

Bilingualism in kindergarten

UCN-212

Abstract

This case study was conducted in a kindergarten where English-only education is provided. Nine six-year-old children from various language backgrounds were investigated in order to gain a better understanding of the environmental and psychological factors that influence their language learning. The presupposition was that their language background will heavily influence their language proficiency even in their third year in this kindergarten. Language background, however, seemed to have a surprisingly little role: only in the diversity of the vocabulary of children and in the use of certain pronouns. Other major factors include talent, practice, amount of conversation with the teachers and occupation with role play.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of bilingualism is a surprisingly scarcely discussed topic today considering the fact that about two thirds of the children in the world are brought up bilingually (Crystal, 1997). The prevalence of bilingualism is largely due to the mobility of people, but even in a country that is homogeneous with regard to the language its inhabitants speak, like Hungary, it is becoming more and more common. While in other countries becoming bilingual is essential socially, in Hungary speaking two languages (especially English as the second one, which is perceived to be the most prestigious and useful language) constitutes “only” an additional benefit. It is rare and the privilege of the affluent, as English education for children is not available free of charge.

Nevertheless, there are more and more parents interested in their children becoming bilingual in Hungary, as well. As impacts on the child in this age have a very significant bearing on them, it is very important to have valid and reliable information on how language learning takes place in this period to be able to manipulate this process for the best results. This case study examines the questions of successful language learning in a Hungarian kindergarten. My research questions were the following: what systematic relations link children’s English skills with their personality on the one hand, and with the environment on the other? Does children’s language background determine their English language proficiency after three years in kindergarten? Are there any child-rearing and teaching methods that facilitate language learning in early childhood?

The research was carried out in a private international kindergarten in Budapest from 28 February to 22 June 2011. It involved nine six-year-old participants who had been going to this kindergarten for three or four years. They were assigned to three groups of three: in the first children came from Hungarian-speaking families, in the second they came from different foreign countries, and in the third they came from English-Hungarian bilingual families.

I used various methods to collect data: I gained data on the kindergarten and the teaching methods and beliefs of the teachers by interviews and observation. Detailed interviews with teachers and parents about each child, progress reports and two story-telling sessions with all the participants served as the basis for assessing their language skills. The stories were analysed according to a wide range of features: diversified aspects of the renowned complexity-accuracy-fluency triad, vocabulary, cohesion, coherence and goal-orientation of the narratives. Then the language measures were compared with their language background, their personality and social behaviour in the class, and conclusions were drawn.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Defining bilingualism

To be able to deal with a phenomenon, it has to be defined first. Defining bilingualism is, however, not an easy task; there is no consensus in the literature on who is bilingual and who is not. Bilingualism is usually defined taking into consideration the level of proficiency in the two languages and the age of acquisition. The difficulty with these constructs is that it is very hard to draw boundaries that would separate bilingualism and monolingualism, as these categories (proficiency and age of acquisition) are not binary; they constitute scales (Bialystok, 2003). The question is whether bilingualism is unattainable after a certain age, and whether we can determine an exact number of words or grammatical features or the quality of any other aspect of language skills that constitute the level of proficiency needed for someone to be called bilingual. The definition I am going to adopt is the following: “bilingual is someone who can function in each language according to given needs” (Grosjean, as cited in Bialystok, 2003, p. 4).

2.2 Theories concerning language acquisition

The world has always been amazed by how fast and perfectly children master their first language(s). A number of theories trying to explain this remarkable achievement have been suggested. Two of the most influential linguists in this field are the nativist Noam Chomsky and the constructivist Lev Vygotsky. In the next section I am going to outline these theories together with recent criticism they received, and I will attempt to form a unified view based on what is common in them.

2.2.1 Nativist theories

Nativists are fascinated at children's achievement, because they think that the grammatical system is underdetermined in the input, that is, children hear a lot of ungrammatical forms. Because of this, Chomsky (1968) came to believe that it is impossible to learn languages without being endowed with an innate, modular knowledge of the basic structure of all human languages – the Universal Grammar –, which is operationalised by the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Chomsky uses the word *acquire*, because he believes that acquiring a language is a sheer maturational process, during which children discover the

structure of language. Chomsky claims that the environment has little role other than providing input; children are programmed to learn the language they hear.

2.2.2 Constructivist theories

Vygotsky theorises that social interaction is “the most important source of learning mechanisms underlying all of child development, including language, cognitive, and/or social development. According to this position, developmental processes stem from an external social source, resulting from a process whereby interpersonal patterns are internalised” (as cited in Hickmann, 2004, p. 45). With regard to the relation between language and cognition Vygotsky proposed that “human language has transformed the behaviour of our species, allowing the emergence of rational thought and of complex social interaction” (as cited in Hickmann, 2004, p. 33), and this is how we are able to form abstract thoughts.

This centrality of social interactions has also been supported by Berne (1968), who claimed that it is essential for people to get enough “strokes” to survive in a psychological sense. A stroke is basically social interaction: it can be any act by which someone acknowledges the presence of someone else. Mérei and V. Binét (1975) presented shocking evidence in favour of the outstanding importance of relationships: they reported that children who were taken care of in their first years but could not become emotionally attached to their caregiver (that is, they did not receive enough strokes) lost their interest in the world. The consequences were the following: at the age of four many of them could not walk, speak or get dressed. Thus, one of the most important driving forces for development in general and the emergence of language in particular is emotional attachment paired with sustained social interaction. Furthermore, Bialystok, Craik, Green, and Gollan, (2009) argue that

it is now clear that language acquisition is not a simple matter of biological unfolding [...], but rather a process that is finely tuned to features of the environmental input, the child’s attentional and perceptual abilities, and the development of cognitive and conceptual competencies. (p. 90)

2.2.3 Summary of the two theories

Combining the observations that are common in both theories helps to form a fairly unified theory on the subject of language acquisition. Both views agree that children possess some innate predisposition to language and that acquiring a language is the result of an active process whereby children continuously construct and reconstruct the structure of language.

Furthermore, they agree that the brain is modular: language, for example, comprises of more separate and yet, interconnected modules. As far as the social dimension is concerned, social interactions seem to be of central importance based on the arguments presented above.

2.3 Notions connected to the mastery of a second language

2.3.1 Simultaneous versus sequential language acquisition

The simultaneous versus sequential language acquisition dyad concerns the age when a child starts acquiring a second language rather than two primary languages. The basis of this distinction is the idea that these processes are qualitatively different, and therefore it is highly unlikely that native-level proficiency is attainable in second language. There is no agreement on a definitive age that could mark the boundary between first and second language acquisition, that is, simultaneous and sequential bilingualism; different researchers have put this cut-off point at different ages – ranging from one month (De Houwer, 2005) through before three years (McLaughlin, 1978) to well into school years (Peccei, 2006) – depending mostly on what language domain they put the emphasis on (Nicholas & Lightbown, 2008).

Nativists put this boundary at the age of five (Chomsky, 1968). This is, however, the boundary for grammar only; they do not take pragmatics, discourse or anything else into consideration. This is problematic, as especially these two domains of language are still under construction beyond the age of five (Peccei, 2006), largely due to other aspects of cognition that evolve them. An interesting point against the critical period is that every language domain has been found to be learnable by some adult learners (Dimroth, 2008).

The other explanation for the apparent general differences between first and second language acquisition concerns the environment. Although the success of mastering these domains may well depend on an innately determined sensitivity to them, there are a number of other factors that – no theories deny – change in life and have a major impact on how languages are acquired. One of the most important factors that divides language acquisition into two phases is that in the first one and a half years children gain understandings about both “Language and understandings about a specific Language” (Nicholas & Lightbown, 2008, p. 38). By this time they already know what language is, what functions it can serve and how it can be used. Cognitive and attentional capacities also change with time, which also plays a great role, taking into consideration the fact that “the linguistic and cognitive systems are intimately interconnected, each guiding the other and profiting from the symbiotic

relationship” (Bialystok et al., 2009). Furthermore, their personality, motivation and communication purposes change, as well.

All in all, it seems that there are major differences between simultaneous and sequential language acquisition, and that the reasons appear to be related to environmental factors as well as to the differences between the access to our innate capacities in different ages.

2.3.2 Language acquisition versus language learning

This leads us to the language acquisition versus language learning debate that deals with the nature of the process by which a second language is mastered. Nativists argue that mastering a second language requires qualitatively different processes at different ages: within the critical period one acquires the language, that is, discovers the inherent properties of language effortlessly and subconsciously, and after this critical period (the age of which is debated and seems to differ with the specific language domain) language learning takes places, which is seen as the conscious construction of language structures with the help of explicit tuition. Although it is interesting to posit that there are two distinct processes for mastering a language, we do not know whether they are indeed different processes, as the related notions – learning, acquisition, conscious and subconscious – have not yet been defined precisely.

In this vein, the competition model of MacWhinney suggests that first and second language “acquisition processes are inherently similar” (as cited in Philp, Mackey, & Oliver, 2008, p. 9), other factors making the difference, like sociological and psychological factors, experience, interlocutor characteristics and the amount of input. It is well established that these variables change considerably during life, and it seems reasonable to postulate that they do play a major role in the success of acquiring a second language irrespective of whether there is a difference between simultaneous and sequential language acquisition.

2.3.3 Additive versus subtractive bilingualism

Last, but not least, the additive or subtractive nature of bilingualism has always intrigued researchers and laypeople alike. Bilingualism is subtractive when a person does not learn either one or any of the languages fully, and this hinders his or her education and cognitive growth. Additive bilingualism is when “a child derives maximum benefit from the bilingual experience for his cognitive development” (Hamers & Blanc, 1989, p. 265). It raises

the question if can bilinguals attain native-like competence in both languages. Usually bilinguals either have a dominant language that they use more often and know better (Genesee, 2008), or they use their two languages for different purposes, for example one at home and one at work.

Balanced bilinguals are scarce, but they have been found to function in everyday life with no striking difference from monolinguals; only clinical experiments reveal subtle deficits and advantages. It is remarkable if one considers the fact that even in the best case they hear and produce only half the amount of either language. Cummins asserts that the “continued development of both languages [...] is associated with subtle positive academic and linguistic outcomes” (2000, p. 193). This brings us to the question: how can the acquisition of two languages be best promoted.

2.4 The necessary conditions for maximising first and second language development in childhood

In the next section I will attempt to provide a holistic view of what is needed for the successful development of two languages in early childhood. The following sources of impact are going to be discussed: society, home and kindergarten.

2.4.1 Society

Language development cannot be seen as unrelated to the social and cultural context where it takes place. Society forms everyone’s value system, which determines the value and the role of languages. In Hungary this is a straightforward issue: while Hungarian is the official language that most people speak, English is probably the most valued foreign language that every Hungarian person should be able to speak. Society also affects the socio-economic status (SES) of families, and thus, their chances to learn a foreign language (Loban, 1976; Neuman, 2006; Serpell, Baker, & Sonnenschein, 2005).

Yet another impact that society has on life in kindergarten is its expectations formulated in the Hungarian Government directive for kindergarten education (Óvodai Nevelés Alapprogramja, 2009) in Hungary. The criteria for entering primary school are physical, emotional and social maturity. The requirements rely heavily on the higher mental functions Vygotsky (1962) mentioned.

2.4.2 Home

It is a well-established fact that the family has the most significant impact on the child (Erikson, 1950); the most trivial reason being that in the first three or four years it is almost only the family that the child meets. The family mediates the first and most fundamental information to the child about himself (I am going to refer to children as he for the sake of convenience) and the world, and the foundations of his personality, identity, attitude towards himself and the world are shaped during these years (N. Kollár & Szabó, 2004).

2.4.2.1 Attachment

First and foremost, the duty of the caregivers is, of course, physical care for the child; without this he would die. Psychologically one of the essential foundations is the type of attachment developing between the child and the caregiver(s), which is a “lasting psychological connectedness between human beings” according to Bowlby (1969, p. 194). As the infant is not capable of taking care of himself, attachment is necessary for survival. Attachment is needed for the security, safety and protection of the child. When the caregiver is loving, regularly responsive to the child’s signals and dependably reacts fast and sensitively, the child feels safe – which is one of the fundamental needs of humans.

This way he will trust his caregivers – which later turns into trusting others according to Erikson (1950) – and he will be securely attached to them, according to Benoit (2004), based on the classification of Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Fall (1978). Infants with secure attachment, which is about 55% of the general population (Benoit), can separate from the caregivers to go to play. Furthermore, they tend to be sociable, cooperative, persistent, inquisitive and independent (N. Kollár & Szabó, 2004), while children with other styles of attachment avoid or are resistant to the caregiver (Benoit). Children who are not securely attached tend to be timid, shy, or even aggressive, and they also tend to have worse language skills (N. Kollár & Szabó, 2004).

2.4.2.2 Autonomy

Besides providing secure attachment to the child, it is also imperative for the caregivers to help the children become autonomous and develop their identity. Becoming independent is not an easy task for children (Mérei & V. Binét, 1975): as they cannot do as many things as they want to and as adults can, they become frustrated. To ease this tension, they emphasize their own autonomy and mimic their caregivers to decrease the distance and rivalry between them and the caregivers. The development of language follows this pattern,

too: it is becoming more and more “autonomous”, or decontextualized in this case.

