

# **How to Start a Bilingual Preschool**

## **Practical Guidelines**

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# **How to Start a Bilingual Preschool: Practical Guidelines<sup>1</sup>**

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## **1. Introduction**

For several decades, bilingual preschools have been an integral part of the education system in some European countries (Eurydice Survey 2005, 2006), and more and more institutions are striving to implement bilingual groups into their programmes. Despite these indications that an active interest in establishing and running bilingual preschools has been increasing over the past years, it has been our experience that the initial set-up phase is – almost unavoidably – hampered by a set of practical questions which seem to be the same everywhere.

Research and the experience of many practitioners in the field have pinpointed many such problems, and a range of solutions has been suggested for some of them. Though a variety of information resources are available, we have observed that many of these problems re-occur when new programmes are implemented. The following guidelines are designed to raise awareness of the various difficulties that may arise when new programmes are started and to help avoid unnecessary problems. Building on insights from research studies and the input provided by experienced practitioners<sup>2</sup> from the ELIAS project and elsewhere, we will outline best practices from well-established bilingual preschools with respect to a wide range of factors that may affect the success of a bilingual programme. Such factors include the overall goals, the setup of the bilingual groups, the role of educators, parents, heads of preschools and politicians, as well as organisational and practical recommendations. Many of these issues refer to bilingual primary schools as well as to preschools.<sup>3</sup>

Up to now, we have used the term "preschool" to refer to children in pre-primary education in general – yet, pre-primary education covers a range of distinctly different concepts. Some programmes differentiate between children up to three years (nurseries, crèches, Krippen) and children of three years or older (preschool, Kindergarten, école maternelle, Vorschule), but the age at which pre-primary education ends and

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- 1 We are grateful to Aafke Buyl, Anna Flyman Mattsson, Holger Kersten, Christina Schelletter and Anja Steinlen for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
  - 2 If not indicated otherwise, all issues and recommendations discussed in these guidelines arise from a workshop held in the context of the ELIAS project and are based on the experiences of researchers and practitioners from ELIAS preschools.
  - 3 Guidelines with a special relevance for the implementation of immersion in primary schools can be found in Kersten (2010) and Kersten et al. (2010).

primary school education starts differs throughout Europe and world-wide. The term "kindergarten" is used variably to include both groups, or only children in their final preparatory year before they enter regular schools. The different job titles used for pedagogues in pre-primary education reflect how differently their function is perceived in different countries. They are referred to as nurses, educators, teachers, to name but a few terms, and their professional training requirements differ accordingly.

In these guidelines, we use the term "pre(-)school" as a cover term to include the whole range of institutions which lead up to primary school education, independent of the age of the children. We use the term "teacher" for the pedagogic personnel if the staff involved perform specific educational tasks. Finally, we use the term "bilingual" for a preschool if the L1 and L2 teachers adhere to the one-person-one-language principle, and are equally involved in guiding their respective groups. For reasons of brevity, we will refer to the first language or the mother tongue of a child as to her or his L1 (Language 1)<sup>4</sup> and to the second or foreign language in the preschool as L2 (Language 2).<sup>5</sup>

Part A of these guidelines will give a brief introduction to the immersion concept on which bilingual programmes are based; Part B will relate best practices in bilingual preschools.

## **Part A: The Immersion Concept**

### **2. Why choose bilingual education?**

Knowing different languages is of growing importance for personal development. Language skills provide better chances for communication and exchange in the European market and in an increasingly globalised world. In its 2004 Action Plan, the European Commission takes these new developments into account and, consequently, promotes foreign language learning at a very early age:

Language competencies are part of the core of skills that every citizen needs for training, employment, cultural exchange and personal fulfilment ... It is a priority for Member States to ensure that language learning in kindergarten and primary school is effective, for it is here that key attitudes towards other languages and cultures are formed, and the foundations for later language

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4 Note that this is not necessarily the national language of the country where the preschool is situated nor the language which the majority of children and adults in the preschool speak. For a child whose parents speak Turkish and who attends a German-English preschool in Germany, Turkish would be the L1.

5 In this paper, we do not differentiate between the terms *second* and *foreign* language. Note also that the L2 of the preschool, e.g. L2 English in a German-English preschool in Germany, although being the L2 of most of the children in the preschool, may be the third or even fourth language of an individual child, if he or she comes from a multilingual background.

learning are laid, ... **in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age.**"

(European Commission: Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004 – 2006, p. 8; our emphasis)

Bilingual preschools are the first part of an educational programme which is aimed at achieving functional multilingualism (Council of Europe 2001). To fully accomplish this goal, it is necessary to continue successful foreign language programmes in primary and secondary education (section 8, see also Wode, this volume).

### *Factors which enhance the second language*

Providing early opportunities for contact and interaction with a foreign language results in a longer overall contact time with the L2 and thus in improved opportunities for language learning. Additionally, bilingual preschools provide further factors which have been identified as beneficial for the child learner (e.g. Burmeister 2006, Met & Lorenz 1997, Piske et al. 2001, Wesche 2002, cf. also Kersten et al., this volume, Weitz et al. volume I): The young age of the learner, a long exposure to the L2, a high intensity of the language programme, the active use of the L2 and also the specific pedagogic strategies used in bilingual programmes have been found to advance the children's language attainment: data from the ELIAS project have shown for the first time that the teaching principles used by L2 teachers have a significant effect on the children's language learning, that is, children show the best results when teachers provide a high quantity and quality of language input, when they ensure comprehension by visualising and contextualising everything they say and when they explicitly encourage the children's language production (Weitz et al., volume I, see also section 6 below).

### *Naturalistic learning and authentic communication*

Immersion programmes work best when teachers use the target language in the authentic contexts of the children's everyday life. Language in preschools should always be content-based, i.e. the language is not in the prime focus of attention but is used as a means of communication instead (e.g. Richards & Rodgers 2001). By ensuring this, teachers provide an ideal learning environment for learning another language, as well as for learning different contents. If it offers children audio, visual and tactile information in their encounter with the new language, it fosters multi-sensory learning, and thus caters to the children's different learning styles. To establish contact with their L2 teachers, children also need to and do experiment with different verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, a fact which adds to their repertoire of expressing themselves.

