learning of literacy (2005, p.18). He adds that functional bilingualism is a basic principle, which means that the two languages should be used according to the immediate content needs.

Motivational strategies

L2 is not seen as an aimless artificial subject, but as an authentic communicative tool to teach and learn content subjects. It would consequently favour learners' individual interests. Content subject teaching is appropriate to the learners' state of cognitive development, because the subject would anyway be taught in the mother tongue. Wolff favours content subject teaching when he says that, "motivation, curiosity and involvement can be raised much better through CLIL than through the contents of the traditional foreign language classroom" (2005, p.19). Yet, this depends on what is done in a language classroom. Dörnyei rightly explains that language teaching can also help to develop motivational strategies (2001, p.138-142). These include the promotion of interaction and the sharing of genuine personal information among the learners, the regular use of small-group tasks, and the organisation of extracurricular activities, in order to raise the intrinsic interest in the L2 learning process by demonstrating aspects of L2 learning that students are likely to enjoy. It is also important to find out about the public's needs, goals and interests, to make task content attractive, to select tasks which require mental and bodily involvement, to teach children learning strategies, and to make tests completely transparent.

We will therefore suggest a series of answers.

3. Positive suggestions

Institutional suggestions as answers to Aurélien's issues

The following institutional answers could be given:

-Taking the specific school environment into account: in Mauritius, English as an official language is dominated by Creole and French. Setting up bilingual French-English teaching is

certainly more logical there than in India, which has no national language and a multilingual environment: if Hindi is spoken in Delhi, Tamil is used in Pondicherry. English is only spoken by 10% of the population and French is not heard except among elderly people in Pondicherry, a former French colony. In such an environment as India, learners could be selected from the beginning of tuition, not only according to specific abilities (hard to be detected at the age of three), but also according to parents' motivational criteria. Bilingual learners should have a double role, a language and a content subject learner.

- Setting up an adapted immersive programme: French could be used at the beginning for those who already practise it: at kindergarten (from the age of three), teaching would be in French, and some pupils would have a more intensive tuition if needed. Besides, the same type of organisation could be done in English for pupils who master English better than French.

- Integrating oral initiation in English for French speakers as early as the age of four in subjects like PE, Art and Craft, and Music.

- Setting up literacy in French at the age of five. It would be set up in English gradually, once French is mastered.

- Proposing more intensive teaching in English, from the age of six, in subjects like History and Geography, Science and Maths. The aim is to achieve a balance in the two languages from the ages of eight and nine. The two languages could be used simultaneously from the age of nine in a cross-curricular immersive programme.

- Planning testing, which should be content and language oriented first in French, then content or language-oriented in English from four to eight, and eventually, assessment should give learners a free language choice, both content subjects and language being evaluated.

- Offering secondary teaching the same opportunities to these bilingual learners.

- First reducing the number of subjects taught in L2, having thus a larger part taught in L1. Then, when more subjects and topics are involved in L2, a constant referring to L1 speech utterances and vocabulary are worked out contrastively (Wolff, 2005, p.19). This distinguishes bilingual teaching from a full immersive programme.

- Using the web to find materials. A few websites already exist (Emilangues in France, CLIL ties in the UK). International projects through the internet would help to promote bilingual teaching; the L1 or L2 would be used to exchange ideas and information with learners from other countries. The reality of the school is therefore connected with the reality of the world outside.

- Hiring teachers who could be bilingual and professionally competent through special intensive training courses. French teachers could be used as well as Anglophone teachers, provided they should coordinate the bilingual curriculum. Those English-speaking colleagues would have to understand the way the French cultural system works (learner-centred, inductive heuristic approach). Native speakers are not necessarily the best persons because they master the linguistic dimension: they usually neglect the linguistic obstacles and will not master the content subjects. Interaction among learners is more and more widespread and, in the case of a learner-centred teaching, the role of the teacher has certainly evolved in recent years.

- Setting up a complete cooperation between content subject teachers and language teachers. University Schools of Education in France (IUFM) start training content subject trainees in L2 oriented teaching. Content subject teaching proficiency exams in France now include an optional part in L2.

Language acquisition suggestions can be made.

Language acquisition suggestions

-The mixture of theoretical acquisition approaches should be maintained. Communication can be interspersed with activities based on form and forms. Cognitive oriented teaching should integrate neurosciences, not to be knowledge-based only but also learner-centred.

-The five language communication activities should be equally developed in the long run, oral skills being mastered first, before tackling literacy. Classroom discourse plays an important role in a bilingual class.