Caregivers’ consistency helps the child become independent, friendly, cooperative, motivated and to develop self-control (N. Kollár & Szabó, 2004). If, however, the child cannot become autonomous, sense of shame and doubt arise (Erikson, 1950).

2.4.2.3 Language development

Turning now to the both first and second language development of children, a number of techniques have been found to aid it. First of all, it is necessary to understand the child’s communication and to be dependably responsive to it (N. Kollár & Szabó 2004). This helps the child develop in their ability of self-regulation through internalization (Maccoby, as cited in Landry & Smith, 2006), and in this case the child displays a significantly faster growth in his social, cognitive and language skills (Landry et al.; Landry, Smith, & Swank as cited in Landry & Smith, 2006). Responsiveness has other advantages, too: according to Bruner and Vygotsky the reciprocal nature of interactions that help the child maintain his attentional focus assist in developing the level of children’s games, language, cognitive skills, “immature attentional systems, self-regulation and memory capacities” (as cited in Neuman, 2006, p. 38).

Another facet of support is the use of more complex speech, as well as long utterances, richer vocabulary (as children cannot learn unheard words), and a great deal of talking on behalf of the caregivers, which result in children having greater productive vocabulary as opposed to children whose caregivers talked less, used fewer words and shorter utterances (Neuman, 2006). Out of these factors, the richness of caregivers’ vocabulary has proved to be the most influential on children’s later cognitive development. Neuman (2006) found that these supportive elements are in relation with the socio-economic status of the caregivers. Thus, the higher the SES the richer children’s productive vocabulary. In a large-scale longitudinal study Loban (1976) found that children from high SES background performed better in virtually all aspects of language than children from low SES families.

A further assisting factor is the use of languages outside the kindergarten, which is positively associated with both first and second language development (Genesee, 2008). It is, of course, questionable how successful caregivers in Hungary can be in supporting their child’s English language development outside the kindergarten. Döpke (as cited in Genesee, 2008) found reassuring evidence: when families made conscious efforts to favour the minority language, children used it more than the official language of the country despite the social pressure. This is in line with what common sense suggests: the more a child encounters a language the better his chances are to become proficient in it.

Another issue is the value caregivers attach to the languages. On the one hand, a child can get motivated if his caregivers emphasize the value of learning a second language. On the other hand, however, if his second language is prioritised over his first language and the child's first language is not promoted enough, it can have detrimental effect on the child, since it has been established that a well-developed first language makes second language development easier (Cummins, 2000). A further requirement for caregivers is that they should not expect too much improvement in the second language in a short time; there should be no pressure on the child, because it makes him frustrated and stressed. Thus, he will actually have problems with mastering the language.

2.4.3 Kindergarten

If a kindergarten wants to help children in developing proficiency in a second language, it has to consider a number of factors that I am going to describe in what follows: first of all, the expectations of the society – realised at the level of primary schools, defined by the Hungarian Government directive for kindergarten education (Óvodai Nevelés Alapprogramja, 2009) or the requirements of other countries – in order to meet the needs of both the society and the children. Furthermore, an extensive knowledge of the needs of children is needed in order to adjust the programme to them; teachers have to know about the cognitive development that shapes language development, how to best promote language development in the kindergarten, the course of language development, the personality factors that affect it, and in the end the necessity of the kindergarten's collaboration with families will be outlined. This description pertains only to those kindergartens that provide English-only education, as this is the type of kindergarten that was the milieu of my study.

2.4.3.1 The needs of children

“Human relationships are at the heart of schooling” as Cummins put it eloquently (2000, p. 40). In order to create a good relationship between themselves and the children, teachers have to collect information about the child's cultural, linguistic and family background first that they have to respect (Cummins, 2000 & Tabors, 1997).

Armed with this knowledge, teachers can start catering for the needs of children. According to Tay and Diener these include “basic need for food and shelter, safety and security, social support and love, feeling respected and pride in activities, mastery (doing what one does best and learning new things), self-direction and autonomy” (2011, p. 355). As people need to fulfil a variety of these needs, it is obligatory to deal with all of them daily, but

by all means, regularly: life in kindergarten should be about helping children to meet all these needs on a regular basis. Thus, although essential, it is not enough to care for their basic necessities, e.g. safety, toileting, food, drink and sleep. In line with that, in the next section I am going to deal with language and cognitive development which are closely connected to three of these needs: mastery, gradually becoming self-directed and autonomous.

2.4.3.2 Cognitive development

As language development and cognition are closely connected, second language development (which is one of the primary goals of kindergartens with English-only education) cannot be discussed without dealing with cognitive development. One of the most renowned theorist's, Vygotsky's views are presented on the topic. Vygotsky (1962) is a constructivist researcher, who considers problem solving the heart of cognitive development. For him learning is an active process whereby learners construct their own mental representations. Vygotsky asserts that development takes place with the help of environment and some innate endowment that governs maturation or biological unfolding.

Vygotsky (1962) believed that mental development takes place when the biologically determined maturational processes are transformed by the interaction between the child and the culture he is surrounded by. Biological maturation alone allows for learning with the help of the lower mental functions that are conditional and associative. As young children do not have control over their attention, which is easily distracted, they can learn something only if the activity is repeated several times, and/or it is very attention grabbing.

When children interact with more competent others and the cultural practices, they gradually gain consciousness, deliberateness, greater memory and more focused attention, which are the most crucial accomplishments of children, Vygotsky (1962) says, as primary schools require these capacities. These properties are crucial for the successful operation of higher mental functions, which are sign-mediated, artificial cognitive processes. Vygotsky found the acquisition of higher mental functions important, because ideal knowledge, according to him, is universal, abstract and decontextualized. This is when skills or knowledge can be transferred to a different context.

Higher mental functions originate as shared behaviours, and they are gained through using psychological or cultural tools. The most important tool, according to Vygotsky (1962), is language. This is the primary tool via which culture is mediated and, what is more, knowledge is organised in humans' brains. Other tools that kindergartens should strive to acquaint children with include mathematical symbols, writing, maps, works of art, charts,

computers, and also the help of other (more competent) people. Symbolic tools are first external: counting on fingers, using ABC charts. When they are internalised, and children can use them without help, they become part of the higher mental functions.

For development to take place, children have to be challenged first (Vygotsky, 1962). An integral part of development is help, according to Vygotsky (1962), as development is precisely about coming into possession of skills and knowledge one does not yet have. He introduced the concept zone of proximal development (ZPD) which denotes the distance between the child's present state and the state in which he needs assistance for solving a problem. The ideal way of helping children is providing human (teacher's or another, more competent child's) assistance first, then withdrawing it and providing the child with tools he can use to self-assist (e.g. ABC chart). In the end the child internalises the tool.

Sources of ZPD can be aids, instruments, specifically designed group activities and role play (or make-believe play). Out of these the most important is, probably, role play. The advantages of role play are tremendous, as it "creates the zone of proximal development of the child. In play the child is always behaving beyond his age [...]. Play contains in a concentrated form [...] all developmental tendencies" (Vygotsky, as cited in Bodrova & Leong, 2006, p. 249). Role play develops language, communication skills and knowledge about self, and it relieves stress. According to Ginsburg, the Committee on Communications, and the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health (2007) play develops children's imagination, dexterity; physical, cognitive and emotional strength. It further helps reducing fears, enhances confidence (and therefore, courage) and resilience, it helps developing cooperation, leadership, negotiation and resolving conflicts; children become better at decision-making, and they can discover their areas of interest.

Vygotsky's colleague, Elkonin identified four major effects of role play on cognitive development that promote the formation of higher mental functions (as cited in Bodrova & Leong, 2006). First, as children are motivated to play, they learn to delay gratification, thus gaining control over their behaviour. This way their actions become more deliberate and purposeful. Secondly, taking on different roles and assigning different functions to the same prop fosters cognitive decentring, which leads to the ability of taking others' perspectives and later, reflective thinking and metacognition. Third, by substituting objects with different objects first, and speech afterwards, they gradually become able to use symbols and make mental representations, which is, according to Vygotsky, an essential prerequisite for writing, for example (as cited in Bodrova & Leong, 2006). Last but not least, since children have to follow the rules of games, their deliberate behaviour advances, which later extends to the

regulation of cognitive processes like memory and attention, which are essential requisites for language acquisition.

2.4.3.3 Language learning in kindergarten

Children who enter the English-speaking classroom with no knowledge of English need safety first of all (besides the basic physical needs), as it was previously noted. A consistently organised strict schedule will help them feel more secure there sooner and will immediately allow them “to act like members of the group” (Tabors, 1997, p. 106). It is also important from the point of view of language learning: anxiety and the lack of self-confidence – that they might experience if they do not feel safe – are held to filter the language input (Krashen, 1982). Safe heavens, voluntary sharing at circle time, engaging book-reading sessions and cooperative games make them “feel more comfortable, included and competent” (Tabors, 1997, p. 130). Furthermore, allowing them to take part in activities “in easily understood ways will help them join the social group and be exposed to more language” (Tabors, 1997, p.109), a double gain, which leads to language development.

Tabors (1997) noted that the development of communicative and social competence is related: to learn the language one must be socially accepted by the others; and to be socially accepted, one must be able to speak the language at least a little. Speaking the language does not start on the first day, however. Tabors reported that children seem to know that learning a new language is an enormous and time-consuming task; they arrive at this decision at different times. They need sufficient motivation to start learning the language.. In classrooms where there are more children who share the same first language, children may not feel motivated enough to make this decision. Motivation is a crucial factor in language learning, as it is also held to filter the language input (Krashen, 1982).

Another factor that affects the attitude of children towards the new language is what their caregivers tell them about the value of language and how society esteems it, since “language development cannot be envisaged outside the social and cultural context in which it takes place. The social network [...] transmits to the child [...] the value system which determines the status and relevance of languages” (Hamers & Blanc, 1989, p. 72).

Once a child wants to learn a language, he must be surrounded by language-rich environment. This, however, does not seem to be enough. Although there have been debates about whether merely listening to a language is enough for mastering it, researchers tend to agree that production is also necessary for acquiring a language, as children are forced to

reorganise, thus, construct the language through production (Swain, 1985). Therefore, teachers should urge children to speak.

In the beginning, teachers should speak much with children, as studies have shown (Genesee & Nicoladis, 2006) that relatively less proficient children benefit more from communicating with teachers, and relatively more proficient learners gained more from communicating with peers. What is more, Cathcart-Strong found (as cited in Saunders & O'Brien, 2006) that the responses of native English-speaking children were not found to be beneficial for their language learning interlocutors.

Techniques that teachers should include in order to facilitate language learning are, according to Tabors (1997), doubling the message with gestures, actions or directed gaze, repeating their words, putting emphasis at the end of their utterances (as children can concentrate the best on endings), talking about here and now, expanding and extending. It aligns with Hoff's (2006) findings according to which children appear to benefit from longer utterances. Hoff also claims that more complex speech with rich vocabulary is helpful. It can be seen as the zone of proximal development: in order to develop, children have to meet the yet unknown since they cannot learn what they do not hear.

Furthermore, teachers have to utilise the entire array of activities in kindergarten to develop children's linguistic skills. Since all these activities (for example play, constructive arts, reading, physical exercises or work-like activities) involve comprehending and producing higher and higher level of English, they all develop linguistic skills. Due to the limitations, however, only the effects of storytelling are summarised, as it played an important role in my study, too: listening to a variety of stories develops vocabulary, syntactic complexity, listening skills, attention span, accuracy of recall, and organisation of narratives (Roney, Phillips, Reed, & Davis as cited in Speaker, Taylor, & Kamen, 2004).

2.4.3.4 Language development of bilingual and monolingual children

A well-supported finding concerning the language development of bilinguals and monolinguals is that they go through the same major developmental stages of sounds, words and sentences at the same time (Bialystok et al., 2009). Although language is not comprised of only these domains, research concerning others is scarce. Starting with the phonological system, Bialystok et al. (2009) report that by about 14 months, bilinguals develop separate phonological sets for their two languages. This differentiation at this early age provides a foundation for developing two different linguistic systems. Monolinguals, by contrast, lose their ability to distinguish between the contrasts in the sound system of languages they do not

hear by about 6 month of age. This period is perhaps the time when humans can acquire native level pronunciation in a language without fail; after this period it is highly uncommon.

Moving on to the learning of words, Pearson, Fernandez and Oller (as cited in Bialystok et al., 2009) found that children produce their first words at around one year old with no regard to the number of languages they hear. What are different for bilinguals and monolinguals, are the strategies, the rate and extent of acquiring the vocabulary. As for the strategy, bilinguals rely less on the mutual exclusivity constraint principle that Markman and Wachtel proposed (as cited in Bialystok et al., 2009), as they have translation equivalents for words as soon as they begin to speak (Genesee & Nicoladis, 2006).

The second difference lies in the size of their vocabulary: both bilinguals and monolinguals learn fifty words by the time they are about one and a half years old, as far as the total vocabulary is concerned. Although assessing the vocabulary of bilinguals is not a straightforward matter, it has been shown that there is a delay in vocabulary acquisition from age five to age nine (Bialystok & Feng, 2011). Similarly, Bialystok et al. (2009) has shown that from age three to age ten bilinguals possess a reliably smaller size of vocabulary – especially home-related vocabulary – in the language of schooling, and this difference in vocabulary size seems to persist throughout life. The explanation for smaller vocabulary is the less frequent use of words, which yields weaker connections in the network of representations for words (Bialystok et al., 2009). Having a smaller vocabulary, however, does not seem to cause any problems in every day communication for bilinguals (Bialystok & Feng, 2011).