### *General cognitive advantages*

For these reasons, scholars believe that early intensive multilingualism also fosters the general cognitive development in a child. Children are able to think more abstractly

and they have a higher awareness of languages and their similarities and differences (metalinguistic awareness) than their monolingual peers. Using two languages actively also raises the children's cognitive control, their working memory and selective attention, i.e. their capacity to focus on one language without completely suppressing the other, and their general planning and problem solving abilities (e.g. Bialystok 2001, for an overview see Festman & Kersten 2010).

#### *High level of second language attainment*

Children attain a competence in their L2 which is much further advanced than that of most of their monolingual peers at that early age. Generally, comprehension precedes production, i.e. children understand the L2 better than they are able to speak it. Sometimes, children even produce the L2 in full sentences at the end of their preschool years. Under favourable circumstances (e.g. extended contact with and high intensity exposure to the L2, as well as competent L2 input), some ELIAS children were able to reach a level in the L2 comprehension of English which resembles (but does not exactly equal) that of monolingual English children (Steinlen et al., volume I). This level of language competence depends on various factors, many of which will be described below.

#### *The first language does not suffer*

Preschoolers at the age between three and six years are still in the process of acquiring their first language. Parents often ask the question whether the first language will suffer from an extensive exposure to a second language at such a young age. However, research conducted over several decades has repeatedly shown that this is not the case. On the contrary, children who learn a second language in an early intensive bilingual programme may equal or even outperform their monolingual peers in their first language (e.g. Swain 1974, see also Steinlen et al., volume I and this volume).

#### *Learning about different cultural backgrounds*

Moreover, bi- or multilingual preschool groups are, in most cases, bi- or multicultural as well. Most of the educators in bilingual preschools are native speakers of the preschool's L2 and originate from another country. Thus, even if all children are from the same cultural background, at least one of their attachment figures (the preschool teacher) introduces them to a different culture. Children in the ELIAS preschools have been observed to overwhelmingly react in a positive way to cultural differences: they accept and trust the native speakers, they are interested in their language and their origin, they ask questions and talk about language, they help each other understand the unfamiliar language and they even translate for each other. In other words, the bilingual preschool context creates opportunities for the development of social competences. Rejection or negative prejudices are rare. The few children who initially showed fear of a person from a different background overcame these attitudes quickly and later created a close bond to the L2 preschool teacher (Gerlich et al. and Thomas

et al., volume I). The bi- or multicultural situation of these preschools presents a valuable context for all educators to raise awareness of and tolerance for cultural differences.

*Bilingual learning is suitable for all children*

All children have the ability to learn a second language (Chilla et al. 2010) and bilingual preschools provide a beneficial environment for the acquisition of a new language plus the above-mentioned competences. This happens regardless of the children's social or cultural background, their language aptitude, or other differences that might exist. No special talent for language learning is needed to benefit from bilingual education in the preschool. Metalinguistic understanding of the language, reading and writing are not required in bilingual preschools.

In the discussion of bilingual education, questions are often raised about children with a migrant background. In our research context, we have observed that children whose cultural and linguistic background differs from the surrounding majority adapt very well to the bilingual preschool setting. The results of their receptive L2 vocabulary and grammar learning does not differ significantly from that of their monolingual peers (see Rohde and Steinlen et al., volume I).<sup>6</sup> However, one word of caution is in order at this point: parents and preschools have to make sure that a child learns his or her first language, i.e. the language(s) spoken at home, as well as the majority language, in an age-appropriate way (Council of Europe 2006). Researchers have claimed that, if a child's first language does not develop at an appropriate rate, children may run the risk of becoming "semilingual" (e.g. Cummins 1982, 2000)<sup>7</sup> and thus fail to develop sufficient academic language skills in either of their two languages. At this particular age, the general cognitive development is, after all, linked to language development.

However, this problem has really nothing to do with bilingual preschools – it is rather an effect of parental attitudes and the general conditions of educational systems. It can also be found in monolingual programmes. Educators who are aware of such problems should make sure that both home language and majority language receive equal attention. More often than not, it is not a good idea for parents to abandon their own native language in favour of the majority language in an attempt to "help" the child in the new education system. Further information on the suitability of bilingual programmes is provided below (section 10).

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6 For children with a migrant background, the preschool's L2 is their second new language. What we observe here fits in well with results regarding the general cognitive advantages pointed out above. However, more research is needed to support the claim that bi- or multilingual migrant children indeed have an advantage over monolingual children when it comes to L2 learning in bilingual preschools.

7 The term "semilingualism" has been influential in studies of language acquisition, but the approach has also been criticised for methodological shortcomings with regard to sociological and psycholinguistic factors (see Chilla et al. 2010 for a discussion).

### 3. Education in a bilingual preschool

Education in bilingual preschools follows two main approaches. The first is the so-called *one-person-one-language* principle (Ronjat 1913, Döpke 1992). It is derived from bilingual families in which each parent uses his/her own mother tongue consistently with the child. Preschool teachers imitate this strategy. While one teacher uses the majority language (L1) in contact with the children, the other teacher uses the target language (L2). In most cases, both are responsible for one group of children, thus rendering the input truly bilingual.

The second approach is the immersion principle. The term immersion, in a linguistic context, is a metaphor which means that the children are "immersed" in the L2 just as they are immersed in water when taking a bath. It has originally been used for school contexts where the L2 is not taught as a subject but is used as a means of communication in at least 50% of the curriculum instead (e.g. Genesee 1987, Wode 1995, Zydati 2000). As many preschools do not have a teaching curriculum comparable to schools, the term has to be adapted to the preschool context. In this paper, we use it in the sense that *at least 50% of the language input provided in a bilingual preschool needs to be given in the L2* (based, e.g., on Genesee 1987, Wode 1995). Some exceptions to this principle will be discussed below (section 4).

As is characteristic of the immersion principle, the L2 is not "taught" in a bilingual preschool. Instead, it is used as the everyday language of conversation and activity by the L2-speaking teachers. The immersion concept has successfully been used for over 40 years around the world, and has been especially well documented in Canada (for an overview, see Wesche 2002). An increasing number of case studies shows that the concept has successfully been transferred to Europe as well.

Even so, it was pointed out that educational systems in Europe differ significantly from one another and that, as a result, the setup, starting age, terminology and educational goals of European preschools are difficult to compare. Part B will show that and why these differences are important in the setup of a new bilingual preschool.

