

The Impact of Observing Good Teaching Practice on Early CLIL Teachers: A European Project

Dana Hanesová*

The aim of the present study is to underline the importance of the observation of authentic lessons for the professional development of trainee teachers. This is especially important with innovative methodologies, such as CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). In Slovakia, since the new educational reforms in 2008, there has been a huge shortage of professional teachers able to teach English to young learners. Another challenge has been presented by the difficulties of implementing this innovative methodology in school practice. Of course, one of the most effective ways is trying to include as many hours of direct observation of CLIL lessons as possible during teacher training. To address the shortage of professional teachers trained in CLIL, in 2013 and 2014 Matej Bel University (UMB) invited Prof. Kovács, an expert from ELTE, Budapest to provide students, teacher trainers and methodologists, with opportunities to observe practical CLIL lessons (project of the European Social Fund No. 26110230082). Feedback from the participants showed the value of seeing CLIL demonstrated in real life. They reported feeling encouraged, motivated and enabled to implement CLIL methodology later in their schools in Slovakia.

Keywords: CLIL, early years education, observation, teacher education, in-service teachers, EFL teaching practice

Introduction

After the experts in getting knowledge discovered that it was far more profitable to examine real things and observe how they worked rather than merely speculate and argue about them, and that it was unsafe to trust the authority of any man's opinion without testing it in accordance with facts of nature, education experts also began to advocate teaching by the direct study of things and experimental verification of opinions (Thorndike, 1920, p. 176).

With children at the centre of educational efforts, everything should be done to offer both students in Teacher Education (TE) programmes and in-service teachers enough opportunities for their teaching skills to develop and blossom. One of the most effective ways of doing this is to provide them with enough opportunities to observe and reflect on real teaching in schools. But what does it mean to ensure the quality of the foreign language lessons that the teachers observe and specifically of teaching via CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) – a methodology which is rather new in our national educational systems? How can it be ensured in a region without previous expertise or experience? Our study shows one way of solving this problem, and that is by learning from the experience of other countries with sufficient levels of expertise.

* Doc. PaedDr. Dana Hanesová PhD: besztercebányai Matej Bel Egyetem Teológia és Hitoktatás Tanszékének munkatársa. E-mail: dana.hanesova@umb.sk

The Need for Lesson Observation – Steps to Solution in Slovakia

The current state of foreign language teaching in Slovakia has been shaped by the last educational reform that was launched in 2008 when the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport approved the School Act defining new pedagogical documents for the state educational programmes at ISCED 0, ISCED 1, ISCED 2 and ISCED 3. This ongoing reform has focused on innovations and changes in educational standards in terms of quality, and at the same time on the development of new educational programs that understand competences to be creative abilities to solve problems, including teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL).¹

As a radical step of reform, a new concept of teaching foreign languages was accepted whereby English language acquired the status of being the first obligatory foreign language for all learners from the 3rd grade of primary school (with an opportunity to start already in the 1st grade). Once this measure came into force, the deficit of well-prepared primary school teachers in foreign languages was glaringly obvious. Textbooks and other EFL documents written by Slovak methodologists (e.g. Farkašová, Menzlová & Biskupičová, 2001; Gadušová, 2004; Hartánská, 2004; Cimermanová, 2010; Pokrivčáková, 2010; Straková 2010) underlined the importance of innovative approaches to teaching languages to young learners, especially the natural acquisition of the target language without consciously learning the definitions of linguistic rules. Thus, instead of content issues, the reform emphasized the quality of language acquisition by young learners.

The Slovak National Institute for Education promptly launched an initiative to overcome this deficit by organizing extensive courses (384 hours) of EFL teaching methodology for primary school teachers. However, in spite of the tremendous efforts made by course organizers as well as by hundreds of learners, one important issue remained unaddressed as highlighted in the follow-up surveys completed by these teachers; namely, the need for a lot more hours of reflective observation of good school practice than the educational institutions were able to provide. Furthermore, compared to the previous experience of many practicing language teachers of ISCED 2 and ISCED 3, 'young learners' – the target group of children from 3 to 10/11 years – require a methodologically different approach.