The third, and perhaps the most complex, domain is morphosyntax. Since different languages have different grammatical structures, they are mastered at different rates and in different manner (Bialystok et al., 2009), but at the same rate as those of monolinguals, as far as the dominant language is concerned (Genesee, 2008). A recent finding concerning grammar is its deep connection with vocabulary: words seem to store grammatical information (Bialystok et al., 2009). The first structures occur when “the lexicon has reached a critical mass” (Bialystok et al., 2009, p. 92), about 50 words. Grammatical forms are acquired separately for the two languages early on (Genesee, 2008). Research on developmental grammar, however, is scarce; a consistent finding is that when one language is dominant, cross-linguistic transfer may occur: children might incorporate some structures from their dominant language into their weaker language.

In addition to these three domains of language, communicative competence has to be mentioned. Genesee (2008) found that bilingual children in the one-word stage of

development can already make on-line adjustments to match the language of strangers, even when their interlocutors switch between languages.

2.4.3.5 Personality factors

Three personality factors have been proposed to have role in successful language acquisition: first, the aptitude factor according to which some people are more talented in mastering languages than others. Indeed, González found (as cited in Cummins, 2000) that communicative competence underlies the use of more languages of a person. The second is the social factor: some people are more outgoing and risk-taking than others, as a result of which they engage in interactions more, and the third is the psychological factor: some people are more motivated because they want to communicate with the English-speaking people (Tabors, 1997), which is beneficial for language learning, as Strong (1983) reported positive relationship between maintaining communication effectively (being talkative and responsive) and successful language learning.

2.4.3.6 Cooperating with caregivers

Since caregivers constitute the most important relationship of children, it is indispensable for the kindergarten teachers to collaborate with them. The optimal relationship is one that encourages “the development of mutual trust, a positive orientation, [...] goal consensus between settings” (Bronfenbrenner, as cited in Serpell et al., 2005, p. 219). Therefore, teachers have to learn about the culture of the family, and value it. They also have to inform caregivers about the child’s development and the benefits of learning the new language as well as maintaining the home language, as this seems not to constitute a part of caregivers’ knowledge. Often the slowness of the progress in the new language has to be emphasized, too, to avoid caregivers expecting too much improvement too soon.

2.5 Advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism

Language learning in kindergarten seems a promising opportunity. But is it worth it? Does it have advantages for children? I am strongly in favour of learning two languages, as it has many advantages and only a few disadvantages. The most consistent finding is that there are no across-the-board advantages of bilingualism (Bialystok et al., 2009); no general advantages that affect large domains, e.g. cognitive abilities or concentration as such. Moreover, once a study has a result, it is usually refuted in a subsequent one. Therefore, I present only those findings that enjoy the support of various studies.

Starting with differences in vocabulary, it has been found that bilinguals produce and comprehend words more slowly even in their dominant language than monolinguals (Bialystok et al., 2009). The reason might be that bilinguals retrieve words in a different way than monolinguals, but the smaller size of their vocabulary and the less frequent use of it also play a role. The importance of practising language is not only demonstrated by monolinguals' better scores at vocabulary tests, but a surprising finding seems to confirm it as well: monolingual English-speaking students who spent a year in a foreign country produced fewer English words at the end of this year than those who did not travel abroad (Bialystok et al., 2009). It might be due to the fact that the comprehension and production of vocabulary depends very much on frequent use. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that the more frequently one meets a word the more effective its retrieval is.

Other studies discovering disadvantages have failed to match bilinguals and monolinguals on their vocabulary size; and since vocabulary is a primary drive for performance in that a large vocabulary facilitates language production greatly, whereas a poor lexicon highly hinders it (Bialystok et al., 2009), it is not fair to compare them in this case. When they have about the same size of vocabulary in one language, bilinguals outperform monolinguals in tasks that require greater executive control: cognitive control (monitoring) and working memory. The most important question is whether these advantages are restricted to language use – and thus, being bilingual has no further advantages than being able to speak two languages – or they generalise to other areas of cognition, as well. Bialystok et al. found that “bilinguals possess an advantage in cognitive control that generalizes beyond language processing to other aspects of cognitive functioning” (2009, p. 97). Thus, language use draws on the resources of several other areas of cognition.

Looking at what these general, nonverbal advantages are, the most consistent finding was bilinguals' enhanced selective attention (focus on relevant information), probably because of their much-encountered experience in maintaining the use of only one language during speaking (Bialystok et al., 2009). Monitoring is another field bilinguals tend to be better at. However, it also seems to be tied to practice: those bilinguals who use their two languages in two distinct contexts (e.g. one at home, the other one at work), do not have to monitor language changes often; thus, they do not show advantages in monitoring.

Perhaps the most alluring advantage of being bilingual is that they benefit from its advantages across the lifespan: the executive control functions – that are least effective in young and old age – are enhanced during these periods, too. Bilingual advantage has been shown in case of seven-month-old infants (Kovacs & Mehler as cited in Bialystok et al.,

2009) as well as in case of eighty-year-olds. Two tentative conclusions can be drawn from the studies mentioned above with respect to the conditions when bilingualism is advantageous: the first is that the more proficient a bilingual, the higher the impact of bilingualism on cognitive and linguistic processing, and the second is that the earlier and the more often one encounters two languages, the more extensively he or she can learn both languages.

3. RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research approach and design

I adopted multiple case study as the design for my research. I chose case study, as my goal was to gain a deeper understanding of my chosen topic; since - according to Dörnyei (2007) - case study research “offers rich and in-depth insights that no other method can yield” (p. 155). I chose to investigate nine children, thus, it is a multiple case study. My reason for studying more children was to gain a deeper understanding of the complex and interrelated social and psychological factors that influence language learning: examining more children leads to more accurate generalizations to form a theoretical model. Purposive sampling was another tool to enhance validity: I tried to make my group as homogeneous as possible with respect to a number of characteristics (age, siblings and years spent in this kindergarten).

These two strategies (generalisation to theoretical models and purposive sampling) “can offer (and have proved to be able to offer) as valid results as any other research methods” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 154). I also collected data related to their former kindergarten years, as it is necessary to examine where they started from, in order to unveil how these children have developed their current language skills. My data were of two types: qualitative and language data. I used quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyse my data. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, it was predominantly qualitative; quantitative data were gained to add more precision to the results.

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 *Selecting the kindergarten*

Before this study, I already spent time in the kindergarten I selected for the purpose of this study as part of my teaching practice. It took place in March, 2010, and I had to observe the children in class. Luckily, six children of the ones I investigated in the present study were part of that class. These notes presented me with important insights in the changes of their social life. This time was also beneficial in building rapport with and getting to know the teachers and some of the children.

3.2.1.1 About the kindergarten

This kindergarten was founded almost ten years ago and is situated in a picturesque, green area of Budapest. It has six large friendly and very beautifully decorated rooms for the

classes with lots of natural light. They are all very well equipped with an incredibly wide range of toys and materials to play with, and there are a lot of plants and even animals. The kindergarten has a children's library, a gymnasium, an art room and a big garden where children play and grow their own plants. Every class has two teachers: a Hungarian and an English native speaker. Their work is aided by the school psychologist and a speech therapist.

The curriculum was developed to adhere to national curriculum of Australia, Britain, the United States and Hungary to make the transition of children into schools of all these countries easy. For this reason, early academic skills are taught in the kindergarten: reading, writing and mathematical skills on their level. The kindergarten's main goals are to "maximise each child's development in all areas of learning, to adapt to reflect current theories, to bring each child to their next step in their development [and] to lead each child smoothly in to their next level of schooling, wherever this may be" ("Curriculum," n.d.).

The children's daily routine is the following: there is free play from arrival until 10:30 when there is fruit snack. After that there is "circle time" for half an hour when children sit in a circle on the floor and teachers discuss different topics with them in a way that children can learn new things. On Monday and Wednesday, they have literacy and mathematics classes at this time. After this they go out in the garden for an hour until twelve when they come back and have lunch and go to the bathroom. From one o'clock to two it is rest time when they are allowed to play quietly. After this on Monday it is free play, on Tuesday they have gym and speech therapy in Hungarian, on Wednesday and Thursday they have Hungarian class, and on Friday they go swimming after lunch.

3.2.1.2 The teachers' beliefs

Katerina and Matt have very similar beliefs about their jobs in the kindergarten. Their personal belief is that no child is beyond help. As a primary goal for the children in this kindergarten is to learn to speak English, language is an all-pervasive goal and means, as well. The ideal environment for learning a language is to be extendedly surrounded by it, according to Matt, the British teacher. In order to make it possible for the children to make the most out of the situation, the teachers listen intently to whatever they have to say, and encourage everyone to speak more, with more people and more in front of the public. Katerina, the Hungarian teacher believes that this is an excellent way of not only learning the language, but also of getting rid of their anxieties and their shyness and gaining more confidence. This is of primary importance, as they both think that the social and emotional well-being is essential, since anything else can come only after children feel comfortable in their environment and are

emotionally well-balanced. This aligns closely with the hierarchy of needs Tay and Diener (2011) presented.

To aid language learning, Katerina speaks almost exclusively in English, giving them no other option. She speaks in Hungarian only when a child is especially anxious and she feels it is the only way to comfort him. When a child knows very little English, Katerina even translates for him what is said. During the initial phase, the teachers do not correct children's language, because that ruins their confidence and makes them anxious about speaking. Instead, they model the sentences children want to say. This way the children get acquainted with the basics of English, gain an understanding of the daily commands and rules, start communicating with the others and thus, they start feeling more comfortable and confident. Later on, when children speak a more advanced level of English, teachers speak a higher level of English and make more and more corrections, as much as the particular child can handle. This challenge as well as urging them to strive for a higher command of English is necessary for their development according to the teachers, which reflects Vygotsky's (1962) views.

In addition to the social and emotional development, they invest a great amount of energy in children's mental and physical development as well. According to Matt, education can be successful only if it is exciting and interesting for children. Based on my observations, they excel at providing the highest quality and most entertaining education possible. Their method for making their development in all areas more effective and faster is to constantly praise them for what they are good at, and help them advance in the weaker areas. And, as children do not develop at the same pace, it is essential for them to get to know every child very well, so that activities can be tailored to their individual needs.

Another key issue in dealing with children is their behavioural problems. They deal with them in a very effective way: reasoning. Whenever there is a problem, they talk about the reasons why this behaviour is not desired, or if the child has problems with another child, they encourage him or her to talk about it with the other child. This way they promote not only communication, but also make them deal with their problems on their own, which develops their social skills, acceptance and makes them independent and better at negotiating and solving conflicts. This method is also beneficial in that teachers do not have to deal with all the behavioural problems; children get used to solving problems themselves.

3.2.2 *Selecting the children*

On my first visit 28 February 2011, I had a discussion with the teachers about which children I would include, and I also spent my day there observing the children. I presented my criteria to the teachers: children had to be matched for age, time spent in this kindergarten and their siblings, and they had to be of three types with respect to their language background. I chose three children to represent each type, and thus, they were assigned into three groups.

In the “Hungarian” group there are children who have virtually no contact with English-speaking people outside the kindergarten. They are Lili, Márk and Zsófi (all names are pseudonyms). Lili and Márk are special in that it is their fourth year in this kindergarten. Lili has no sibling, and she lives with her mother only. The “English” group consists of children who have a mixed family background: all three children have a Hungarian mother and an English father, and Hungarian is the dominant language at home. The “Foreigner” group includes children from abroad who come from monolingual families, and left Hungary at the end of 2011. There is Wilma who is Swedish, Małgosia who is Polish, and Katerina who is Czech. All the children are from high socio-economic background, which is reflected in the sheer fact that they go to this kindergarten.

3.2.2.1 The Hungarian group

Lili

The two most striking features of Lili are her perfectionism and love of language and everything connected to it: stories, reading (she became interested in it at the age of four), writing and role play. Therefore, having to speak in English in the class has never been a problem for her. Lili is said to be very bright, inquisitive, and talented in language learning (both of them); she has always had a great attention span and good memory. Her key strengths are negotiating and reasoning (probably because she avoids conflicts), and she can make tactical decisions in games. She was extremely shy and reserved until her last half year there (February, 2011), which prevented her from fearlessly plunging in interactions with others, resulting in few friendships with peers. In the end, however, she became confident, assertive and popular. Her mother has very good relationship with the teachers.

Márk

Márk’s English is one of the worst in the class. He started off shy, too, his confidence was boosted when he gained more English in his second year there. He never minds if he gets something wrong, his voice is heard in the class. Despite this, he is not very sociable and is

not willing to use English if it is not required. The reasons for his poorer English skills might be that he has always had only two friends with whom he speaks in Hungarian, that he brought anxieties from home related to his brother, that he seems not to be talented in learning English and that his English has always been below practically everyone else's. His motivation was directed to reading and writing, which he is phenomenal at. He also has good memory and abstract reasoning. Parents have excellent relationship with the teachers.