## Part B: Best Practices

### 4. Factors and conditions

Starting a bilingual preschool means, first of all, to be aware of the entire legal framework within which the programme will have to operate. Conditions pertaining to the fundamental design of the bilingual programme, language selection and the teaching staff (see below) are relevant to all preschool forms. However, some important differences exist between preschools operated by a public institution or by private initiative. In public institutions who would like to implement an immersion concept, the pre-

school is usually already in operation. They are not concerned with issues concerning location or funding. If, however, the preschool is built up from scratch, a whole range of other issues becomes important. Unfortunately, for instance, some private programmes still lack the institutional support they would need to offer good bilingual education and are forced to charge a higher fee than communal programmes. Therefore, the following sections first give an overview of some logistic factors pertaining primarily to private institution, and then moves on to factors of general relevance to bilingual preschool programmes.

### *Finding a suitable location*

The building should be located in an area populated by families with young children and a financial basis which allows them to pay the rates charged by private institutions. It should provide enough space for several groups of children. It is recommendable to optimise the ratio of children per group and the room size with regard to the number of teachers that have to be provided for them. Note that the size of a room presents a limitation to the group size: since at least one qualified teacher needs to be in the same room with the children at all times, more teachers have to be provided for groups with small rooms than for groups with large rooms, even if the overall number of the children may be the same in the preschool. This may result in an additional financial burden for the institution.<sup>8</sup>

### *Identifying the official authorities responsible for legal and technical questions*

There are a number of safety rules and other legal and technical regulations which apply to preschools. To protect the children in the best possible way, these measures are often more restrictive than in other buildings. These requirements should be checked with the local authorities in advance in order to ascertain the suitability of the chosen location. Other prerequisites concern the preschool concept, the language choice and the selection of staff. Other authorities, such as e.g. the ministries of education or social affairs, are responsible for these questions. It is recommendable to identify and contact ahead of time the appropriate people in charge of legal issues, to find out about all conditions to be met and to ask for advice and help.

### *Acquiring sponsors and money for the basic equipment*

Usually, existing buildings need to be renovated and adapted to become suitable for the requirements of a preschool environment. To meet the costs of a partial reconstruction and the purchase of basic equipment – if they cannot be covered by the monthly payments coming from the parents – it is advisable to have a starting capital. This often presents a serious obstacle for the project initiators. In such a situation it is very helpful to find local sponsors who are able to provide this money. Sometimes, banks

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8 According to our experiences, small groups are beneficial for the children's language acquisition process. Some ELIAS partner institutions recommend an adult-child ratio of 1:4 for very young children at the age of 1-2 years, and of 1:6 for children of 3-6 years.

are willing to make money available at reasonable interest rates. Many creative solutions are possible to enhance such cooperations, such as specific marketing procedures (e.g. advertising opportunities) or special contracts and reduced membership rates for the sponsor's employees. It is very important that all logistic preparations be finished well ahead of the preschool's opening day (cf. Kubanek-German 1996).

### *Choosing the concept and the language*

The concept of the preschool programme represents the cornerstone of the future work. In addition to the pedagogical approach (e.g. Montessori, Reggio, Waldorf, etc.) the group structure (open, semi-open, or closed, cf. Wippermann et al., volume I), and the preschool's content focus of their conceptual design, the choice of the language and its implementation in the preschool routine is of vital importance to a bilingual preschool. Our experience with the ELIAS preschools shows that bilingual education is compatible with all of these different approaches. As was explained in Part A, a language approach is recommendable which is based on the one-person-one-language-principle, and which offers at least 50% of the daily routines in the L2. This condition can easily be met if two teachers are fully responsible for the children, one of whom speaks the L2 at all times in contact with the children.<sup>9</sup>

The choice of the second language is also an important issue. The majority of preschools in Germany choose English as their foreign language. This is understandable since English is, for most children, the first L2 they will learn in school, but also with regard to the increasing importance of English as the vehicle language for communication in a global market. However, other reasons are important as well, such as language contact in border regions, the preservation of minority heritage languages, or the introduction to different cultures other than those from the Anglophone world (Wode 2009). In the decision about which language to choose, it is important to keep in mind that, in a second step, trained teachers have to be found to maintain the concept over time, especially if a language is chosen as L2 which is less frequently found. If a preschool already employs staff members who speak a different language at a native-like level, this language might present an easy option for the choice of the L2.

### *Selection of the staff*

*A. Languages:* The preschool team is one of the most important building blocks of a bilingual programme. Therefore, the selection of the staff becomes a crucial issue for the setup of a preschool. There are several important issues which need to be recognised: As most bilingual preschools prefer to work with teachers who are native speakers of the target language (henceforth referred to as *native speakers*),<sup>10</sup> the staff will

9 Note that in trilingual preschools, such as the ELIAS preschool in Lund, Sweden, the language input will come from three different teachers. The amount of input in each language will necessarily be reduced to 33% for each teacher.

10 Some preschools consider the option to employ a non-native speaker with a very good competence in the L2. Such a decision, however, should be made only after the L2 language proficiency

consist of an international and intercultural team. This means that the team has to find forms of communication that enable its members to cooperate smoothly on an everyday basis. That this cannot be taken for granted is borne out by the following statement from a preschool teacher with several years of experience in bilingual teams (the survey from which this quotation is taken will be introduced below):

**Quote 1:** I know from my own experiences working in an [intercultural] team and from other institutions that there might be problems between the L1-speaking colleagues and the native speakers. These problems often result from the different way of life, the different approaches to education, and also from language barriers, which complicate the communication within the team. If not both sides are willing to approach each other (with regard to the language and to social issues) and to understand their diversity, this may lead to problems and may hinder communication, which may affect the work or the immersion concept. (L1 teacher, translated by the authors)

To avoid such communication problems, it is desirable that all staff members should be bilingual. As this is rarely the case in a bilingual preschool, either the native speakers or some other staff member(s) should at least be able to understand the other language. Native speakers of the L2 are usually required to understand the first language of the majority of the children as a legal prerequisite for them to be given full responsibility for a group. Their language competence should be such that they can react quickly, appropriately and without help or translation in an emergency situation. However, this is not always the case. In most cases, the native speakers do not speak the majority language at a native-like level, a fact which may create an asymmetry in everyday communication. It is vital to the cooperation within the team to avoid any kind of imbalance between the group members arising from an unequal distribution of language skills. The responsibility for the groups as well as for questions of organisation, of the educational approach, of discipline and so on, has to be equally distributed among all team members. If the necessary language skills are lacking, alternative solutions have to be found to ensure that this will not adversely affect the role distribution in the preschool. Patience is a very important asset in this respect: language learning takes a long time, and a willingness to learn another language and dedicated support for this goal are needed from everyone in the team. It is an essential requirement for a successful operation of a preschool that the head of the institution is able to speak both languages in order to be able to discuss administrative questions with all parties involved. Otherwise, the linguistic hurdles might lead to frustrations, as the following