Besides EFL teaching methodology for younger children there is yet another demand on the graduates of these early EFL courses, and that is how to face the new challenge of EU countries and Slovak ministry to teach CLIL in state primary schools as it has been put forward as a recommendation for primary schools in official educational ministerial instructions² since 2011. In spite of the fact that several faculties of education and their methodologists started to focus on describing teaching CLIL (Lojová, 2010; Pokrivčáková, 2010), there is still an evident lack of qualified teachers prepared to apply it (Hurajová, 2013; Sepešiová, 2013; Menzlová, 2013; Pokrivčáková, 2013).

With this need in mind, a team of Slovak teacher trainers from the Faculty of Education, Matej Bel University (PF UMB) in Banská Bystrica (with no previous experience in teaching early CLIL) started searching for ways to assist TEFL students to develop more effective teaching skills and to offer Slovak pre-service and in-service teachers high quality CLIL education. Based on the references and positive experience with a Hungarian expert in early years CLIL, they decided to invite hab. Prof. Judit Kovács, PhD. from ELTE University, Budapest to facilitate UMB to develop CLIL teaching skills based not only on theory but also on observing and reflecting on real CLIL lessons. Prof. Kovács became an official international expert for a European mobility project called 'Mobilities – the promotion of science, research and education at the University of Matej Bel (UMB)', Activity 1.4. This

1. For further details see: <http://keyconet.eun.org>

2. For further details see: <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/6148.pdf>

project with the ITMS code 26110230082 was approved under the Operational Program Education, Priority Axis 1 – Reform of the system of education and training in the end of the year 2012. It has been co-financed by the European Social Fund as Project OPV-2011/1.2/03-SORO in Chapter 1.2 Universities and research and development as engines of development of the knowledge society. The project started in January 2013 and lasted until June 2015.

Teacher mobility can be viewed as one of the ways of successfully meeting the requirements of qualifying foreign language teachers with respect to the multilingual and multicultural context of current society. So the idea behind the project was to fund the secondment of Prof. Kovács – a prominent academic with many years of research and teaching experience at different education levels – to Slovakia in order to contribute to the education, science and research at UMB. The project was aimed at facilitating UMB to improve the EFL/CLIL research and education.

Prof. Kovács had various roles at PF UMB during the project – from facilitating the development of courses of primary EFL, including CLIL, methodology, and its research at PF UMB (e. g. advice on planning, implementation and evaluation of students' development) to dissemination of the project ideas during conferences and seminars and publishing about project results. She became a tutor to the Slovak team offering her know-how of teaching foreign language and especially CLIL to young learners. Besides teaching, the project supported consultations between the Hungarian expert and Slovak TE students and teachers (either about theoretical principles or questions related to the real learning process). The main purpose of this project has been to guide the students through their theoretical as well as practical training in dealing with specific situations and providing them with 'tailor-made' counselling in CLIL.

Since the project started, Prof. Kovács has provided three teaching blocks in Slovakia. The first one took place between 22th and 26 April 2013. Prof. Kovács was welcomed by the team of Slovak experts, namely by the academic dean prof. PhDr. Bronislava Kasáčová, and her colleagues doc. PaedDr. Dana Hanesová and Mgr. Ivana Králiková. Prof. Kovács started the tradition of teaching Methodology of teaching English (namely CLIL) for young learners at PF UMB by teaching the first course in 2013 according to the curriculum that she prepared. The course participants consisted of M.A. students of primary education who were highly motivated to learn how to add the methodology of teaching English language to their study programme for primary education.