Zsófi

Zsófi should be in a Hungarian-speaking kindergarten, according to her teachers, as her English is not enough for her to express herself in the way she wants to; she does not enjoy speaking in English. She speaks, however, a lot in Hungarian; thus, it is almost only the teachers who have had impact on her English. She has two exclusive Hungarian-speaking friends; she is not naturally outgoing, but she enjoys being the leader. She is not a risk-taker, probably because it affects her greatly when her parents punish her on the occasions when she gets her clothes dirty. She is bright (intelligent, good abstract reasoning, focused attention, memory and general knowledge of the world); enjoys and excels at reading, writing and maths. This made her a bit more confident in her last half year.

Zsófi and Márk are said to be the least proficient in class. One of the teachers reported that they know that they cannot speak in English as well as they would like to and as the others, which make them feel inferior to the others and also to resort to speaking in Hungarian as often as they can, which further lessens their opportunities for practice (K. Tamás, personal communication, March 30, 2011). Lili's language skills are said to be better, but she is said to be more enthusiastic about and more talented in language learning than the other two.

3.2.2.2 The English group

Abigail

She could be best described as unmotivated. When she started kindergarten she had already had a good command of English that did not develop much thereafter. She is extremely outgoing and talkative and loves to be in control, and as language is not a barrier for her, she could talk with anyone from the first moment on (she is one of the most fluent, fastest-speaking children). Therefore, she soon became the most popular and top leader person in the group, and she became extremely confident and a risk-taker at the same time. As she seems to be almost exclusively socially motivated and has always preferred her peers to her teachers, she did not have to monitor and further develop her English skills for her purposes. Nevertheless, she is not considered talented. She finally became motivated to read

and write in the last half year, for which she lacked concentration (probably because she has not concentrated on learning English in kindergarten). She encounters little English outside school (despite her father being English); it is mostly watching English videos that she does. The connection between the teachers and the mother (who they meet) is good.

Olivia

Olivia does not care about languages. Both her English and her Hungarian are much below those of others'. Her father travels a lot, but other than that there is no information on how much she encounters English outside the school. She talks in Hungarian much more than in English. It took her a long time until instead of being physical in conflicts she could learn to use language to solve problems. She has not grasped abstract reasoning yet; she is easily distracted and not overly interested in the world. She seems to care only about being in the centre: besides Abigail she is the most talkative, outgoing, confident and leader-type of person. She is very observant concerning others, which helps her to remain in the centre. The relationship between the teachers and parents is good.

Soma

Soma's language skills are very advanced; he is the only balanced bilingual in the class. He has very sophisticated vocabulary, he is very accurate and fluent. He is considered talented and motivated. This latter might be in connection with his exceptional love for his English-speaking father. He is outgoing and extremely talkative; though he is very soft-spoken, and his voice is not heard in the classroom. He is very friendly and can get on well with everyone (though he prefers his teachers' company); he is the "link" between the boys and the girls. He finds it hard to manage problems; he is very sensitive and not very assertive. He cannot defend himself against the bullying of his two best friends (the two other boys in the class). He loves challenge, nevertheless, he is very inquisitive and thus, he has above average knowledge of the world, memory and focused attention. He hears and speaks approximately an equal amount of English and Hungarian outside the kindergarten. The relationship between parents and teachers is very good; the father holds very similar views on child rearing to the teachers.

3.2.2.3 The foreigner group

Katerina

She could be perhaps best described as having a strong desire to communicate. After a rough start, she soon made much effort to communicate with others to learn the language (she is said to be very energetic): she listened intently to stories, took part in circle times, talked a

lot with teachers and made some friends early on. She was, however, often shy (she became embarrassed when she said something in the wrong way), which held her back from socialising. Teachers' attentive listening, her love of stories and role plays helped her become a social butterfly in the third year. She is considered quite talented. She is not good at maths and abstract reasoning, but good at reading (it might have to do with her love of language). She has a very good family background; their relationship with the teachers is very good.

Małgosia

Małgosia spent most of her time as the reserved observer. Her mum reported that she has always envisaged herself in a Polish environment; thus, she was not motivated to learn English until her third year. In addition, she was very shy and lacked confidence; she did not dare to join others. Instead, she chose to observe everything before acting. It also pertained to language; she did not speak much. This might also be due to the fact that she is perfectionist. She has always been fond of stories, however, listened to them very intently and has very good memory. She reads stories in English every day with her mother. This, along with her exceptional talent for reading (she can read for fifty minutes and follow the plot), writing and maths helped her a lot in becoming more confident. Thus, in the third year, she managed to make a lot of friends (she is good at resolving conflicts), she enjoyed role play, often taking on the role of the narrator. The teachers' relationship with the parents is good.

Wilma

Wilma has developed tremendously during these years. She went to the kindergarten with some command of English, a great deal of shyness and fear of public attention. This lasted for two years; during that time the teachers had a great influence on her. She always strived to impress them with her English and talked much, which gave rise to her development. In the third year, she became more confident, partly because of her successes in literacy. As a result, she made friends easily and got on well with everyone. She experienced anxiety twice when there were serious problems with her little brother. Her cognitive skills have improved a lot: she has a very good memory, general knowledge of the world, focused attention, and she is also capable of abstract reasoning. At home she plays with her brothers in English sometimes. The relationship between teachers and parents is very good.

3.2.3 *Deciding about the methods*

After my initial visit, I studied the literature to find the best ways of collecting data for my purposes, conducted a pilot study on 7 April and defined the sources of data. In order to

enhance the validity of the study, I decided to collect the widest range of data possible. These sources include field notes, interviews, tape recordings, school documents and, naturally, the related literature. After obtaining permissions from the director of the kindergarten, the teachers and the parents (see Appendix A), all the data collection procedures were accomplished in five days: 14, 15, 20-22 June.

3.2.3.1 Field notes

I took field notes on these five days. These observations were unstructured; they served as first-hand experience on children's personality and social behaviour, the classroom practices and the teacher's work. It also created rapport between me and the children studied.

3.2.3.2 Language samples: narratives

This rapport was especially important, as the next step was the collection of samples of their language. This was a crucial part of the study, as I had to be very precise in assessing their level of English to be able to relate it to other (social and psychological) factors. I asked them to tell me two stories to enable me to assess their English language skills. Using English as a means to retell the stories rather than Hungarian had a further benefit: children were shown to comprehend and retell stories in the language used in the classroom (Schelletter & Parke, 2004); as it is the language in which they practiced telling stories. One of the stories was well known to them: Little Red Riding Hood (Giles, 1998); the other one is a widely used story for research purposes: the wordless picture book, Mayer's Frog, where are you? (1969).

Originally I wanted them to tell the two stories on two different days to eliminate the "bad mood effect" (that is, there might be days when they do not feel like telling stories), but the circumstances did not allow me to do this with every child. After piloting the story telling-session in the classroom with not much success (the child was distracted), I decided to record the stories in an unused, quiet room where it was only me and one child at a time. Most of them were very keen to come with me; they even asked me several times to have these story telling-sessions more often. I interpreted it as a sign of motivation and that they were not afraid of me, which clearly makes a positive impact on the quality of their stories.

Careful consideration was given to choosing the means of sample collection. As the level of all the studied elements of language (complexity, accuracy, fluency and lexis) is dependent upon the type of text that is produced (Skehan, 2009), the method most likely to produce the highest levels of most of these elements had to be found. High levels of the performance variables are important, as my purpose was to assess what they know and not

what they do not know. Besides, as I was to compare the language skills of the children with each other, the samples had to be comparable. For this reason, I discarded communicative tasks, and chose the least negotiable (and at the same time, most comparable) type: narrative.

According to Skehan (2009), narratives have many merits. They have the benefit of requiring unavoidable lexis, which is useful for determining the breadth of their vocabulary and it also lets story-tellers include complex sentences and ideas. The fact that children deal with concrete, static information is also a facilitating factor; familiarity with the stories enhances fluency and accuracy. Familiarity was ensured by telling them the stories before they had to tell it on the one hand, and on the other, they already knew the Little Red Riding Hood (Giles, 1998) story very well according to the teachers. Another benefit is that when they include background information, complexity and accuracy are raised. Drawbacks of narratives are difficult vocabulary, which hinders complexity and accuracy in case of non-native speakers. Of course, it is a question who can be regarded a native-speaker in my study, but according to the teachers, the English skills of most of them are below the level of native speaker children. Another negative factor is the online pressure: they do not have time to think ahead about what and how they want to say, unlike in case of communicative tasks.

Narratives were used also for the purpose of evaluating the coherence and cohesion of their narratives. This is not related to their language skills (complexity, accuracy, fluency or lexis), but to higher cognitive skills: how well they can organise information in order to make their message clear for the listener. It requires a higher organisation of a longer text that is beyond the sentence level (Hickmann, 2004).

3.2.3.3 Interview with parents

To learn more about the children's family environment, I interviewed the parents. The questions concerned the children's linguistic background, their personality, their linguistic development and issues related to the kindergarten. There were four parents I was able to interview orally, three who filled in the written version of the interview (Abigail's, Soma's and Katerina's parents) and two who did not send the questionnaires back (Zsófi's and Olivia's parents). See the parent interview form in Appendix B.

3.2.3.4 Interview with teachers

Teachers were interviewed about each child (there was one interview about each child only, there was no time for interviewing both the teachers about each child) and about their teaching practices and beliefs. There were some follow-up questions in the end, which

emerged later in the study, and they were also asked to prepare a sociogram for the entire class. See the teacher interview questions in Appendix C.

3.2.3.5 Asking children

I prepared a second sociogram based on who the children consider their best friends. See the two sociograms in Appendix D.

3.2.3.6 School documents

I asked for the Progress Reports of each child from the last three years. They are written every half year for the parents, and with two exceptions, I received all the documents. I used these with caution, however, because sometimes they painted a brighter picture about children than the teachers in the personal interviews.

3.3 Data analysis

3.3.1 *Qualitative data analysis*

The vast majority of the data is qualitative in nature; I analysed them mostly using qualitative methods. I used the grounded theory approach to analyse the data (Dörnyei, 2007) in order to gain a deeper understanding of the psychological and social factors that affect language learning. First of all, I gathered all related data separately for each child. First an accurate transcription of the interviews with the teachers and the parents was prepared. The next phase was the close reading of these interviews and the progress reports of each child and relating them to the measures of their language skills I had already obtained from the analysis of the two stories they produced. I read the texts more times, looking for conceptual categories: this was the open coding phase. The next step, the axial coding, was to find relations between these categories, and the last stage, the selective coding stage, was to reach a more abstract level: to form hypotheses.

3.3.2 *Gaining language data*

To have precise data on their language skills, I first broke up their performance into several categories to make the assessment of their linguistic skills as diverse, and thus, as precise as possible: grammatical complexity, accuracy, fluency, vocabulary and narrative. Then I turned these measures into numerical data.

3.3.2.1 Grammatical complexity

3.3.2.1.1 A new unit for analysing spoken data: the AS-unit

Foster, Tonkyn, and Wigglesworth (2000) made great efforts to develop a unit that can be used for measuring spoken language in a valid and reliable way. They developed the AS-unit – the Analysis of Speech Unit –, which signifies what “the performer can achieve in a single chunk of micro-planning process” (Foster et al., 2000, p. 356.). This can be viewed in quite many ways, however, which affects the definition and thus, the application of the unit: semantically, intonationally and syntactically. Semantic units are information or meaning chunks. This idea, although appealing, is rather impossible to put into practice. Viewing units marked by intonational and pausal features as the minimal units of planning does not always reveal the speakers’ real planning abilities, since the difference between fluent and dysfluent speakers does not necessarily lie in their planning abilities.

There is, however, evidence from studies that investigated the pauses of native speakers that “syntactic units are genuine units of planning” (Foster et al., 2000, p. 365), as pauses tend to occur at syntactic boundaries. The question arises at this point whether clauses are appropriate for this purpose. Foster et al. (2000) explain that speakers sometimes plan multi-clausal structures, which is important to be taken into account when assessing language proficiency, as the ability to plan multi-clause units is associated with higher proficiency. The AS-unit allows for structures that go beyond the limits of clauses. An AS-unit is “an independent clause, or sub-clausal unit, together with any subordinate clause(s) associated with either” (Foster et al., 2000, p. 365).

3.3.2.1.2 Measuring grammatical complexity

Measuring grammatical complexity has always constituted a challenge for linguists. In order to be able to investigate it one needs to define it first. According to Pallotti (2009), it can refer to three distinct notions: structure, variety and the age of acquiring. Structurally it means the number of linguistic rules to be applied in order to reach the correct form. When one thinks of it in terms of variety, complexity means “hard to separate, analyse or solve” according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (as cited in Pallotti, 2009, p. 593), which is, however, too vague to deal with. The third meaning of complexity concerns the age of acquisition: the later a linguistic form is acquired, the more complex it is. It is, however, not necessarily a case of complexity: there might be structurally incomplex forms that are learnt late, because they are infrequent, for example. Investigating the development of grammar in

terms of structure and age of acquisition is still in its infancy; there was, however, an attempt that is worth mentioning.

From 1953 to 1966, Loban (1976) carried out a research in which he followed the linguistic development of 105 Californian children of various linguistic abilities. He measured linguistic complexity in more ways; one was the so-called Elaboration Index. They investigated all strategies to expand a sentence from one-word subject and predicate, assigned weight to each strategy and analysed their language samples accordingly. Loban (1976) also applied another method – one that is not so time-consuming and approaches this problem completely differently. This method consists of dividing the text into c-units (that is, communication units) and measuring the average number of words in them. A communication unit is an “independent clause with its modifiers” (Loban, 1976, p. 9). In the end, he came to the conclusion that the analysis with their Elaboration Index yielded the same results as the analysis of c-units. Loban concluded that there was a significant and consistent difference between children with high and low linguistic abilities in all these attributes: average number of words per c-unit, number of dependent clauses and the use of connectors.