-Discourse skills should be divided into two sets: one more general and functional consisting of speech acts like identify-classify/define-describe-explain-conclude/argue-evaluate, and another more specific set, differing according to content subjects or groups of subjects, for example making inductions/stating laws-describing states and processes-working with graphs, diagrams, tables etc...—interpreting—writing reports (Wolff, 2005, p.19).

-The linguistic dimension should be important: making vocabulary in context (through content subjects) and speech utterances real key-stones in this bilingual learning, not to forget phonology and spelling.

-Basic elements would be focused on at the beginning, and more specific elements would be gradually studied. CLIL specialists insist on providing more general content subject-oriented elements first and then moving towards more and more specific linguistics. Gaonac'h insists on a gradual exposure to more and more complex linguistic elements, and more and more elaborate class activities (2006, p.139).

-Literacy, learning to read and write, would be done in the dominant language first, (dominant because learnt first in this tuition), then gradually in the second language to avoid interference and semilingualism, as much as possible.

-The type of bilingual sequence would be logically mainly immersive, but some activities could become reflexive or pragmatic when needed.

-The four key-principles given for CLIL (Content, Communication, Cognition, Culture) should be equally developed. CLIL specialists recommend four stages in a bilingual approach mixing languages and content subjects: a sensitising stage (communicative listening, short reading and written activities), followed by research (task-based learning), development (interactive share with peers), consolidation (language specific features) and synthesis (summary of the content) stages.

-Neurosciences should be integrated to favour bilingual acquisition. This means relying on all sensory channels—the emotional power and the important motivational strategies—in order to balance an excessive cognitive influence, which can pervade the content subject teaching.

-The teaching staff should take the learners' interest into account to favour intrinsic motivation: interaction, small group tasks, bodily involvement and fun, which simply means humanising bilingual teaching.

Before this bilingual programme is launched, the whole education community should agree on the principles retained, and the final assessment should be arranged in relationship with the international system. This should help to overcome most of the previously mentioned obstacles.

We will analyse an example of a sequence set up in class, as an answer to Aurélien's problems.

4. An example of a sequence at the end of a bilingual primary teaching

Goals

This sequence is taught at Pondicherry's French primary school. It is in English for bilingual pupils being nine or ten. The teacher is Indian and can speak Tamil, English or French. Most pupils in this section started bilingual tuition with French as the dominant

language as early as three years old. As required by the French institution for late primary pupils, children's literature is studied as a disciplinary subject. It is normally done in French, but in this bilingual section, the language used is English. The book used, "Goldilocks and the three bears," published by Ladybird in 1999, is in English. This sequence is immersive but some activities become reflexive or pragmatic. Starting off from literature, cross-disciplinary work will gradually be set up to meet CLIL principles in the long run.

Learning to learn goals integrate Aurélien's linguistic data. They include language communication activities such as interaction, individual oral production, reading, writing and listening. Pupils will build up strategies like anticipating, making assumptions, predicting, sharing information, summarizing, matching gesture and speaking, matching pictures and speaking, understanding and mastering new grammar concepts and new words, practising these, looking for differences, sequencing events and understanding a literary text. This implies reflexive and pragmatic activities.

Linguistic goals are focused on Aurélien's issues. They include phonology, which will be treated for lax/tense vowels and diphthongs in words like "big," "eat," "porridge," "door," "plate," "chair," and consonants (/h/) in a word like "hot". Rhythm will be practised in words (porridge-10) as well as in sentences ("Someone has been **sleeping** in my bed"). Grammar is planned as well with consequence and the perfect continuous tense both as duration and as the result of a past action. Vocabulary dealing with graduation will be inferred. Culture goals will be about bears and man's negative influence on the environment. Cross-disciplinary work and CLIL will follow with subjects like citizenship and science. Fun is not neglected, since several games are proposed.

Lessons and steps

Lesson 1

Pre-reading tasks- Pupils will anticipate orally from the book cover by asking and answering questions. The title will be exploited to guess what the story could be about. Assumptions will be made on the board. Eventually, three pictures (pages 24, 42 and 8) will be displayed on the board to make pupils sequence them. This will favour logical reasoning.

Reading tasks

This will help learners to discover pages 4 to 11. Two groups will be made (A and B) with a series of different questions about what happens. Once reading is over and answers found, there will be information sharing and interacting. Prompts will be projected for each question (from A and B sheets) so that everyone can participate. New words will be inferred and their pronunciation will be exploited.