Prof. Kovács' next teaching block in Slovakia from 4th to 7th November 2013, focused on the second part of the Methodology of teaching English to young learners. This challenging four-day-long series of lectures and workshops, seminars, practical exercises and lessons, targeted students, practicing teachers, teacher trainers, and even for primary school managers/heads. Its aim was to strengthen the links between Higher Education and the real needs of the primary schools that are the potential employers of these Faculty of Education graduates. One part of the course took place in a primary school in Banská Bystrica. Several sample lessons were being taught by Dr. Kovács in the course of three afternoon meetings. They were observed and reflected on not only by the whole group of TE students (in the master programme) but also by in-service teachers of English from eight primary schools in Banská Bystrica and even by EFL methodologists from faculties of education. Thus a 'dream' of many teachers observing authentic teaching of English/CLIL to young learners came true. This hands-on experience was followed by theoretical and methodological education in the mornings. Prof. Kovács focused on several issues regarding the teaching of different language skills such as pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, but especially on the quality of lesson plans and lesson assessment.

In spring 2014 (24th to 28th March and 10th to 14th April) a new group of students participated not only in an innovative course on the Methodology of teaching English language to young learners, but they were also given a unique opportunity to become students of a brand new course of teaching CLIL to young learners. Both subjects consisted of 26 lessons and the course was successfully completed by 23 students. Thanks again to a primary school in Banská Bystrica, this group of students was given a great opportunity not only to acquire basic knowledge of EFL/CLIL methodology for young learners, but also to gain some real life experience with teaching this age group via observing actual lessons.

During her courses, Prof. Kovács emphasized the acquisition of English language prior to conscious learning of young learners. She used the method of experiential learning so that the TE students had several opportunities to try and experience different methods of developing their own language skills and vocabulary. She familiarized her students with a number of theoretical and methodological resources and teaching methods. The video recordings of good CLIL practice in Hungarian bilingual schools were of great value, but even more was the live teaching she gave to young learners in front of the TE students and in-service teachers. Prof. Kovács shared her expertise based on her experience in bilingual Hungarian schools to several university teachers, methodologists, and representatives of the Department of Primary Education as well as of the University management.

In March 2014, the Hungarian expert set up an extensive high-quality week of CLIL teaching observations in Budapest for two members of the Slovak team, Dana Hanesová and Andrea Poliaková. They were given the chance to visit several Hungarian bilingual kindergartens and primary schools and observe their ways of teaching English to young learners. They had an opportunity to visit several schools that focused on CLIL methodology, namely the state kindergarten Pitypang Bilingual Kindergarten, the private elementary school Magda Szabó Foundation Bilingual Primary School and the State Frigyes Karinthy primary school.

Another benefit of this project was a direct contribution to the professional development of three doctoral UMB students, all of whom were writing their theses about primary and secondary CLIL (I. Králiková, A. Brišová, and D. Guffová). Through having the opportunity to participate in the project and observing CLIL lessons by Prof. Kovács, their PhD research could acquire wider, authentic dimensions of CLIL methodology. After producing a very creative, pioneering set of CLIL mathematical course books for children in 2014, D. Guffová was accepted to become a new university methodologist.

The Importance of Observing and Reflecting on Teaching Practice

Though everybody might agree that observation plays a central role in teaching practice, many students in teaching programmes say they need far more opportunities to observe, reflect and train directly in primary schools than they actually are offered by the faculties. Observational learning in the preparation of trainee teachers (or even developing the professional skills of in-service teachers) is learning that occurs through observing the behaviour or in our case the teaching of others. Observing other teachers' lessons is an experience that shapes the future teaching practices of pre-service or in-service teachers. It means to learn not only by studying theories, but through experience, or rather, through reflecting on what occurred. Having opportunities to observe somebody's teaching means providing the occasion for experiential learning where students are involved in learning content in which they have a personal interest, need, or want. Observations of senior training teachers in the class give TE students 'a chance to familiarize themselves with the course materials, the teaching methods and teaching strategies, their interaction with students, the kinds of language to use so that the stu-

dents would understand it and produce it' (Richards, 2011, p. 90). They allow future teachers to become familiar with potential problems and the problem-solving process. One of the most important benefits of observation is that finally it focuses directly on learners – who they are, how they can learn, and their interests, motives and learning styles.