Recent research has used the same method to measure grammatical complexity with a slight change in the unit of measurement, and it has been shown that all children follow the same pattern in the development of complexity. According to Norris and Ortega (2009), the first step of making an utterance more complex is to link clauses by coordination, after that by subordination and the last step (which indicates a high level of proficiency) is an increased mean length of clauses. For this reason I decided to assess grammatical complexity by investigating the coordination and subordination measures by dividing the texts into AS-units and clauses and calculating the ratio of subordinate and coordinate clauses per all clauses multiplied by hundred.

3.3.2.2 Fluency

Fluency is “the production of language in real time without undue pausing or hesitation” (Pallotti, 2009, p. 591). The term “undue” is a rather vague one, and, indeed, there is little agreement on what can be called fluent and dysfluent. It can be measured in terms of speed fluency (number of words or syllables per minute), breakdown fluency, indexed by pausing and repair fluency, indexed by reformulation, repetitions, false starts and replacements (Skehan, 2009). I did not measure breakdown fluency, as it would have required a programme I did not have to determine the exact length of pauses. I measured speed fluency by dividing the number of words by the length of the texts measured in minutes. Loban

(1976) found that repair fluency (which he termed maze behaviour) was a good predictor of overall language skills. I measured repair fluency in three ways: I freed the texts first of all of fillers, then of false starts, too and then of repetitions, as well (that is, of all instances of repair fluency). Then the ratio of the number of words per the number of minutes of the text were calculated for the three versions of the texts. Fluency is to be dealt with care, however, in my opinion. Speedier speakers may not be better at other measures of language skills than slower ones, and it is rather vague what counts as too much hesitation or pausing. Without norms only a subjective evaluation and comparison of children are possible.

3.3.2.3 Vocabulary diversity: the D-value

Instead of TTR (type-token ratio) I used Malvern and Richards' (1997) D-value, which is currently a widely accepted measure among researchers working with English language learners to assess the richness of the vocabulary of texts. This D-value is based on TTR, that is, type-token ratio, which is the number of different words (types) divided by the number of all the words in the text (tokens). TTR has, however, been shown to be unreliable with longer texts (Malvern & Richards). D-value is different in that the software uses random sampling of tokens to plot the curve of the TTR against the increasing token size of the text (Malvern & Richards). This value seems especially appropriate for measuring the shorter texts of those not possessing a particularly high command of English, that is, for my purposes. I used the software of Meara and Miralpeix (2007) called D_Tools.

The texts had to be edited for the best results: decisions had to be made what constitutes one word. I decided on the following: contractions count as two words, hyphenated words count as one word (for example bye-bye) and the two proper names (Little Red Riding Hood and Big Bad Wolf) count as one word, too. I also deleted nonsensical words that conveyed no meaning. Furthermore, I deleted the possessive apostrophes, as apostrophes are treated as spaces and all the punctuation, because texts with it had different results.

D-value has one disadvantage (and this is why it is recommended for texts of relatively low level English): it does not use any external source to evaluate the "difficulty" of the words; more difficult words are treated the same way as the most common words. A problem challenged me at this point: which words are to be considered "difficult"? What is the definition of a "difficult word"? In the literature, it is an often reoccurring expression, and as no definition was given, what is more, there were debates about it, I adopted a more appropriate version of this instinctively pertinent notion: I chose to regard "difficult words" those words that native speakers encounter around this time in their life first (that is, in their

sixth year), or later. As native and these kindergartners spend about the same time in kindergarten and presumably the topics they talk about the kindergarten – and thus, the words they use – are largely the same, I suppose that even if these kindergartners do not have the same size and the same depth of vocabulary, they can have much in common. Therefore, I looked for lists of words that were arranged according to children's age of acquisition.

Unfortunately these lists (Stadthagen-Gonzales & Davies, 2006; Gilhooly & Logie, 1980; Coltheart, 1981) – even though considered very reliable – are very short, and they do not contain most of the words these children produced. This way I have no evidence on how late native children usually acquire the words these children used; the only possibility is to compare the participants of my study with regard to the D-value.

3.3.2.4 Accuracy

Accuracy is probably the most independent construct of all: it is not connected to complexity, as having not many errors does not necessarily indicate that it is a complex text, too; it might be made up of simple structures only. In the same vein, a text with fewer errors might not be more intelligible: one might construct completely inadequate and unconnected strings of speech. Thus, accuracy alone does not predict overall language proficiency.

The less time-consuming version of operationalising accuracy is measuring the percentage of error-free clauses, which has been shown to be effective (Skehan & Foster, 1997). In order to have a clearer picture of what is problematic for them at this age and to see how effective Skehan and Foster's (1997) measure is, I looked at and categorised every error they made. Errors fell into three main categories: errors connected to verbs (tense and inflection problems) belong to the first category, the second category includes errors connected to pronouns and the third comprises of errors of every other kind. Calculating errors seems unproblematic: one has to count the number of words not complying with the norms.

Many problems arose, however: children's speech is full of words that, although not the most appropriate, serve the approximate purpose. For example "then he slept" (instead of fell asleep) or "then they started to find" (instead of look for), or "so better to climb out" with the subject and verb missing (see Appendix F). I counted only those mistakes that they do not normally produce and those errors that could not be seen as understandable ways of shortening the texts (for example "I hear little squeaking like ounk" where the object is disturbingly missing). Children's idiosyncratic – though not absolutely grammatically correct,

but still understandable – solutions were accepted. Due to the rather subjective evaluation of errors, the numerical results are to be interpreted with caution.

3.3.2.5 Narrative

I was also interested in how children can build up stories, as this reflects their ability to go beyond the minimal planning processes (AS-units) to create meaningful connections not only between words and phrases, but also between AS-units, which is seen as an essential element of well-formed utterances (Hickmann, 2004). This can be achieved by means of cohesion and coherence. Cohesion “refers to the ways that linguistic devices are used to connect different sentences within a narrative” (Nicolopoulou, 2008, p. 300). It is measured by the subordination index and the personal pronoun ratio. A high density of pronouns can be problematic when the reader does not know what the pronouns refer to.

Coherence is a less specified concept which refers to the degree to which the content is integrated and interconnected (Nicolopoulou, 2008). Nicolopoulou (2008) pointed out that children might choose from a number of ways to make their stories coherent when they tell a story of their own; the “glue” of their story might be referential, spatial, temporal, causal or thematic. Furthermore, Nicolopoulou argued that in order to learn what children are really capable of one should give them the chance to build the story according to their own inner logic.

Nicolopoulou (2008) states that picture books like the Mayer’s (1969) book call for the use of goal-based narratives and that they “rule out alternative narrative frameworks around which the children might organise their stories” (2008, p. 307). I chose using picture books, nevertheless, for two reasons: on the one hand allowing children to make up stories on their own would have made the texts difficult to compare to each other, and on the other hand, these children are well accustomed to this task. The fact that these stories usually have the same set narrative framework implies that they have to learn that type of coherence, as well.

Indeed, Berman and Slobin (1994) pointed out that children go through a well-identified process in learning to tell narratives: after enumerating individual events they learn to organise them temporally, then causally and after it they integrate the actions into a thematically coherent plot line. Thus, it seems that causal connections (like goal-based connections) are part of children’s armoury from a certain age on.

To assess the goal-based nature of the frog stories, seven crucial events were identified in the story where the actions seen in the pictures are related to the goal of the characters: finding the lost frog. Children received a point for alluding to this goal at each crucial event.

In addition, I also assessed stories subjectively to obtain a picture of their general level of coherence and examined the coordinating and subordinating connectives they used.

In the Little Red Riding Hood story seven events were identified without which the story was incoherent. These are the following: (1) The grandmother is sick (and this is why Little Red Riding Hood has to visit her). (2) Little Red Riding Hood sets off. (3) The wolf hears Little Red Riding Hood talking with her father (and this is why he goes to the grandmother's house). (4) The grandmother saw the wolf and hid in the cupboard. (5) The wolf disguised himself as the grandmother. (6) Little Red Riding Hood cried, and the father chased away the wolf. (7) They found the grandmother and took her out of the cupboard.

Assessing how goal-based this story is did not seem beneficial, as – unlike the frog story – it is not build around one problem solving process; although the characters have goals, the story is not organised around attaining them. Connectives were investigated related to this story, as well.

For a comprehensive chart of all the measures, see Appendix E.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Analysis of the narratives

Having two tasks provides more sophisticated results and additional challenges. The two tasks (retelling the Little Red Riding Hood and the frog story) are not only inherently different (the two stories are different), but they are also dissimilar in that children have had recent and frequent experience in both listening to and telling or acting out only the Little Red Riding Hood story. One would expect familiarity to be a facilitating factor; this was, however, not always the case. This might be due to motivational or attentional factors, for example. My reason for providing the children with two different stories was for them to have the chance to do their best. Thus, I originally intended to take into account the “better” scores only.

Further challenges arose at this point: there was one girl (Małgosia) who attained much higher scores for the Little Red Riding Hood story than for the frog story, and she also outperformed most of the other children. This is a problem due to two reasons: first, she is said to have attained a mid-level English as compared to the others, and, as Loban (1976) argued, teachers are reliably good assessors of the language skills of the children they teach. Second, the other children did not practice this story as much as she did. It is reasonable to posit that practice helped her immensely resulting in her better scores. The question arises then if it is fair to take her scores related to the Little Red Riding Hood into consideration.

Moreover, this question led to another one: is it the good way to learn about their real level of proficiency if only their best scores are taken into account? Does it reflect their real abilities? I resolved this problem by discarding this question and approaching the problem from a different angle. The main difference between the tasks was (not taking into account the inherent differences which are present in two different stories in all cases) children's familiarity with them. As life always “presents” everyone with tasks that are different with respect to the degree people have practiced them, it seems a better measure if we consider how they deal with relatively novel tasks, since flexibility and adaptability are crucial components of learning. Therefore, I am going to present both the average scores of the two stories for each child as well as the scores of the tasks separately.

This seems necessary, as problems evolved concerning the “bad mood effect”: there were two cases in which children's willingness to tell the story dropped dramatically when they had to tell the second story (the Little Red Riding Hood) immediately after the first. In Olivia's case (who told me a most detailed, creative, and unusually long frog story

beforehand) almost all the scores dropped (with the exception of accuracy) alongside with the decrease in her motivation in case of the Little Red Riding Hood story. It would seem unfair to provide only the average scores, since her Little Red Riding Hood story clearly did not reflect her real capabilities. Due to all these problems and the fact that merely two stories cannot provide a comprehensive means to assess their skills, I took into account the scores of both stories and treated them with caution.

4.2 Complexity

This domain of language has always been viewed by the public as probably the most indicative of one's language skills (together with pronunciation). It is important because children encounter public judgements most of the time; therefore, they had better have a sophisticated grammar when they leave kindergarten.

Complexity was measured in a number of different ways (number of words per AS-unit, number of words per clauses, subordination index, coordination index, and coordinated verb phrases-index), two of which were indicative and widely accepted measures: subordination index and coordination index. Coordination measures were in case of these children not indicative of anything: on average about two-thirds of the clauses were coordinated ranging from one-third to all the clauses being coordinated in one case. These children have clearly moved beyond the level of only coordinating clauses (see Norris & Ortega, 2009), which is also supported by the appearance of subordination in their texts.

The Little Red Riding Hood stories tended to be more complex than the frog stories. There were three exceptions: Olivia, whose scores were surprisingly low for the frog story, which is accounted for by her lack of motivation, and Wilma and Márk whose scores for the frog story were negligibly lower than those of the Little Red Riding Hood story. Thus, it is plausible that familiarity with the story enhances grammatical complexity.

But what is complexity related to? Trying to assess them according to the categories they have been assigned to based on their language background seems a logical step. It seems reasonable to assume that the earlier one starts learning a language the better; moreover, more frequent interactions in English should call forth for more hurried development. Furthermore, narratives are reported to hinder complexity in case of native speakers (Skehan, 2009). From these it follows that the English group should perform the best (them members of whom are closer to native speakers in terms of language proficiency than those of the other groups). If

one looks at their complexity scores, however (see Table 1), this is clearly not the case, as Olivia and Abigail from the “English” group attained the lowest scores.

An alternative explanation is needed. It has been established that at a relatively lower level of English, teachers’ influence is greater; at a higher level peers affect language development more (Genesee & Nicoladis, 2006). It has also been proposed that interactions with peers might not yield as good learning opportunities as with teachers (Saunders & O’Brien, 2006). Therefore, I compared children’s complexity scores with the approximate amount of their communication with the teachers. Furthermore, a proximate ordering of children according to their language aptitude is presented (see Table 1).

Surprisingly, the relative order related to the amount of interactions that children have with teachers is strikingly similar to their rank related to talent in language learning and the complexity scores, as well. Although the example of nine children certainly does not provide conclusive evidence, it reinforces the assumption that both talent and the amount of interaction with teachers are related to the complexity of their stories.