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of that particular person has been evaluated and verified. The L2 should be spoken at what is called a "near-native" level. More often than not, the level of language competence attained after having graduated from school is not sufficient for the tasks required in this line of work. In our experience, it has generally proved difficult to find teachers who have both the formal training and the language skills needed for a position in a bilingual preschool. In addition to that, it has been argued that such teachers usually lack the cultural (and intercultural) knowledge which native speakers of a language acquire in the course of a long socialization process in their own country. Very few non-native speakers have at their disposal the rich repertoire of language use with very young children, such as nursery rhymes, songs, and games, which is always a part of an authentic cultural heritage (Wode, personal communication).

quote from a survey on team communication documents. The survey was carried out after six months in a new international team in one of the ELIAS preschools.

**Quote 2:** [Team communication within the first six months was] partly successful – unsuccessful: my choice is based on both intercultural differences and ‘mono-cultural’ differences. Some of the current issues could have been avoided if there was more of an open/clearer communication between all parties. Many frustrations stemmed from not being understood, even after repeated explanations, and then having to resign to the fact that my questions or comments would go unanswered. (L2 teacher)

**Quote 3:** The organization of the school makes it difficult to find time to communicate things to other teachers, and this is compounded by the problem of things needing to be translated from someone’s first language. If a note needs to be left to inform me of something, sometimes my [preschool L1 competence] is not good enough to understand completely, even if I understand the words, I am not sure what I am supposed to do about whatever the note said. Sometimes I also feel that the [L1] colleagues (being more direct or forward) don’t wait for the English-speaking colleagues to finish their thoughts before jumping to a conclusion or making a decision. (L2 teacher; "L1" replaces name of the preschool’s first language)

Such frustrations are easily avoidable if appropriate measures are taken to enhance the quality (and, if necessary, the quantity) of team communication and to ensure that each team member understands the issues at stake.

*B. Training background and selection:* Apart from skills in both languages, native speakers need to have a training background which will be accepted as an equivalent to that of the host country. Recognition of different foreign training degrees by the local authorities has proved to be *the* major obstacle in the recruitment of suitable personnel. In addition, the accreditation process often involves several administrative agencies and may therefore take several months to be completed (see also Schilk et al. i. pr.). For this reason, it is vital to learn as early as possible about all the legal prerequisites to be met and the measures which need to be taken at each of the multiple stages of the process. To rule out the possibility that an agency might reject an applicant, key contact persons should be identified and contacted in person well before any hiring is finalised.

It is important to realise that a teacher’s educational training background is of importance not only for the recognition of personnel, but also for internal staff communication. Intercultural differences in training, educational approaches, questions of discipline and the like, will definitely arise and will need to be solved by mutual agreement. Significant differences among staff members in training and expertise are another potential source of frustration and conflict which can put an additional burden on the intercultural team (see section 5 for more details).

A thorough acquaintance with immersion principles is important for a smooth and successful operation of the programme. Knowledge in the field of second language acquisition is recommendable, but it is not a vital criterion to begin a position in a bilingual preschool. Further on the job-training should be provided from the very beginning. Contacts with local academic institutions (see section 9) for mentoring and training may be helpful in this respect. This volume of the ELIAS publication and extensive

training materials on the ELIAS website ([www.elias.bilikita.org](http://www.elias.bilikita.org)) also provide helpful introductions to, and background information and training materials on various topics related to bilingual preschool education.

All these issues call for a thorough selection process of new staff members. In view of the long time required for the recognition of foreign diplomas and degrees, job announcements should be published far ahead of time. They should include the precise name and description of the required training background. The job interviews should preferably be carried out by a team of staff members and external advisors who are able to evaluate the training, the educational qualification, the experience and the language level of the applicants. For obvious reasons, teaching experience in preschools is an important prerequisite in any application. If applicants do not have any prior experience, a careful selection process becomes even more important. However, many applicants come from abroad and can thus not easily be invited for a personal interview. In this case, video technology has proved to be a very helpful tool. Interviews can be set up via skype. In addition to the usual applications materials, preschools may ask (or require) their applicants to submit a teaching video in which the teacher has an opportunity to present her- or himself in the daily work with children. If interviews take place in preschool, it is helpful to let the applicant take part in the preschool routine. Our experience has shown that such measures are very effective for gaining a more complete picture of the applicants and their respective qualifications.

## **5. Working in a bilingual preschool**

### *Additional costs*

First of all, employing the bilingual principle of the person-language bond is not necessarily more expensive than a traditional preschool programme. Therefore, a bilingual preschool may get by with just the same amount of staff costs as a monolingual one. Experience has shown, however, that bilingual preschools are often interested in employing additional staff for their language programme, or need to bridge a gap between two employments of native speakers with creative solutions, such as bringing in external help for a limited period of time. This creates additional costs for which financial resources should be set aside. While a preschool's non-written materials are usable in a broad range of activities in both languages, there may be a need to purchase instructional materials that can be used in culture-specific teaching situations as well as materials for initial literacy training in the context of L2 activities (see below). Some of these materials are commercially available, others will have to be created by the preschool teachers from scratch (see Tiefenthal et al., this volume). This is an activity which, apart from background knowledge and creativity on the part of the teacher, requires time slots in which such preparations can take place. The L2 teacher's job specifications should therefore explicitly allow for hours spent in the creation of learning materials and count them as working time. In our experience, neglecting to set aside an

adequate amount of preparation time leads to feelings of frustration and overwork which may, in the worst case, push teachers to resign.

### *Formation of the team*

*A. Work load and initial help:* Teachers in bilingual preschools need to have a high level of enthusiasm and a willingness to put in extra hours, at least at the beginning of the programme. Usually, the first year on the new job is filled with a variety of challenges. Not only do L2 teachers have to get acquainted with their new work environment and a programme of a very special nature, but their whole life has to be adjusted to a different country and a new culture. These professional and social adjustments, together with all the administrative rules and regulations imposed on foreign employees, are time-consuming in themselves. The first year is also a very labour-intensive time on the job because instructional materials have to be adapted or created for the immersion context.