This form of observational and experiential learning on how to become a good teacher does not need reinforcement for it to occur, but instead requires a role model. A good teacher becomes a role model for TE students. He/she is extremely important in observational teaching practice because they model not only the steps to undertake during the lessons, but also stimulate trainees' useful cognitive processes and their own construction of what good English teaching practice means. Observation, furthermore, helps TE students to analyse what to observe and store it in memory for later imitation. Teacher preparation can involve both observational learning and modelling. Though by observing experienced teachers 'you can learn how and what to teach or how and what not to teach' (Homolová, 2012, p. 3); observational learning is very beneficial in situations where there are positive teaching models involved.

There are several basic principles for the application of lesson observation for the purpose of forming reflective EFL professionals (adapted from Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010):

- To carefully choose observation experiences of teaching and support them by reflection, critical analysis and synthesis.
- Observation experiences should be structured to require the student to take initiative, make decisions and be accountable for results.
- Throughout the experiential observation process, the student is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative and constructing meaning.
- TE students have to be engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually and/or physically
- In cases of the above-mentioned principles being respected, the results of the observational experience are personal and form the basis for becoming a good teacher.
- The teacher trainer and his/her students are open to mutual "experience of success, failure, adventure, risk-taking and uncertainty, because the outcomes of the real school experience cannot totally be predicted.

So what is usually being observed in TE of future EFL teachers? In the Slovak context, each faculty of education has its own set of observation elements though they overlap to a large extent. Let us mention a few of them.

According to Gadušová (2004) from the Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (Gadušová, 2004), EFL students had to focus on the specifics of classroom management, teacher talk, error correction, lesson analysis – the fulfilment of aims and skills objectives, materials and methods used in the lesson, procedures in the lesson (review – presentation of new language – practice – production – additional activities) and especially on learners (problems, enjoyment etc.).

Homolová (2012, pp. 7, 24, 38) from UMB in Banská Bystrica provides the following lists (not specifically focusing on young learners) of the potential observation elements during several semesters of EFL teaching practice:

Table 1. Lists of the potential observation elements during various semesters of the EFL Teaching Practice. Adapted from Homolová (2012).

1 st year trainees winter term	1 st year trainees summer term	2 nd year trainees winter term
Learning environment and use of board	Developing receptive skills	Writing in the class
Teacher's gestures and facial expressions	Learner's speaking	Process writing procedure
Managing pair work and group work	Speaking practice of individual learners	Aims and activities
Teacher talk	Learning environment	Error correction
Learner talk	Lesson plan reconstruction	Pronunciation, intonation, stress
Class management	Stages, activities, aims	Speaking activities
Error correction by the teacher	Communicative speaking	
Questions asked by the teacher	Pronunciation, intonation, stress	

Doušková et al. (2011) from the Department of Primary Education, UMB specify observation points in the teaching practice of young learners to include lesson plans, the formulation of teaching aims, the choice of teaching methods, contact with pupils, the motivation and activation of learners, educational environment, the level of cognitive difficulty of learning tasks, learner's behaviour, classroom atmosphere, teacher's verbal and nonverbal communication, teacher's questions, classroom management, teaching/learning styles, teacher's interaction style, dealing with socially disadvantaged children, etc.

In cases where there was a lack of time and resources in the TE curriculum for all students to observe teaching by experienced teachers, Bajtoš (2010, p. 39) suggests the use of observation of microteaching, where individual TE students teach short allocated blocks of the lesson, whilst being observed by the rest of the group of TE students. The observation points could be, e.g. the teaching aims, the cognitive activity of pupils during lesson, methods used by teacher, social roles and relationships, educational communication, styles of teaching, and effectiveness of the teaching process.

During her teacher training courses for teachers of young learners at PF UMB, Prof. Kovács underlined the synergy of several 'high-quality lesson' requirements: interactivity between the teacher and students, age-relevant materials and methods, gradualism of the teaching process, space for language acquisition, holistic use of skills other than linguistic ones, context-based learning, the right amount of challenge, involvement of the senses, visual/audio, aids etc., cross-curricular elements, teacher's/pupils' language, relationship with pupils, and ways of evaluation. Of course, there are many points which can be observed but during their teaching practice students have to start with just a few points that are carefully chosen and planned during a pre-observation meeting. In her discussion with the TE students at PF UMB, Prof. Kovács chose the following points to observe in the CLIL classroom:

- What was the aim of the lesson? (linguistic, non-linguistic)
- What was the topic of the lesson?
- What was the teaching material of the lesson (coursebook unit, handout, individual tasks, authentic material, or else?)
- How far do you think the topic and the material were age-relevant?
- What were the steps of the lesson?