Table 1

<i>Subordination index: average</i>			<i>Talk with teachers</i>		<i>Talent</i>	
Group	Child	Percentage of subordinated clauses	The amount children talk with teachers		How talented they are in learning languages	
“English” group	Soma	24,6	Very much	Lili	Very talented	Lili
	Abigail	13,9		Soma		Małgosia
	Olivia	8		Małgosia		Soma
“Foreigner” group	Małgosia	26,2	Quite much	Katerina	Talented	Wilma
	Katerina	18,8		Wilma	Quite t.	Katerina
	Wilma	17	They prefer peers	Zsófi	Not really talented	Márk
“Hungarian” group	Lili	19,3		Márk		Olivia
	Zsófi	17,7		Abigail	Not talented	Abigail
	Márk	14,4		Olivia		Zsófi

4.3 Fluency

Fluency was measured in two ways: speed fluency and repair fluency. As repair fluency is said be indicative of general language skills (Loban, 1976), it is worth examining. The general difference between the repair and speed fluency was about fourteen words per minute in case of the frog story and about eleven words for the Little Red Riding Hood story, which means that they produced less fillers, false starts, repetitions, reformulations and replacements (that is, dysfluency markers) in case of the Little Red Riding Hood story. It

supports Skehan and Foster's (1997) finding according to which a known text structure enhances fluency (see Table 2).

Looking at the patterns, there was a tendency for the members of the "Foreign" group to speak more speedily and with more dysfluency markers than the others. Dysfluency, however, was not a good predictor of overall language proficiency: while Małgosia, who is amongst the middle to high-achieving children in the class, produced a very high number of them, Márk, who is reported to have amongst the worst overall language skills, produced a surprisingly low number of these dysfluency markers. Thus, it seems not to be related to the talent of these children – which, in their case, reflects their language proficiency, according to their teachers (K. Tamás and M. Holding, personal communication, March 27, 2011), and thus, to the relative amount they speak with the teachers.

Table 2

Measures of fluency

Children	Frog story			Little Red Riding Hood story		
	Speed fluency	Difference	Repair fluency	Speed fluency	Difference	Repair fluency
"English" group						
Abigail	136,4	18,2	118,2	127,1	5,3	121,8
Olivia	80,3	8,3	72	60,4	2,5	58,2
Soma	83,4	10,8	72,6	84,3	9,3	75
"Foreigner" group						
Katerina	104,4	14,4	90	108,5	14,3	94,2
Małgosia	102,5	23,9	78,6	106,9	21,1	85,8
Wilma	114,1	12,1	102	110	8	102
"Hungarian" group						
Lili	90,4	14,8	75,6	63,9	5,7	58,2
Márk	67	5,4	61,6	57,7	1,9	55,8
Zsófi	91,7	21,6	70,1	96,1	28,3	67,8
Average difference		14,4			10,7	

Another interesting finding was that Olivia and Lili (who were the least motivated to tell the Little Red Riding Hood story, but motivated to tell the frog story) produced much fewer fillers, false starts and repetitions in the frog story than in the Little Red Riding Hood story. Although generalising a finding based on two examples is more than bold, both children were careless about telling the story, which must have affected their measures in some ways. It might have eliminated most of these characteristics.

4.4 Accuracy

Accuracy was measured in two ways: the standard percentage of error-free clauses per all clauses, and a count of all the words that are erroneous according to three categories: errors related to verbs, pronouns and other grammatical and lexical mistakes. These two measurements yielded very similar results (see Table 3).

Table 3

Accuracy measures

			Total percentage of not erroneous words	Errors related to verbs	Errors related to pronouns	Percentage of other errors	
Groups	Percentage of errorfree clauses						
“English” group	Soma	71,3	Soma	93,2	1,8	2	3
	Olivia	61,5	Olivia	86,8	4,3	0,7	8,2
	Abigail	40,4	Abigail	77,8	14,8	3,5	3,9
“Foreigner” group	Wilma	67,6	Wilma	90,7	5,7	0,3	3,3
	Katerina	63,3	Katerina	89,9	6,3	0	3,8
	Małgosia	42,8	Małgosia	82,9	13,3	0,3	3,5
“Hungarian” group	Márk	53	Márk	88,3	5,7	2,5	3,5
	Lili	47,7	Zsófi	84,4	6,5	4,4	4,7
	Zsófi	42,6	Lili	83,9	14,2	1,1	0,8

Looking at the breakdown of errors, language background, once again, seems to play no part in determining their level of accuracy: from the “English” group Soma has attained the highest accuracy level, Abigail the worst and Olivia is in between them. Similarly, while Wilma and Katerina (of the “Foreigner” group) kept to the language norms fairly well, Małgosia has not yet come to terms with the use past tenses. The “Hungarian” group’s performance is interesting: Márk and Zsófi have a quite clear idea about how to use the past tenses (they are considered amongst the least talented and least proficient language learners); the problem is that they often use present tenses instead of past. Lili, on the other hand – who is one of the most talented –, makes mistakes connected to the formation of past tenses frequently; and yet, she rarely uses present tenses instead of past, which shows that she might have a clearer sense of time than the other two.

Measuring wrong verbs as a ratio of wrong verbs per all the words, however, gives a false picture: there may be children who use more verbs than others. Therefore, I also looked at the proportion of wrong verbs per all verbs. It had different results only in case of one child: Márk, who turned out to have a greater ratio of wrong verbs (see Table 4), but even this way he performed better than Lili. It is also interesting to see how big the difference is

between the best and the worst performing children: Soma, the 8,7% of whose verbs were used in a wrong way and Abigail, with 53,1% of verbs being incorrect.

Table 4

Measures of verbs

Percentage of wrong verbs per number of all words		Percentage of wrong verbs per number of all verbs	
Soma	1,8	Soma	8,7
Olivia	4,3	Olivia	18
Wilma	5,7	Wilma	22,9
Márk	5,7	Katerina	23,8
Katerina	6,3	Zsófi	33,3
Zsófi	6,5	Márk	34,8
Małgosia	13,3	Małgosia	48,2
Lili	14,2	Lili	48,9
Abigail	14,8	Abigail	53,1

It seems that verbs constitute the most problematic part of language for children, which is supported by Cremer, Dingshoff, de Beer, and Schoonen (2011). One of the teachers reported that she observed the same phenomenon with native English-speaking children when she worked in England: their use of verbs (assigning them to the appropriate tenses and giving them the proper form) did not reach the level of correctness until the age of about six (K. Tamás, personal communication, March 22, 2011).

It is also interesting to have a look at the kind of errors they made related to verbs. Most of them were in connection with past tenses, as the stories were told in the past. The most frequent mistake was the use of the following construction: *did* plus the present form of the verb (98 times altogether). Other tactics for dealing with past tense include using *did* plus the second (past) form of the verb (21 times altogether) and various other kinds (e.g. *did* plus the third present tense form of the verb, *did* plus the present tense form of the verb with an –s inflection, *was* plus the present form of the verb and even *is* plus present tense form of the verb). Many times they forgot to put the verbs into the past tense; they were in the present. This is a common mistake; it happened 76 times altogether as compared to the 491 times when they used some past tense form to express past. It means that on average 13% of their verbs that should be in a past tense is in other tenses.

It is very difficult to find an answer to the question: what the cause of these differences related to verbs is. It is clearly not related to the input, the language background, the social positions (considering the difference between the two leaders: Abigail and Olivia), the amount of communication between them and the teachers (considering Lili, Soma and

Małgosia being the ones who speak the most with the teachers). It is not even connected to motivation considering Katerina – who produced relatively few verb-related errors – and Małgosia – whose number of errors related to verbs is especially high – who are reported to be most affected by the quality of their own language: Katerina is embarrassed when she makes a mistake, Małgosia is perfectionist.

What is more, this is only one facet of the use of tenses: there are notable differences in the number of other tenses they use: Abigail and Małgosia, who are not good at using past tenses, used a wide variety of tenses: simple future, present and past continuous. Soma (who seems to excel at every different domain investigated) also uses these three tenses; once – although not appropriately but in its correct form – he even used present perfect. There seems to be no systematic difference between the groups related to this issue, either.

The measures of the pronoun errors yielded an unexpected but a very consistent finding: the three foreigners had virtually no mistakes, whereas all the others, whose other language is Hungarian, made many. A closer look at the data reveals that it is the *he* and *she* pronouns that children have problems with. The results show a clear-cut pattern: all the foreigners' first language contains this *he-she* distinction whereas Hungarian does not. It seems then that the cross-linguistic transfer of this element of language facilitates its mastery.

Other grammatical and lexical errors were scarce; these scores were in almost all cases lower than the errors connected to verbs. Most of them were prepositional errors (36 all in all) and article errors (11 altogether), and there were some cases when the subject (5 times), the object (5 times) or the predicate (twice) was missing. Lexical mistakes were not prevalent; in a few cases they did not find or did not use the most appropriate word.

In conclusion, it seems that language can be broken down into very specific parts (like the selection of the suitable tenses and verb forms, or the use of pronouns), and children attend to the correct use of them separately. Whether speaking accurately depends on their choice or it is part of their learning process, is not clear, but the fact that different children have better and worse results related to different domains seems to suggest that they might personally prefer to attend to and work on different domains of language. Furthermore, it is also interesting that in this study does not seem to support the proposition of Skehan and Foster (1997) according to which narratives hinder accuracy in case of non-native speakers, as Abigail speaks the least accurately, even though she comes from an English-Hungarian background. All in all, it seems to be a matter of personal preference possibly related to feedback.

4.5 Vocabulary assessment

The diversity of their vocabulary was measured with D_Tools (Malvern & Richards, 1997). As the volume of children's vocabulary is primarily associated with the caregivers' use of language – more complex and longer utterances with richer vocabulary on the caregivers' behalf result in a larger lexicon on the child's behalf (Neuman, 2006) –, the “English” group is expected to perform better. My results confirm this finding (see Table 5): the “English” group outperformed the “Foreigner” group, and the “Foreigner” group (with the exception of Wilma) outperformed the Hungarian group.

Table 5

Vocabulary diversity

Group	Children	D-value
“English” group	Soma	39,8
	Olivia	39,3
	Abigail	37,5
“Foreigner” group	Katerina	36,9
	Małgosia	35,5
	Wilma	26,5
“Hungarian” group	Zsófi	28,8
	Márk	25,6
	Lili	22,2

The results show that amount of English they use and hear is connected to their vocabulary diversity, as the members of the “English” group hear and speak English the most, after that come the members of the “Foreigner” group who are forced to listen to and speak English in the kindergarten, and those children who belong to the “Hungarian” group listen to and speak Hungarian much in the kindergarten. In this case kindergarten teachers can be viewed functionally as caregivers. These results are also visible if one takes a look at the sociograms (see Appendix D). Zsófi and Márk have no strong connections with English-speaking children, and although Lili is in a central position, she was there only in the last half year, whereas Małgosia, Katerina and Wilma were central figures already in the last third year. The teachers' sociogram represents the actual relationships better, in my opinion.

4.6 Coherence and cohesion in narratives

4.6.1 Personal pronouns and proper names

Starting with the personal pronoun ratio, I examined how many personal pronouns they used as compared to proper names, as too many personal pronouns may make it more difficult for the listener to follow the story. Both numerical measurement and subjective evaluation were done for both stories (see Table 6), as numbers only do not necessarily reflect how easy it is to follow who does what in the story; one also has to read them in order to be able to judge how clearly the child alludes to the characters. The results of the numerical measurements did not always reflect the perceived ease with which one could identify who the child is talking about. Whereas there were absolutely no problems with understanding Lili's referents, she ranked pretty low; Olivia's referents, on the other hand, were often unclear or even missing, and yet, she ranked quite high.

Table 6

Personal pronoun assessment of both stories

Groups	Percentage of proper names per personal pronouns		Subjective evaluation	
“English” group	Soma	66,5	Márk, Zsófi,	who made everything
	Olivia	61,5	Katerina, Lili	absolutely clear
	Abigail	52,5		
“Foreigner” group	Katerina	67,5		
	Wilma	57,5	Soma	very few uncertainties
	Małgosia	53	Wilma	a few uncertainties
“Hungarian” group	Márk	85,5	Małgosia,	sometimes not clear
	Zsófi	73,5	Abigail	
	Lili	60	Olivia	often unclear

There seem to be no group-related differences in this case. It is very interesting that Márk and Zsófi (probably the two least proficient English speakers) obtained the best results. Clarifying the referent requires extra effort on behalf of the speaker, as he knows who he is talking about; it is the listener who does not. Whether someone pays attention to making the referents clear or not, depends on whether he was warned about it and whether he was receptive about it, in my opinion; it does not necessarily reflect overall language skills.

4.6.2 Connectives

A way that is traditionally seen to help in the establishment of cohesion and coherence is the use of subordinating connectives. In case of children, however, the use of connectives is unique. Slobin et al. (1994) claimed that old forms express new functions first. It means that when a child starts to organise his stories causally, he first expresses the causal connection by means he already used (such as *and then* and word order). In due course, new functions will call for the use of new forms; this is when they start to use *because* properly.