To help native speakers overcome these obstacles and to provide support for a successful transition into the new job and culture, guidance from the employer is indispensable. Newly arrived teachers experience the language barrier often as the greatest obstacle as they become involved in the administrative processes that invariably mark their initial weeks and sometimes months in the new country. Legal language and technical terms may render it virtually impossible for non-native speakers to manage their affairs on their own. This may understandably lead to feelings of helplessness, insecurity and dissatisfaction. It is also often paired with a sense of embarrassment arising from a constant need of having to ask for assistance. It is easy to see that such moments of frustration are annoying for the person concerned and may also affect the entire team. To avoid such irritations, the preschool should plan ahead of time and provide help on how to procure visas and work permits, and on how to deal with the essentials of everyday life, such as health insurance, apartment contracts, communication equipment (telephone, internet), and the like. Providing sufficient background information, practical advice and help in these instances will help minimise the negative effects that such time-consuming and often baffling tasks can have on a newcomer. Since the colleagues at the preschool are usually the first contact persons the new staff member can turn to, they need to be aware of these initial difficulties, and to understand that the process of acclimatisation, during which all team members have to adjust to each other, tends to last about an entire year.

*B. Working in an international team:* Apart from this transition time, cultural differences may manifest themselves visibly in others aspects of the daily work. These may concern educational approaches (e.g. teacher-centred vs. learner-centred activities, guided activities vs. free play), different ideas of discipline (e.g. which ways of sanctioning a child are appropriate or acceptable in the preschool, what rules have to be followed, etc.), or different styles of communication (what is considered polite, how to phrase criticism or a deviant opinion without hurting the other person, etc.). This latter

issue, in combination with the limited language competence in the other language, may result in unclear role distributions and problems in the organisational process. A very practical example recorded by a participant observer in one of the ELIAS preschools may serve as an illustration (observed during the first four months with a new team):

**Quote 4:** As I am one of the few people at the preschool who are able to speak both the L1 and the L2, both [L1] and L2 teachers turn to me to discuss team issues with me. The [L1] teachers repeatedly expressed their frustration that the native speakers did not take over equal responsibility for their groups. The [L1 teachers] felt that, although they were willing to share the tasks and decisions with the native speakers, and although they frequently invited them to take part in that process, the native speakers remained too passive and had to be specifically asked to take action. On the other hand, the native speakers told me that they tried very hard to find their way into the team and into their roles within it, but that they considered the [L1 teachers] the hosts in the preschool and that, to their understanding, it would be extremely rude to jump in and impose their ideas or actions on the preschool programme without being asked to do so. In other words, as far as I understand it, what was regarded as an irresponsible neglect with regard to the role as a group leader by the L1 teachers, was regarded as a natural form of politeness from the point of view of the L2 teachers. (ELIAS Participant Observer)

Three months after this incident, an L2 teacher from the same team, commenting on the situation, identified language and communication issues as the core of this problem:

**Quote 5:** My role within the team feels unclear. I was told at the beginning to take charge and be the leader and the boss of one of the houses at the kindergarten, but so many of the important things going on were conducted in [the L1] that it became silly to pretend that I was in charge when I didn't have the complete picture of what was going on. Now that I am working alone in the house, I guess my role is clearer, but still a little foggy because I don't know what sorts of things I am allowed to make decisions about and which I am supposed to ask my boss about. (L2 teacher)

It is important to keep in mind that one and the same situation might be interpreted very differently if seen from the perspective of different cultural background and on the basis of a different set of experiences, as the next quote from the survey illustrates. At the time of the survey, some of the L1 staff had the impression that the native speakers "fenced themselves off" from the rest of the team, and expressed their regret about that. They felt that they had given them more advice and practical help than they themselves had ever received in their own sojourns abroad. However, the same situation is interpreted in the opposite way by one of the native speakers at the same point in time. This vividly illustrates how the feeling of frustration about how an individual's own position is not understood is shared by *both* sides:

**Quote 6:** I really feel that [we] the foreigners have tried very hard to work within the new cultural expectations, to conform to the cultural and educational expectations, and yet I feel this is not reciprocated in the same manner. I would like to see all members of the team create an intercultural atmosphere instead of only the foreigners conforming to [L1] regulations. (L2 teacher)

Fortunately for all parties concerned, these initial difficulties were overcome in the course of time. At the end of the project, several team members explicitly pointed out that they were grateful for the experience and proud to be a part of the team. One crucial factor, even at this early stage in the process, was that all team members were

highly motivated to integrate themselves into the newly formed group. This is a prime example of the effect that positive attitudes have on group formation. As a matter of fact, such processes are well-known in the formation of teams:

[Intercultural] Teams are unlikely to show peak performance from the moment of their conception. Instead, they require time for team members to come together, get to know each other and begin discovering mutual orientation and a shared normative idea about how the team is to proceed ... Traditional models of team development, such as Tuckman's (1965) model, have already dealt with this issue, in which the "performing phase" is not reached until the prerequisite phases in the team process, namely the "forming", "storming" and "norming", have been completed. The more culturally diverse the team is, including the respective members' abilities and their disparate ideas of "norming", the more important it is to allow enough time for the "forming" stage. It is unrealistic to expect peak performance from intercultural teams from the very beginning. These teams require more time for interacting and finding their own [sic.] within the team and might, as a result, find more difficulties in getting the team up and running. This is especially true when tasks require close collaboration among members. (Stumpf 2010: 307)

Understanding the basic principles behind these processes and allowing enough time for them to develop according to their own dynamics is thus vital to overcome the "storming" phase in order to reach a phase of fruitful "performance." The following quote shows how easily this point can be missed when expectations – towards oneself as well as towards others – are high, but the forming and storming, though unrecognised, are still going on:

**Quote 7:** I will not blame any misunderstanding or problems to "language" or "intercultural" issues because 6 months is long enough for us to learn to work around them. It's a matter of accepting other ways of doing things and working together as a team. We all have our various backgrounds, experiences and talents which can be put together to form a great team but up to now it's just everyone doing their own individual thing. (L2 teacher)

Recognising the current stage in the team formation process is one important step towards a successful development. Other helpful attitudes are described by an L1 teacher in the same survey, who concludes that it is important:

**Quote 8:** ... to feel enriched by the diversity of the people who surround you, and to offer your own skills to support them. In this way, a team of L1 and L2 speakers can become an asset for everyone. This is the significance and the goal of good team work, especially in an intercultural team. (L1 teacher, translated by the authors)

### *Regular quality exchange*

Becoming a mutually supportive team means that members understand and support the idea of bilingual education and that each of them plays an important role in the process of striving for this goal. Regular opportunities for an exchange of observations and ideas, for discussion and improvement – meetings which we have called "quality circles" – have proved valuable for the progress of team formation and the actual work process. Meetings that provide room for such activities should take place on a regular basis, e.g. once a week, and should be integrated in the preschool routine. They can be used to discuss issues of the bilingual preschool programme, the educational concept, the children's development, practical problems, and as training sessions for new staff

members who need to be introduced to the special programme of the preschool. Simultaneously, sessions like these offer opportunities to invite external advisors for training in different background areas (see section 9 below).