- How was new vocabulary introduced?
- How was new structure introduced?
- Was there any piece of literature used, any story books? In what way was it different from using course-books?

Maybe it is needless to add, but any lesson observation is wasted unless it is accompanied by a reflection of this observation. According to Kolb (1984), in order to gain genuine knowledge from an experience, 'the learner must be willing to be actively involved in the experience; to reflect on it; to use analytical skills to conceptualize the experience; and to apply decision making and problem solving skills in order to use the new ideas gained from the experience'. In her elaboration of this cycle, Moon (2004, p. 126) argued that if teacher education of future English teachers is to be effective, it must have three phases: a 'reflective learning phase', a 'phase of learning resulting from the actions inherent to experiential learning', and 'a further phase of learning from feedback'. Thus the observation has a chance to result in 'changes in judgment, feeling or skills' for future teachers and become a guide to choice and action. This means that reflection is necessary to any observational learning process. The teacher trainer/educator asking the right questions and guiding reflective discussions before, during, and after an experience, can help open 'a gateway' to creative thinking and innovative school practice. As the Association for Experiential Education states in its website,³ focused reflection of a direct experience (in our case of experience of observation good school teaching) can 'increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values'.

Observation of good practice of CLIL teachers and its feedback

The main focus of teaching observations organized by Prof. Kovács via the above-mentioned Project ('Mobilities – the promotion of science, research and education at the University of Matej Bel') has been on 'observing and reflecting the way CLIL works with young learners'. In Prof. Kovács's conception, feedback and reflection after each observation are absolutely crucial if the observers are expected to learn from them and to apply such practice into their own teaching. All kinds of reflections – oral or written reflections by individual observers, reflections shared in pairs and/or in small groups/the whole group – usually took as much time if not longer than the observations themselves.

The first stage in the reflective process was a spontaneous response about impressions (mostly emotional) from the observed lesson. Then the observers were asked to read through the list of observation points prepared in advance by the teacher (see above) again and recollect their occurrences during the observation. They were given time to make a short analysis and evaluation and comment on each of them. The last stage – sometimes directly following the observation or even later in the course – was an overall evaluation, including both affective and cognitive aspects, of this form of teacher training for CLIL teaching, and, answering the main question: 'How does CLIL work with young learners?'

Before presenting some specific reflective statements and feedback, it is necessary to say that all feedback statements mentioned during the after-observation interviews and/or written by the observers were very positive. Of course there were ideas how to improve some project activities, but Prof. Kovács's and her coworkers' efforts were accepted with real gratitude and excitement by most participants. The impact of their role in modelling good CLIL teaching to young learners was evident.

3. For further details see: <http://www.aee.org>

Observation of good practice in CLIL in Slovakia

During the Hungarian expert's teaching blocks in Slovakia, a whole range of reflected observations took place. Here is their short account viewed from a qualitative point of view.

Most of CLIL lessons were taught by Prof. Kovács in several primary state schools and one denominational school in Banská Bystrica. They were observed mostly by pre-service teachers – students of primary education studying in the 1st and 2nd year of their primary teacher education. Usually these primary school invited Prof. Kovács and the group of TE students to teach their pupils. The CLIL lessons were observed also by a certain number of in-service teachers (group size ranging from 4 – 25 teachers) and even teacher trainers. During the seminars with Prof. Kovács, all these above-mentioned groups as well as university methodologists had the opportunity to observe and reflect good models of video CLIL lessons that had been recorded in some Hungarian bilingual schools. Their presentation was part of the CLIL course at UMB.