Table 7

Connectives in Little Red Riding Hood

Connectives in the frog story

Group	Children	<i>so, because</i>	<i>and then</i>	Total	<i>so, because</i>	<i>and then</i>	Total
“English” group	Abigail		7	7	1 so	6	7
	Olivia		3	3	2 so	33	35
	Soma	2 so 2 because		4	1 so	2	3
“Foreigner” group	Katerina	1 so	1	2	4 so	-	4
	Małgosia	7 so 2 because	3	12	3 so 1 because	12	16
	Wilma	2 because	9	11	1 so	15	16
“Hungarian” group	Lili		1	1	-	1	1
	Márk		4	4	1 so 1 because	1	3
	Zsófi		5	5	1 so 2 because	8	11

Taking a look at the connectives they used, a clear picture emerges (see Table 7). Children used about the same amount of connectives in both stories, the only exception being Zsófi, who said much more *and thens* in the frog story. Olivia is an exception due not only to her resilience to tell the frog story, but also to the shortness of her Little Red Riding Hood story. Thus, the use of connectives is the manifestation of their underlying cognitive ability to express the causal structure of stories explicitly. This is, however, not to say that connectives determine the cohesion of the stories: in the next section it will be shown that although connectives enhance it, cohesion is attainable without them, as well.

4.6.3 Cohesion in “Frog, where are you?”

Cohesion was measured in two separate ways: first, stories were ranked according to how goal-based they are, and I also assessed them subjectively according to how cohesive they were in general, as Nicolopoulou (2008) proposed that the goal-basedness of stories may not be the only means that makes them cohesive. As cohesion and coherence are indicative of

their ability to surpass the level of planning only one clause – which is seen as a sign of more mature cognition according to Berman and Slobin (1994) – it is important to have a closer look at this construct. Therefore, in what follows, I am going to present the numerical measurement firstly and the subjective assessment secondly.

The degree to which the stories are goal-based was measured in the following way: seven crucial events were identified in the story where the actions seen in the pictures are related to the goal of the characters: finding the lost frog. Children got a point for alluding to this goal at each crucial event. This showed the extent to which they were aware of the fact that this story is about encountering and solving a problem with the help of a series of events.

Table 8

Cohesion and connectives

Group	Children	Subjective ranking	Goal-based ranks	number of connectives
“English” group	Soma	1	4	3
	Olivia	4	1	35
	Abigail	5	8	7
“Foreigner” group	Małgosia	2	2	16
	Katerina	3	5	4
	Wilma	6	7	16
“Hungarian” group	Zsófi	7	6	3
	Lili	8	3	11
	Márk	9	9	1

Subjective ranks were assigned following several readings of the stories (see Table 8). The goal-based nature of the stories was not taken into account. Although it seems strange, the absence of one or two allusions to the goal does not necessarily mean that a story is not cohesive (like Soma’s story), especially if the story was evaluated on its own terms, not strictly related to the picture book. Furthermore, there was a story (Olivia’s story) in which the quest for the lost frog was highly emphasized, and yet, the story seemed fragmented. For the stories, see Appendix F.

As it can be seen, the degree to which a story is goal-based does not predict whether it is generally coherent and cohesive and vica versa. They seem to be distinct characteristics of telling a story. In four cases there was a three-rank difference between the two scorings, and only two children held the same rank: the second, and the last. This table suggests that goal-basedness is not the ultimate way of measuring cohesion, as it is only one element of it. This

table is to be interpreted with caution, however, as there are no big differences between the performances of children. All stories are quite cohesive and coherent, even Márk's story.

4.6.4 *The relationship between cohesion and connectives in the frog story*

Looking at the relationship between connectives and cohesion (see Table 6), it seems that building a cohesive story is possible without the extensive use of connectives that help establishing causal linkage (like *because* and *so*). Soma barely used a few connectives, and yet, his story attained the highest score. The use of connectives is somewhat related to how goal-based their stories are: Olivia (whose scores have to be interpreted bearing in mind the fact that her story was far the longest) and Małgosia – who ranked first and second – used a large number of connectives, but still, Soma is ranked fourth with only three connectives.

4.6.5 *Cohesion in Little Red Riding Hood*

Cohesion in the Little Red Riding Hood story was measured in two ways, too: a more objective, numerical and a subjective way. Instead of measuring the goal-based nature of the stories, seven crucial events were identified in this story (similarly to the frog story) without which the story would be incoherent and sometimes, because of the causal structure, even uninterpretable. It is interesting that neither child integrated all the events (see Table 9).

Table 9

Cohesion in Little Red Riding Hood

Group	Children	Crucial points mentioned	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Their more subjective rank
“English” group	Soma	6					-			2
	Abigail	6					-			3
	Olivia	3	-		-		-	-		6
“Foreigner” group	Małgosia	6							-	1
	Katerina	6			-					3
	Wilma	6			-					3
“Hungarian” group	Zsófi	6			-					3
	Lili	4	-	-			-			4
	Márk	4		-	-		-			5

Note. The numbers in the heading refer to the crucial points that were identified (see in the research and methodology section). Minus signs indicate that those points were not included.

Subjective ranking in this case was much more related to this numerical measurement than was the subjective measurement of the frog story to its objective measurement. In case of this story there were many children who mentioned the same number of events, whose performance could further be ranked more subjectively according to cohesion. The most cohesive story was Małgosia's, who had already had extensive practice in telling this story. Her superiority seems to be unquestionably due to practice. Olivia's poor performance is due to her indefatigable resilience to tell the story; thus, her results are not indicative of her real abilities (see Appendix G for examples of retellings).

4.6.6 Comparing the cohesion of the two stories

Children have attained largely the same ranks in case of both stories (bearing in mind that Olivia's Little Red Riding Hood retelling is not considered indicative of her real abilities). Soma and Małgosia are in the leading positions, after them Katerina, Olivia, Abigail, Wilma and Zsófi come with similar performances; Lili is the seventh and Márk is the last. Taking a look at group-related differences, the "Hungarian" group generally underperformed the others, which is strange, as cohesion is asserted to be related to cognitive maturity (Berman & Slobin, 1994). Lili, who is reported to have exceptional cognitive abilities, told one of the least cohesive stories, but at the same time one of the most goal-based stories in case of the frog story.

Attaining high scores on cohesion might depend on children's interest and practice in listening to and telling stories; the impact of practice is very visible in Małgosia's case. Soma, Małgosia, Katerina, Olivia, Abigail and Lili are all said to love stories. The exception is Lili, who did not manage to tell as coherent stories as the others. Her poor performance related to general cohesion might be due to her limited fascination with role plays. As role plays are reported to influence language skills highly (Vygotsky, 1962), and as role play is about acting out, managing and telling stories, it is not surprising that Soma, Małgosia, Katerina, Olivia, Abigail and Wilma – who attained the highest cohesion-scores – are reported to love this type of activity.

5. CONCLUSIONS

My original presupposition according to which children's language background determines their language skills even after receiving the same education for three years in kindergarten, failed. No general language proficiency differences were found related to their language background. The results of this study seem to support Vygotsky's views on the organisation of language in the brain as modular: the different constructs I investigated were not equally developed in the case of these children. What is more, these different constructs appeared to be influenced by very different environmental and psychological factors.

Complexity seems to be related not to the groups, but to the talent of the children and the amount of conversations they have with the teachers. Fluency and dysfluency seemed not to be related to any factors I was exploring. Accuracy had to be divided into more domains, as it did not constitute a homogeneous construct regarding children's performance. Only the "Foreigner" group did not seem to have problems with the use of *he* and *she*; they outperformed even the "English" group. Another domain of accuracy encloses the verbs. Verbs seemed to be the most problematic part of language for children; here, again, no group-related differences were found. Cohesion seems to be related to being highly interested in stories and practice in telling them, as well as to role playing. Vocabulary scores were indicative of the frequency with which children listen to and speak English.

In conclusion, practice in both comprehension and production seems to be a determining factor besides talent. It also appears to be reasonable to posit that as the members of the "Hungarian" group encounter and produce English less, it is more difficult for them to develop as fast as the others. Lili is an exception, but she is said to be very talented. From the same conclusion, it also follows that in case of the foreigner children who heard and produced approximately the same amount of English in kindergarten this had a homogenising effect; their results were much closer to each other than those of the two other groups.

The methodological implications drawn from the study are the following: teachers can successfully encourage children to talk more and with more children by listening to them as often as possible, speaking with them much and developing their cognitive abilities using the methods Vygotsky (1962) described.

5.1 Limitations of the study and directions for further investigations

Besides the fact that findings from case studies are not generalisable, there are a number of limitations that warrant caution in the interpretation of the findings. Some children were not asked to tell the stories on different days as I had previously planned it. Furthermore, the frog story was told by me in as many versions as the number of children, which seemed to affect their retelling, except for Małgosia's, as I did not tell her the frog story, she started to tell it by herself.

Case studies like this would benefit from using more and more diverse methods to elicit language samples. Besides narratives, more communicative tasks would reveal more about the children's language skills. Moreover, gaining more precise data on their language aptitude, amount of conversations with the teachers and other English-speaking children, and the amount and level of their role plays would help in attaining more precise results.

This study could have yielded more accurate results had it been longitudinal. Further research revealing more about the personal and environmental characteristics would help answering the question what hinders and what promotes language learning; longitudinal studies should be more revealing in this case.

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Appendix A

EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY
FACULTAS PHILOSOPHIAE



Dear Parents,

I am a student of English at the ELTE University, and I am writing my thesis on kindergartners' English language learning process. I base the thesis on my own research on children I chose to study in A to Z Kindergarten. Your child is not directly involved in my research, due to its own unfortunate limitations. My research is going to give the teachers and the Kindergarten a better insight into the dubious issue of the success of mastering English in a kindergarten. What you can do to help in carrying out this research successfully, is letting me video-record and tape-record children's daily activities. These recordings will be used for the sole purpose of studying the few selected children's behaviour. They will not be broadcast anywhere, and noone else will listen to or watch them.



I have already done observations here twice as part of my teaching practice; the teachers and most children know me. The research is going to take about a month. In return for your kind permission and help I can offer you the abstract of the results of my research.



Please feel free to contact me via e-mail: kalotaszeg@gmail.com, or in person any day when I am in the kindergarten doing the study. Next time you can meet me is 10 June.



Yours sincerely,
Csilla Kürtösi

EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY
FACULTAS PHILOSOPHIAE



Dear Parents,

I am a student of English at the ELTE University, and I am writing my thesis on kindergartners' English language learning process. I base the thesis on my own research on children I decided to study in A to Z Kindergarten. I have chosen your child, and hereby I am asking for your permission for your child to be included in my study. I have already done observations here twice as part of my teaching practice; the teachers and most children know me.

The research will consist of observations, during which I intend to obtain information on your child's social interactions, a question on who she likes playing with, and two short story-telling sessions, when she has to tell two stories to me (in the presence of one of the teachers?). I would like to tape record the stories of your child which will allow me to get an insight into his language skills, which is an essential part of the study, and, if you do no mind, video record your child during free play. It is necessary for studying her social behaviour. The recordings will be used only for the purpose of data analysis, and will not be shown to anyone else. Naturally, your child will be given pseudonym, as well as the kindergarten.



I would also like to ask for your kind participation in the study, as additional background information would be very valuable in order to get a clearer picture of your child. It can take the form of an interview or a questionnaire whichever is more convenient for you. The research is going to take about a month. In return for your kind permission and help I can offer you the abstract of the results of my research.



Please feel free to contact me via e-mail: kalotaszeg@gmail.com, or in person any day when I am in the kindergarten doing the study. Next time you can meet me is 10 June.

Yours sincerely,
Csilla Kürtösi

Appendix B

EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY
FACULTAS PHILOSOPHIAE

**Language learning in kindergarten**

I would like to ask for your help in answering the following questions concerning your child's English language learning. This survey is part of my thesis at ELTE University. It is conducted to better understand what influences language learning. This is not a test so there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. I am interested in the personal opinion of both of you. Please give your answers sincerely as only this will grant the success of the investigation. The contents of this form are absolutely confidential. Information identifying you will not be disclosed under any circumstances. I have tried to make this questionnaire as comprehensive as possible but you may feel that there are things I left out. Please use the extra page if necessary, also if you feel the space provided for a question is not enough. Thank you very much for your help.

Csilla Kürtösi

your child's name _____

I. Language background

	Mother	Father
What language do you use with your child?		
Is it your mother tongue?		
What do you do?		

Has the father always used that language with the child? If no, how did it change?

Has the mother always used that language with the child? If no, how did it change?

What is the common language? Has it always been like this?

What language do the parents use when they speak to each other? Has it changed?

What language does your child use with her sibling(s)? Has it been always like this?

Is there anyone else living in the household? If yes, what language does your child use with them? Has it been always like this?

Does your child have other important relationships now? What language do they use?

What have been the most important influences on your child's language learning not mentioned so far? (people, TV, other places of residence)

What is the proportion of time your child hears her two languages? Do you remember times when these proportions were different?

What is the proportion of time your child produces her two languages? Do you remember times when these proportions were different?

II. Personality

How outgoing and/or talkative is your child? Has it changed?

Does your child make friends easily? Has it changed?

What do you think your child's attitude to English is? Has it changed?

What do you think your child's attitude to bilingualism is? Has it changed?

III. Linguistic development

How do you think your child's two languages have developed compared to a monolingual child of the same age?

Can you imagine what your child needs most for mastering English? What environmental factors ease her learning (in kindergarten, at home, elsewhere)?

Do you think your child has problems with learning two languages?