Discrimination activity and pronunciation practice (reflexive activity)

New words will be practised through a game (Chinese whispers). Then sounds will be explained thanks to flashcards showing how the pronunciation articulators work. The story will be read again, pupils having to discriminate sounds (lax/tense vowels, diphthongs) by ticking boxes in a grid (minimal pairs). This is a way to answer some of Aurélien's problems.

Cross-disciplinary work

Healthy eating can be explained from these pages by insisting on what makes a good breakfast (cereals and porridge) and why (immersive activity).

Language practice

Pupils will be told, through prompts, to express consequence with expressions like "so" and "so hot that" (pragmatic activity).

Language awareness

From a multi-choice-question quiz written on the board, children will have to find that these expressions are related to consequence and not cause. A translation into French will allow a bilingual comparison (reflexive activity).

Storytelling

Pictures are displayed on the wall, the teacher mimes the actions, and so does group A while group B tells the story.

Writing

A text is handed out with blanks. New vocabulary and new expressions are missing. Low pupils will get aids with lists of items given to choose from. An interaction feed back will follow.

Checking assumptions

Children are asked to confirm or not the assumptions that were made at the beginning. An interaction will end this lesson.

Lesson 2

Recycling

Pupils will tell the story individually from pictures displayed on the board.

Predicting

Children will make new assumptions about what is to come next.

Reading

Pupils will read pages 13 to 25. Group A will underline nouns and adjectives and group B will underline verbs and link words. An interactive feedback will follow and new expressions and words will be carefully pronounced. Aurélien's practice is important here. New words will be inferred.

Language practice

Grammar will be inferred with the link word "then". A few examples will be practised. A translation into French will allow bilingual comparison.

Focus on narrator

Children will have to think of who is telling the story.

Reading and writing

Sentences of the episode are jumbled. Pupils will have to sequence events by writing them.

Lesson 3

Recycling the story

Fun is exploited here with a game (stepping stones picture game). Pictures are displayed on the floor. Pupils have to jump from one picture to the other while telling the story again.

Predicting the end

Children have to guess what the end could be. They make assumptions in interaction.

Reading

The story is read from page twenty-six to the end.

Language practice

Pronunciation is checked for new words that are inferred. The teacher makes sure Aurélien practises these new words. Grammar is exploited through the use of the perfect continuous tense ("someone has been ...ing"). Examples are practised while pupils are asked to play the part of each bear (Father Bear, Mother Bear, Baby Bear) having each a specific voice (loud, medium and little). Rhythm is eventually practised through walking round the room and clapping. Aurélien is particularly active.

Language awareness

Learners have to think of what this tense can express. A diagram is drawn on the board symbolizing the three tenses (past, perfect and present) with three circles, the middle one being interspersed in between. To help them, a multi-choice-question is given. Pupils have to match simple perfect and continuous perfect with examples. Simple perfect examples insist on the result whereas continuous perfect examples insist more on the activity. “Someone has eaten my porridge” is related to the result: the plate is empty. “Someone has been eating my porridge” has to be matched with the activity: the plate is not empty and is still smoking. A strong feeling of surprise can consequently be felt. Aurélien is concentrated on this specific activity.

Further oral production

The teacher gives a list of utterances and pupils have to match them with the proper character (the three bears).

Cross-disciplinary work

Citizenship and moral values—Children have to say why what Goldilocks did is wrong.

Writing

Pupils have to write another ending for the story using fifty words.

Lesson 4

Listening

An audio recording is used. A script with wrong elements is handed out. Children have to listen and cut out what is wrong.

Storytelling

A video is used. The sound track has been cut off. Pupils have to watch and say in an individual oral production activity. Aurélien tells the story again and his vowel pronunciation is better. So is his rhythm.

Role-playing

A group of four pupils play the scene in which the three bears discover their house before they see Goldilocks. They write the scene first and then play it. Pupils evaluate the productions (fluency, pronunciation, linguistic correctness) and the best one is recorded. Aurélien is in that rewarded group.

Follow up work

Writing a new story in fifty words: “you are walking in the forest, you see a house, no one is in...what happens?”

Cross-disciplinary follow up work

Pupils will look for countries in which bears live (Canada, United States, Switzerland, Slovenia, France) on the web through an electronic world map (Geography). They will compare a literary and a scientific text, they will know more about healthy eating (Science), they will understand about bear life in the forests, learn about animal conservation, understand about man pollution in the environment (Citizenship). The French film “*L’ours*” (“The bear”) by J.J. Annaud will be shown through the DVD.