## 6. L2 teaching principles

Using a foreign language as a means of communication with young children throughout an entire day presents a special challenge to the teachers. The chapter by Kersten et al. in this volume gives a comprehensive overview of practical guidelines for teachers' language input (see also Kersten & Rohde in prep.). Therefore, this section will limit itself to highlighting the most important principles.

It is of vital importance that the L2 teachers use the L2 continually in contact with the children. If possible, this behaviour should be extended to parents and colleagues; here, however, the above-mentioned restrictions apply: it is more important to ensure successful communication among the team members and with the parents than to adhere dogmatically to this rule. Yet, observations from the ELIAS preschools have shown that children react positively to the L2 and produce more output in the L2 themselves if they cannot be sure that every L1 utterance will be understood. The need for active negotiation of meaning (e.g. Long 1981, 1996, Swain 1985) is higher the more consequently the L2 is used. However, even if different rules are applied in interactions with parents and colleagues, the L2 should be used with the children at all times. The tendency to take recourse to the children's L1 in, for example, emergency or discipline situations, runs the risk of reducing the authority of utterances in the L2. If all-important information is conveyed in the first language, children might feel less obliged to pay attention to L2 information in the same way.

Language is used as a means of communication, which implies two things: firstly, children have to be able to deduce the meaning of each situation and the reason for each activity from the context, i.e. from other information which the teacher has to provide in addition to the language; and secondly, by understanding the context and the meaning of the activity, the children are enabled to understand the language, and are thus able to gradually build up the language system of the L2 by themselves. For the teacher, this means that she needs to contextualise her language on different information channels, auditory and visual, so as to provide multi-sensory learning opportunities for the children. The following principles for the L2 language use by teachers are particularly important:

- to provide rich input, and to constantly accompany every action with language
- to offer a wide variety of meaningful activities for children using a wide variety of language, not merely games and activities which involves imitation
- to use a hands-on approach in which children can "handle" objects as well as language for themselves

- to use gestures, mime and body language
- to use a variety of different materials and visual aids, such as pictures, flash cards, books, videos and, above all, authentic objects
- to create scaffolds of daily routines with recurring phrases which are easy to remember and which help the children understand the structure of the day
- to foster the children's L2 output by encouraging and praising them; but not to put pressure on them and never to force them to use the L2
- to use the children's L1 and L2 utterances, recast them in the correct form and expand on them using frequent repetitions, paraphrases, expansions; give frequent explanations
- you may focus on the language itself, and this might even be helpful to highlight some differences between the L1 and the L2, but if you do so, make sure that your activity is authentic and does not lapse into a simple language drill

Using the L2 as a vehicle of communication also means that the children's content learning of various topics offered at the preschool will take place in the L2. The zoo preschool in Magdeburg, Germany, one of the ELIAS preschools, located on the premises of Magdeburg's Zoological Garden, is a vivid example of how the topic of bilingual environmental education or *green immersion*, a term coined by the ELIAS team, can be conveyed in the second language.

The impression which the environment exerts is especially great for young children at preschool and primary school age. Therefore, we expect that their natural interest and enthusiasm today will turn them into convinced – and convincing – environmentalists tomorrow. (Kersten & Perret 2008: 5, translation by the authors)

Green immersion means that nature-related themes such as animals, plants, ecology, conservation and so on, are introduced in a hands-on approach in the second language. In immersion schools, it is a well-known fact that such content learning in the immersion context works very well: If the immersion principles are implemented, i.e. if the programme guarantees intensive and long exposure to the L2 in at least 50% of the curriculum over an extended period of time, and if immersion teaching principles are observed, content learning in school does not suffer. The observational study in the ELIAS zoo preschool reveals for the first time that content learning is also possible and very successful at a much earlier age as has previously been shown. As Shannon Thomas, zoo educator and researcher in the Magdeburg ELIAS team, describes in her contributions in the first and second volume of this publication, the children in her groups were able to experience, explore, and learn a wide variety of facts about nature topics. Some of the older children even reached the stage of "action competence," the highest level in a developmental model on green immersion (see Thomas et al., volume I, and Steinlen et al., volume II), provided that immersion teaching principles were competently used in the encounters with biological facts and phenomena.

Further explanations and sources for these principles may be found in the chapters by Kersten et al. in this volume, and in the L2 teachers' input analysis by Weitz et al. in volume I. It is recommendable to organise a teacher training, preferably by involving external experts, at an early time after a new teacher has started in a bilingual programme. As one of the ELIAS observers remarked:

As mentioned before, a teacher training for bilingual education – either incorporated in the existing teacher trainings or as a separate post-graduate training would be advisable, so that teachers are not left to their own devices. Right now there is a lot of frustration among the teachers because they have to discover the best teaching procedures all by themselves, and they do not know whether they are doing a good job. (ELIAS participant observer)

## 7. Role of the parents

The attitude shown by parents has an important effect on their children's learning progress.<sup>11</sup> For the school context, for example, many studies have demonstrated an intimate relationship between parental expectations and the actual academic achievements of their children (e.g. Eccles et al. 1983, McGrath & Repetti 2000). For the preschool context, it is likewise known that children unconsciously conform to their parents' attitudes and that a positive parental attitude positively affects the language learning progress (see e.g. Mushi 2000, Lopez 2005). For foreign language learning, the results from Canadian research clearly show that children are successful in early immersion programs when their parents are enthusiastic about immersion and believe in the programme, when they work together with the preschool teachers, when they take an interest in what the child tells them about the programme, and when they take part in preschool activities (e.g. Fortune & Tedick 2003). At home, parents are advised to (verbally) interact with their children in the mother tongue, and to read to their children in the mother tongue on a regular basis because numerous studies have shown that reading activities at home are an important predictor for later academic success in school (e.g. Fan & Chen 2002, Flouri & Buchanan 2004). Since the preschool provides a lot of input in the L2, the role of the parents as role models for the L1, which needs to be fostered at home, is all the more important. Practical experience in bilingual preschools has shown that it is not necessary for parents to drill the L2 at home. Parents may encourage their children to use the L2, but should not make them produce the L2 for friends or family members if the child does not want to (e.g. Schilk et al. in prep.).