Attendees of these CLIL lessons reflected on the topics and the connection of content with the language aims. They noticed improvements even in their own vocabulary and language skills. After that, they discussed the use of teaching materials, teaching methods, pieces of literature, such as rhymes, songs and stories, as well as their age-relevancy. They also reflected on the way an actual lesson proceeded, on the individual steps taken to balance teaching the content with the new structures, vocabulary and skills. Specifically they observed and reflected on the teacher's interaction with the pupils, pupils' responses to activities, etc. To generalize the impact of these observations on the development of the teachers, let us summarize the main areas of their positive influence:

- development of their own language competence – losing inhibitions to speak English,
- building up new vocabulary,
- acquiring knowledge about CLIL methods appropriate to young learners and developing skills for applying them so that the children would be active, joyous, creating a good classroom atmosphere (e.g. use of games – Domino, flash cards, white board),
- learning how to interact with pupils even though their vocabulary is more limited – how to stretch them and to encourage them at the same time,
- skill of including songs and rhymes and stories into the lesson,
- skill of implementing TPR (total physical response), 'silent period' principle, roughly-tuned input,
- learning how to create and develop trustful, encouraging relationships with the pupils,
- learning how to prepare a good, balanced lesson including group work.

Here are some quotations from TE students' development reports:

The classes of English methodology were very interesting. I learnt a lot of new terms, teaching methods and games. From my point of view, the most valuable experience was the observation of Dr. Kovács' lessons in the primary school. She was switching between activities in order to motive the children continuously [...]

Theory was connected with practice, static activities were alternated with dynamic ones and we were given an opportunity to express our own ideas [...]

Thanks to this course I regained my enthusiasm... I received many answers to my questions about CLIL [...]

At the beginning I felt disoriented. Gradually I started to realize how to teach CLIL to children [...] what kind of ways and methods are there, how I can use games so that the children can learn via a good and peaceful lesson, without being fearful of school.

This course filled me with courage and the desire to learn more.

The teacher demonstrated the benefits of and ways in which CLIL can be taught to young children. We, future teachers, should aim to help children develop their skills in such a way that they experience the joy of learning. Yes, the world is multicultural and Slovaks need change in primary language education.

I have become more 'creative' in terms of activities aimed at the development of English competence and skills of children at primary school. I really liked the fact that theory has been combined with practice; that we tried, played and laughed together whilst learning new activities.

We were able to watch several videos that showed how CLIL works with young learners, in various subjects, taught by various teachers.

Watching the videos – It is amazing that children so young can communicate fluently in a foreign language, without any problem.

I could see that CLIL is a natural process of teaching English and at the same time it is interesting for children. It is funny and dynamic.

During this course I have seen how CLIL should be taught and how it would be effective for pupils. I have seen how to create CLIL lessons so that pupils would be engaged.

The main idea is to teach children not to be afraid of using English. Content is more important than the form of the language.

Thanks to Prof. Kovács's course, I could set new goals for myself and for my future. I will try to apply all the important principles I learnt, especially activity-based learning, total physical response, language acquisition, low affective filter etc.

The group of PF UMB methodologists of various subjects commented on the impact of it in the following way. Their feedback was generally positive. Only one teacher expressed his pessimism about the possibilities of applying it in normal schools with students of various abilities. Two teachers suggested that CLIL methodology should be used at specific bilingual schools, rather than normal state schools because of the shortage of time for English and their various backgrounds. The group was particularly enthusiastic regarding the evidence of the natural acquisition of new language during CLIL lessons, about the stress-free, joyous, natural learning situation, and creating an enjoyable classroom atmosphere through communicating in English. They also appreciated seeing children being able to learn English through group work. The outcome of the meeting was their support of the idea of creating a new CLIL subject module in the TE programme. But the precondition for this should be a good command of English of the TE students. Then, as one methodologist said, 'I would love to let my children learn in a school that teaches using CLIL'.