Aurélien’s performance

This sequence is pregnant with motivational strategies that certainly helped to improve learners’ abilities. Knowing Aurélien’s problems, the teacher took the time to speak to him, to make him understand what she intended to do. She made him realize that his pronunciation and grammar could be easily improved and that she was ready to help him overcome them. She wanted to create a supportive atmosphere by showing tolerance, having mistakes accepted as a natural part of learning.

While talking to him, she managed to discover what his taste was. She soon came to see that he liked wild animals very much. This is how she set up a sequence about bears. By making teaching and the choice of materials relevant to the pupils' taste, this teacher certainly created a positive experience.

-In lesson 1, she took the time to explain phonetic articulation. Each vowel was practised by the teacher slowly and with a visual flashcard picturing the articulators: /i:/ in "eat", a tense front close vowel, was pronounced with the front of the tongue raised, close to the roof of the mouth. Lips were spread. /a:/ in "father," a tense back fully open vowel, was produced with the back tongue far from the roof of the mouth. Pupils could visualize a neutral lip position. Diphthongs were articulated from one pure vowel to the other. Flashcards also helped to understand the way /eɪ/ in "plate," a closing diphthong represented a glide from an open to a close vowel. /ɛə/ in "chair," a centring diphthong was a glide from a front vowel to a central one.

Rhythm was practised, first in words (**open, father, mother, porridge, bedroom, sitting, eating, sleeping**), then in sentences. Practising rhythm meant memorizing a stress pattern through movement: pupils clapped loudly to the stressed words. This bodily involvement including fun favoured motivation and consequently the memory span: it highlighted aspects of L2 learning that Aurélien and his friends enjoyed.

-In lesson 3, language awareness is achieved through a matching activity: pupils have to read examples of perfect tense either simple or continuous on the left hand side of the sheet. They have to tick the correct explanation on the right side. "Someone has eaten my porridge" and "someone has been eating my porridge," suggest "a result" in the first example and "an insistence on the activity, a feeling of surprise when facing the plate" in the second example. Cooperation among learners was promoted. The teacher took the time here to draw Aurélien's attention to his abilities.

-In lesson 4, Aurélien can tell the story by himself and becomes more aware of his capability to complete the task. It gave Aurélien a leadership role that helped him to overcome his problems. Pupils evaluated the role-play production. Evaluating the sketches helps to involve learners in making assessment completely transparent. Pronunciation was one of the three criteria. The teacher herself concentrated on Aurélien's pronunciation. The sounds produced, the rhythm and the understanding of what was said, the speech rules and the grammar involved were three basic criteria she evaluated. Each one was marked out of six points. Aurélien did well, since he achieved a good total in each one (6-5-6).

This experience is pregnant with important principles. Aurélien carried out various activities, which were immersive, pragmatic or reflexive. The teacher helped him individually when coming to the reflexive part of the sequence. The five language communication activities were set up through the whole sequence. Vocabulary, phonology and grammar were integrated in the communication process. Language and cross-disciplinary work was planned. Small group activities and autonomy were set up. A multisensory approach, including visual and kinaesthetic activities, was also carefully suggested. Tasks were pregnant with the motivational strategies we analysed. The specific dangers, the strategic obstacles, the language acquisition process and its difficulties, a bilingual tuition can bring about, were all taken into account and somewhat avoided.

Bilingual teaching is certainly pregnant with linguistic dangers such as interference and semilingualism. Strategic obstacles soon reveal the misleading nature of what an immersive programme is. Language acquisition approaches are so contradictory that their mixture is delicate. Languages are no longer mere subjects, but tools for content subject teaching. Bilingual teaching should rely on a variety of sequences, a balance of immersion,

reflection, and pragmatism, which is not easy to find. Cultural pregnancy is unavoidable for local teachers, which can lead to a biased way of tackling education. Our French boy's experience revealed these problems. Yet, bilingualism nevertheless offers educational and neuroscientific advantages. Starting bilingual teaching at primary level with young learners certainly helps, as does the development of motivational strategies. Precise suggestions imply a strictly structured organisation, that is a logical progressive language and content subject balance leading to a coordinate bilingualism. The crucial issue of literacy should not be neglected. An immersive programme also means moments of reflexion and pragmatism. If these statements are logically taken into account, bilingual teaching should be a real asset for French schools abroad. Teachers should be more aware of basic motivational strategies. As many specialists say, one learns better through two languages. And as the French philosopher Rollin rightly stated: "language intelligence is a gate opening on all sciences" (Hagège, 1996, p.99).

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