For parents who are not familiar with the bilingual programme, it is recommendable to provide information at the moment when they come to enrol a child, and in the course of the school year, on how bilingual education works, what they can reasonably expect with regard to the children's progress in L2 acquisition, and assure them that the L1 and academic development are not negatively affected by bilingual learning. Observ-

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11 This paragraph is taken from the guidelines to language input in bilingual preschools (Kersten et al., this volume), and is reprinted here for the convenience of the reader.

ers' experience has shown that parents who are not initially advised about bilingual education

expect their child to be bilingual within a year or three, fear that the L1 and academic abilities will be [negatively] affected, and ask the L2 teachers to translate to the L1 during the L2 classes etc. [Therefore, it is important to] avoid that the[se] typical fears and prejudices live among the parents. (ELIAS participant observer)

## **8. Programme continuation after preschool**

In an ideal constellation for bilingual learning, a preschool's bilingual programme is continued in an immersion primary school, in which 50% or more of the curriculum is taught in the L2 by bilingual teachers. However, this is often not the case, especially if the preschool has just been implemented. Usually, both parents and the preschool teams begin to ask for a programme continuation when the first group of children in the programme reaches school age. As the setup of a bilingual primary programme takes time, this first group of children often does come to enjoy the benefits of a direct continuation. In that case, parents either opt for the traditional school system, in which the L2 might be introduced at a later stage and in a less intensive form, or they look for other specialised programmes.

To remedy this situation, it is recommendable to contact local primary and secondary schools as early as possible to discuss options for an introduction of special programmes aimed at bilingual children. These children will be part of the primary system at some specific point in the future, after all, and their special abilities will influence the teaching and learning process in their future classes. Schools should be aware of the fact that the children's abilities need to be fostered, and that they differ hugely from their monolingual peers in language classes. These differences need to be addressed and taken care of. Local primary schools are well advised to regard the presence of bilingual children in their classrooms as an asset and a valuable opportunity for everyone to benefit from the specific skills these young learners bring to their new institution.

It is our experience that it is helpful if both primary and secondary schools are introduced to the bilingual preschool. This constitutes an important prerequisite for the institutions to appreciate the impressive language competence of the young children and may thus confirm their belief in the immersion approach to language learning, or actually lead them to introduce such a programme. Teachers may be invited to spend time in the preschool, groups of children may visit language classes in primary school, and teacher-parent meetings or other events may be used to distribute relevant information to interested parties. Parent initiatives coming from the preschool's parents are an important asset as well. At any rate, there is much to be gained if an intensive exchange between the different institutions is established and sustained. Schools might be reminded that a special programme such as language immersion contributes to their profile and reputation, and that it will be beneficial not only to the children from a specific

bilingual preschool, but for their monolingual classmates as well: they will profit both from the immersion programme and from the language competence which their bilingual classmates already possess. Under such circumstances it will only take a relatively short time until they catch up with their peers (see Wode, this volume, and the guidelines for the implementation of bilingual primary school, Kersten et al. 2010).

Ideally, schools with a bilingual follow-up programme should be located in close proximity to the bilingual preschool. This would facilitate an intensive exchange and allow children to remain in their own neighbourhood when they take the next step in the school system.

## **9. Academic monitoring and cooperation**

Just as cooperation between preschools and schools yields positive results for all parties involved, a close connection between preschools and academic institutions has proved to be useful for both partners. Academic experts with their theoretical knowledge in the field of L2 learning and other areas of expertise have the potential to support bilingual preschools in several respects. Researchers are knowledgeable about research studies, practical experiences and best practices in the field of bilingual learning world-wide. They can thus provide academic monitoring with valuable background information and advice on areas such as conceptual planning, teaching principles, intercultural communication and young children's (language) development. They might also be willing to take an active part in teacher training programmes and in supplying parents with useful information, and may thus provide a sound academic basis for the programme. All of these factors contribute to a preschool's good reputation and may strengthen parents' faith in the preschool and its conceptual design.

Researchers, for their part, might welcome an opportunity to conduct language assessment in bilingual preschools as part of their own research interests. If both institutions are able to finance participant observation on a regular basis (a model which has been followed with great success in all ELIAS preschools) they establish a regular exchange and profit from the fact that outside observers gain an insider's perspective on preschool routines. In this way, preschools are able to provide important practical insights, an element that is often neglected in a traditional research setup. In the overall perspective, a more intensive exchange between researchers and practitioners will result in mutual benefits, and in the continued improvement of the immersion concept for preschools.

Collaboration with partner institutions that pursue educational goals but are not connected to the education system in the narrow sense (e.g. museums, zoos, aquaria) may provide preschools with direct and intensive experiences that normally lie beyond their reach. In collaboration with the L2 teachers, these contents can be made available to the children in both languages.

Finally, cooperation with local businesses and companies as well as with inter-/national associations have an inherent potential providing additional resources. Sponsors might be willing to contribute to the programme, give practical help or seek out specific offers for their own employees, which the preschool might be able to provide. National and international funding programmes, on the other hand, can be tapped for the financing of specific projects or the recruitment of language assistants. Here, collaboration with academic research institutions might also come in useful to broaden the range of available resources. It should be pointed out, however, that the identification of funding programmes and the ensuing application process requires a substantial amount of additional time and resources. Any attempt to obtain grant money will lead to a significant drain on the time usually spent on the management of the applying organisation.

## **10. Suitability of the bilingual programme for children**

Making decisions about how to direct a child's education is not always easy. Since parents do not want to expose their children's intellectual development to unnecessary risks, it is understandable that they want to know whether immersive learning is suitable for all children. This often results in questions of whether children with special characteristics benefit from immersion programmes: those who appear to be particularly gifted, slow learners, children with learning impairments, or children with a migrant background. As is often the case, there is no single, clear-cut answer. Since the factors involved in each case tend to vary widely, only a close look at the individual circumstances and the specific prevailing conditions in the families and at the schools will provide useful clues for making the best decision for the given situation. The following paragraphs are adapted from our guidelines for immersion in primary schools (Kersten et al. 2010), but the findings can be applied to the preschool context as well.