Observation of good practice in CLIL in Hungary

Another amazing opportunity for authentic observation was offered to three Slovak members of the project team who were invited to observe teaching CLIL in bilingual kindergartens and primary schools in Budapest. During lessons of Music, History and Science, the Slovak participants could experience the positive atmosphere and overall achievements of the pupils in these schools. There was also enough time for discussions with school management, teachers and especially students. They observed kindergarten children having opportunities to learn English via games, drama and creative activities with native English speakers. Slovak teachers were also given the extraordinary privilege of observing methodology lessons, the practical training of future teachers and their teaching practice lessons at the Faculty of Primary Education of ELTE and its two training schools in Budapest. The week spent in Hungarian educational institutions enabled the observing Slovak teachers to construct a complete picture of various stages of application of CLIL methodology in real school life at primary level. The strongest impression that these observations left in the minds and hearts of the observers was a wonder at how well the children could communicate with their teachers in English – kindergarten children were able to understand instructions, stories and games and to use simple terminology about various topics whereas primary school students fluently responded during activities in specific contexts, such as biology or history.

Observation of good practice in CLIL during the project conference

The last opportunity for the observation of CLIL lessons funded by the Project was given to about 110 participants of an international conference called 'Learning Together to Be a Better CLIL Teacher' on 16 October 2014. Its main aim was to summarize the results of the project activities. The international gathering of participants from Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic and England consisted mostly of TE students and in-service teachers at all levels of schools.

Besides excellent theoretical and principal methodological presentations, the conference offered several opportunities for 'hands-on' experience with CLIL methodology. The first of them took place during the morning plenary sessions. It was actually a very successful and exciting 'live CLIL lesson' taught by an experienced Hungarian teacher I. Mihály to his CLIL students from Magda Szabó CLIL Primary School in Budapest who came to the conference venue to demonstrate how actually CLIL works with primary school learners.

Also presenters of afternoon workshops gave samples from their best practice and even showed some videos from their own CLIL practice. They focused on the use of TPR (Total Physical Response) in CLIL, on engaging young learners in classroom activities using a smart board, on topic based skills development, on reading competence in CLIL, on adapting Maths word problems for elementary curricula, on training practice in CLIL for primary teachers of English, and so on.

The overall evaluation of conference feedback showed that most participants were excited and very positive about this opportunity to observe CLIL in practice. In their responses to open questions in the feedback questionnaire, delegates appreciated the impact of their observation of the biology CLIL lesson by I. Mihály and his students as well as hands-on experience during several workshops. Here are a few of their feedback statements: 'It was excellent to see how CLIL works.', 'Now I have my CLIL knowledge expanded, enhanced, and my enthusiasm for it reinvigorated.', 'It was wonderful to experience the reality of CLIL teaching, now I can envisage it and how to apply it.'

Conclusions

Much has been said about the positive impact of observation on the developing professionalism of teachers. This is especially true in the case of rather new methodologies such as CLIL. In Slovakia, so far the experiences with CLIL have been somewhat rare. Apart from some experimental schools, most educational institutions have just started to learn how CLIL works – and especially – how it works with young learners.

Thanks to the European project and the willingness and expertise of the Hungarian expert on CLIL, Prof. Kovács in 2013 and 2014, TE students at the Faculty of Education, University of Matej Bel in Banská Bystrica PF UMB and also in-service teachers from the city schools were privileged to observe authentic CLIL lessons. They expressed their positive feedback in several ways. Especially eye-opening were the development diaries written by students led by Prof. Kovács. They provided outstanding evidence of how their command of English and their English teaching competences developed due to sufficient reflective observations and the guidance of experienced CLIL teachers.

As the teaching part of the project officially finished, the task of guiding these students further on their way to become successful CLIL teachers has now become the responsibility of the Slovak team that learnt so much from the Hungarian experience. To best conclude the description of the impact of experiencing such a 'nourishing' way of developing early CLIL teaching skills let us listen to the voices of CLIL students: 'Thanks to this set of lessons I realized how important it is to integrate foreign language with other school subjects. I have learnt a lot about methods – how to teach CLIL. Now I can imagine how CLIL works... I am very happy that I could experience that teaching English can be such fun.' 'Now I know that it really works. CLIL is a good way how to develop thinking of pupils.'

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