Research studies conducted in North America have repeatedly shown that a successful participation in immersion programmes does not depend on what might be seen as a child's academic aptitude. Even supposedly weaker pupils benefit from immersion teaching. They also acquire a comparably good foreign language competence in addition to knowledge in the respective subjects. They are not disadvantaged and achieve the same level of competence as they would in monolingual lessons, provided they get the same level of support as in monolingual lessons (Bruck 1982, 1984, Holobow et al. 1987, 1991).<sup>12</sup> Researchers in the USA investigated whether children who changed from immersion programmes to monolingual programmes would improve their

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12 A comprehensive list of references for the topic "Language Immersion and the Underperforming Learner" can be found on the website:

[www.carla.umn.edu/immersion/bibliographies/ul.html](http://www.carla.umn.edu/immersion/bibliographies/ul.html)

achievements. This was not found to be the case and the results from a similar study conducted in a German context at the Claus-Rixen-School<sup>13</sup> support these findings.

Up to now, there are no confirmed results regarding the effects of dyslexia on immersive learning. Due to the lack of hard data, some schools choose to stay on the safe side and advise parents not to enrol children with severe dyslexia in immersion programmes in order to prevent an aggravation of potential difficulties. At the Claus-Rixen-School Altenholz, it has been observed that children's dyslexia only became apparent during primary school and that the problems due to the dyslexia were not very severe. Immersion teaching had no additional negative effects in such cases. In addition, these children were found to have much better foreign language skills compared to their peers who attended monolingual classes. As dyslexia often is not yet diagnosed when a child starts school, there are no guidelines for schools to follow. In preschools, dyslexia seems to be even less problematic for children as most of the language input is based on oral communication.

Especially in areas with a substantial migrant population, parents enquire whether immersion teaching is also suitable for children from migrant families or for families who are multilingual (Piske 2007). For these children, the foreign language would be the third or even fourth language the children are exposed to. For bilingual children who start learning English as a third language when attending a bilingual preschool and an immersion school, no problems are expected, provided that both native languages are well developed. It is important in such cases that the home languages and any other languages are well supported. Children from multilingual families should use the ambient majority language as well as the native or family language/s as often as possible and in as many situations as possible. International research has shown that especially those children stand to benefit from immersion teaching who are certain to develop both their first language and possible other languages at an age-appropriate level (Wode 1995). The children should also learn to write in their native language. However, given the legal regulations in many European countries, the conditions are such that this can – apart from a few notable exceptions – rarely happen in the current education systems.

In this context it is also worth remembering that, at the beginning of an immersion programme, all children are in the same situation because the foreign language is new to all of them. As immersion teaching strongly relies on visual input, all children, regardless of their individual characteristics, have a very good chance to learn the foreign language successfully.

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13 The Claus-Rixen-Schule is an immersion primary school which offers a follow-up programme to two ELIAS preschools in Kiel, Germany. It includes 70% of English immersion teaching in their curriculum (see Wode 2009 and this volume, for more information on the programme and research results from this school).

## 11. Further issues and recommendations

Contrary to what opponents might claim, immersion is not a programme designed for a social elite. In view of the many positive effects that issue from language immersion, we are convinced that it should be made available to all children. Unfortunately, a number of obstacles – some of them financial and political – stand in the way of a more widespread adoption of the immersion principle. Often, bilingual preschools do not receive sufficient support from administrators and policy makers because they consider immersion as an "exotic" programme. To spread the benefits of bilingual education beyond a segment of the population, ministries of education and policy makers must remedy the current situation and advocate a wider distribution of bilingual institutions in their various states. To exploit the advantages of bilingual education in the best possible way, they should also create an appropriate infrastructure for a seamless continuation from pre-primary to secondary education.

One of the important prerequisites for a widespread implementation of immersion programmes is the ability of institutions to attract native speakers of the respective languages. This can only be achieved if the validation and recognition processes for foreign degrees and certificates is facilitated and adjusted to the needs and realities of schools and preschools. It has been our experience that, up to the present time, the long, inflexible and overly bureaucratic recognition process for immersion teachers presents a major obstacle for many bilingual preschools across Europe. It is similarly important to make sure that immersion teachers, who tend to be very talented, qualified and highly motivated individuals, receive adequate credit for the important work that they do – both with regard to their social recognition as well as regarding the monetary remuneration they deserve. Thus we urgently recommend the creation of a set of European standards for the job profile of an immersion teacher (after all, the EU actively sponsors and promotes multilingualism in its member states), as well as an initiative to standardise teacher training for positions in bilingual preschools and, above all, a simplification of the recognition process for foreign teacher training certificates across Europe.

At the same time, it is important to make sure that bilingual preschool programmes meet certain quality standards. Based on the research studies quoted above and on the findings of the ELIAS project, we suggest that criteria for immersion programmes should be evaluated according to factors such as the duration of the L2 contact over several years, its intensity (at least 50% of the provided language input), a high language proficiency of the L2 teachers in the target language, and the competent use of appropriate teaching principles as exemplified above (cf. in Kersten et al., this volume). These criteria are discussed in detail in the various chapters of this book.

We propose this set of criteria for language immersion as a solid base for discussions to be held in the context of politically relevant processes and decisions on bilingual education (cf. Council of Europe 2006). Bilingual approaches differ widely across

Europe and world wide (Met & Lorenz 1997, Swain & Johnson 1997, Walker & Tedick 2000), and while results on content and language learning have been highly positive in the evaluation of immersion programmes, it is at this point still difficult to make substantial statements about the effectiveness of other approaches with less intensive L2 input. The term "immersion," however, seems to be increasingly used as an umbrella term for a wide variety of different bilingual programmes, many of which do not rigorously apply the criteria mentioned above. It is important to realize that the positive results pertain only to immersion programmes which do meet these criteria. Political decision makers should be aware of the fact that programmes which do not adhere to the principles outlined above are likely to produce different, possibly less successful, results, and that perceived problems of bilingual approaches may in fact not be caused by the immersion concept as such, but by a less rigorous application of the immersion principles. We thus recommend the usage of the term "immersion" as a clearly defined concept as outlined above and the establishment of corresponding standards and training profiles which should be based on research results and best practices from efficient and well established bilingual programmes, such as the ones presented in the chapters of this book.

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