Do you think preserving your child's mother tongue is important?

IV. Kindergarten (please underline)

Do you think your relationship with the teachers is a positive, fruitful one? yes / quite / no / don't know

Do you think the teachers are competent? yes / quite / no / don't know

Do you think your cultural and family norms are understood and valued in the kindergarten? yes / quite / no / don't know

Has she been absent a lot from kindergarten?
very rarely / sometimes / quite often / there were times when she was absent a lot
when? _____

Thank you



very much!

Appendix C

Questionnaire for the teachers

1. Questions about their teaching practices and beliefs

1. 1 What are your beliefs of teaching?
1. 2 What are the most important fields needed to be developed in a child?
1. 3 How much do you speak to them (i.e. addressing more children, not personal communication)?
- 1.4 Do you correct errors? How often? In what situations? Has it changed?
- 1.5 Do you encourage reserved children to talk more, or with more children? If yes, how, and how often?
- 1.6 According to your experience can they be successfully encouraged to talk more?

2. Questions about the children

I. Language

1. What do you think about the development of his English? (speed, level attained)
2. How long was his silent period?
3. Does he monitor and correct what he says?
4. Do others correct him?
5. Does he correct others?
6. What are his language skills like now?
 - 6.1 Complexity
 - 6.2 Accuracy
 - 6.3 Fluency
 - 6.4 Lexicon
 - 6.5 Pronunciation
7. Do you know anything about how his other language has developed?
8. Does he do or has he done a lot of private speech? If yes, how long?
9. Who has had a more significant impact on his language learning? teachers / peers
10. How adjusted (simplified) was your speech to him when he started learning English?
11. Do you adjust it now?
12. Did English-speaking peers adjust their speech when he started learning English?
13. Do they adjust it now?

14. Does he switch or has he switched between languages a lot?

II. Communication, relationship

1. In what proportion does he use English and his other language in the kindergarten? Has it changed?
2. Does he speak more with teachers or with children? Has it been always like now?
3. Does he tend to prefer children of the same mother tongue? Has it changed?
4. How have his relationships changed with respect to the mother tongue of his friend(s)?
5. Who has/have been the significant other(s) for him? How many have been English-speaking?
6. Does he want to belong to the English-speaking group? Has it been always like now?
7. Underline which of these the child uses or has used (language learning strategies):
repetition / memorization / formulaic expressions / verbal attention getters /
answer in unison / talk to self / elaboration / anticipatory answer / monitoring /
appeal for assistance / request for clarification / role play
8. Does he talk more with teachers or peers? teachers / peers
9. How much do you talk with him on average?

III. Personality traits

1. How outgoing is he? Has it changed?
2. How talkative is he? Has it changed?
3. How easily does he make friends? Has it changed?
4. Do you think he is motivated to learn English?
5. Do you think he is talented in learning English?
6. Is he self-confident?
7. How high do you think is his anxiety level?
8. What is his self-image like do you think?
9. How socially developed is he?

IV. External factors

1. Has he been absent a lot?
2. When did major changes occur in his group, and how did it affect the child?
3. Is there pressure on the child (from parents, peers, relatives, anyone)?

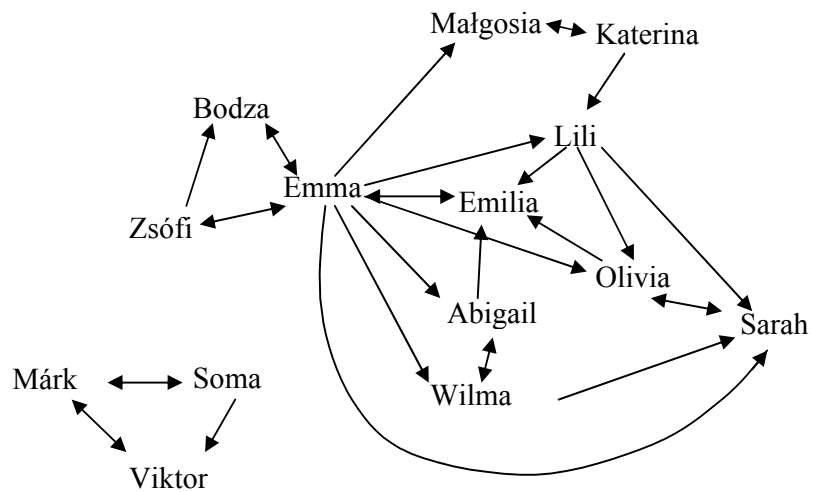
V. Miscellaneous

1. What is his attitude to English?
2. What is his attitude to bilingualism?
3. How developed is he cognitively?

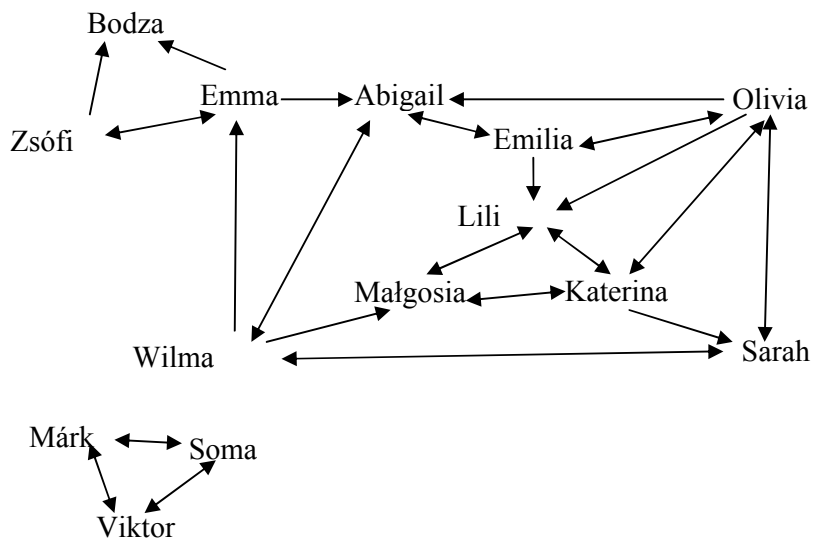
- 3.1 (deliberate) memory
 - 3.2 Auditory discrimination
 - 3.3 Abstract reasoning
 - 3.4 General knowledge of the world
 - 3.5 Focused attention
4. What do you think about the development of the child in general?

Appendix D

Children's sociogram



Teachers' sociogram



Appendix E

The measures

Measure	Construct	Calculation
Complexity	Subordination index	number of subordinated clauses per all clauses
Fluency	Speed fluency	the total number of words divided by the total amount of time measured in minutes
	Repair fluency	the total number of words except for fillers (usually <i>um</i> or <i>er</i>), false starts (unfinished lexical items), repetitions (a word or words repeated with no modification) and reformulations (expressing the same meaning with other words) divided by the total amount of time in minutes
Accuracy	word-level measure	number of erroneous words per number of all words, multiplied by one hundred
	clause-level measure	the number of not erroneous clauses divided by the number of all clauses, multiplied by one hundred
Vocabulary	D-value	a value where the curve of type-token ratio is plotted against increasing token size
Cohesion and coherence	personal pronoun ratio	the number of personal pronouns divided by the number of proper names, multiplied by one hundred
	goal-based nature of the Frog story	seven crucial points were identified where pictures depicted the boy (and the frog) calling for the lost frog: pp. 4 (twice: the boy and the frog, too), 5, 8-9, 10, 13, 17
	cohesion in the Little Red Riding Hood story	seven crucial points were identified that were necessary for the story to be coherent. (1) The grandmother is sick (and this is why Little Red Riding Hood has to visit her). (2) Little Red Riding Hood sets off. (3) The wolf hears Little Red Riding Hood talking with her father (and this is why he goes to the grandmother's house). (4) The grandmother saw the wolf and hid in the cupboard. (5) The wolf disguised himself as the grandmother. (6) Little Red Riding Hood cried, and the father chased away the wolf. (7) They found the grandmother and took her out of the cupboard.

Appendix F

Frog stories

“English group”

Abigail

Once upon a time there was a boy who did who did had a frog and did keep the frog in the jar. One o-once he did sleep and the frog did j-jump out of the jar and go out on the window on the on the morning, the boy couldn't see the frog in the jar, so he did just look, look, put his clothes on, say “Frog, where are you, here?” look out the window too and err the dogs the dog did look in the jar and he did they it did get stuck, on his head, then he did just fall onto the ground, he did picked the dogs u- um up and did just licks his fa-face, the dog, the do- the boy said “Frog, where are you?” then they walking in a forest, and then they did find like a little hole the boy said “Frog, are you in there?”, and then a little um mouse coming out, and said... not, said nothing, and then he-err he he did ba- the dog did ba- bark um some by bee's, bee's um house, and then the bees did all come out, the thing did fall onto the ground the bee's house, the bees were chasing the dog, the boy did fell a- the boy did look in the tree, and then a big owl came out, then the boy fell off the tree, and they were catching the bee the bees were catching the dog, and the boy did just run run, and get to a big like a big stone, saw some branches-es hold the branches like those, and then reindeer did come out, it wasn't branches, and he did just stop, and the boy did fall into the water. And after the her- he did just k-fall, and he did heard some quack-quack you know like the ummm brag-brag-brag then he was searching for the something like [incomprehensible] and he said shh to a dog, and “Look” and he saw some frogs, baby frogs, one baby frog did just jump to him, and go on his hand, and say “Bye-bye”, they say “Bye-bye” and went home. They lived happily ever after.

Olivia

Once upon a time lived a boy and a frog and a dog. It was sleeptime. And the frog jumped out of the pot, out the window, and then when it was wakeup-time, then said the boy “Nothing is in the jar. Let me see everywhere.” I see in my clothes, no jumping frogs here. And the doggie [incomprehensible] on the the jar, and then the jar there stucked on his head, and he called into the jar. And then the frog couldn't hear it. And then said. The boy. “Frog, where you are? Come back, you are my frog!” And it was too heavy, and then he got with his teeth the the

wood. And then the dog did climbed down with the jar. And then he hopped. And then he was cross. “Don’t do this again.” Lick. And then the dog did lick him. And then they went away from their home. And then they came to a forest, and then said dog “Woof woof where woo w-are?” And then said the boy “Where you are, you belong to me!” And then he called into a hole and then did pike his nose “Ouch, this is ouchy”, and the dog climbed off the tree, and then doesh go to the m- the mice and then pick him up and then doesh did this “Wrrr” And then threw him away. And then did licked his nose, the boy did, the doggie did licks /□z/ the boy nose, and then there was the doggie looking the bees how they fly, and then once they did doesh doesh one-two doesh woo-hai went the doggie [incomprehensible] he did knock a [incomprehensible] down there, and the and then the boy said “Where you are? You are here! No you are owl! You don’t live here! This is a tree, it’s not it’s not water! So come out and you belong to me!” And then the owl doesh knocked him out, out, and the doggie run run run really fast, and the bees almost caught the almost, almost. And then the owl doesh jumped on th- no no, the owl doesh fly there and said “Ou, ou, oo-ooo”, and you could see it’s like a a no, and he climbed on it “Ouch ouch ouch poo-poops flung on me, yuk.” And climbed on it, and then he throw [incomprehensible]³ and it didn’t shoot there, and so the owl doesh came away. And then he said “Frog, where you are, froggika, froggie, you belong to me”, and then and then there was a animal, and then he run run run, and kicked his [incomprehensible] feet down the doggie, and then he stopped, and then the and then they flied into a little po- pond a little pond and they said “Oh, this is good! Oh, I s- hear something, but hear aaa, not fishes! How you... nem nem nem nem “Sh- These are sharks!” In the pond they see there’s “Oopsy, so better to climb out. I see, I hear little squeaking like “Ounk, ounk” “Sh, be quiet doggie! Now lean forwards here!” “Woof woof this is the frog! Belong to you! Goodbye, Live with your family good!” “Frog, monk monk, ciao [incomprehensible] my little one, it doesn’t belong to you!”

Soma

Once upon a time there was a boy with his dog, and they had a frog kept in the jar. Went, the frog’s jumped out of the jar, jumped out of the window, and went away. And the boy waked up and he looked for the frog. The dog even looked in the jar, but there wasn’t the frog, and the jar got stuck on his um head. Then the dog um came out of the window and the boy looked out it if it was alright. Then he went to a nearby forest, and called “Frog, where are you?” And then went to a tree in the forest, and he saw a beehive on the tree. The dog was barking at the bees and did um the little boy found a luk a hole, and he shouted “Frog, where

are you?” And out came a dog and bit him on the nose. Then he went to a tree, and s- saw a hole and said “Frog, where are you?” And an and an owl hit him off and and er and er beehive fell down, and the bees um um started to um go off to the dog. So the little boy run [incomprehensible] a a rock, and holded on some branches. But it turned up that it wasn’t branches, it was a a a it was a deer. Then the deer in the end once did stopped and the boy and the um um dog flew into a pond, and the little boy um said to the no he the little boy heard a little noise, and he said to the dog “Be quiet”, and he looked over the um log, and there was a frog a frog family plus a mummy frog and babies, frog. And then one baby frog liked the boy so much, he um jumped towards the frog no jumped towards the boy, and he liked him so much that he went home with him. The end.

“Foreigner” group

Małgosia

I think that he did she did [incomprehensible] a frog from a shop, and and in and and his dog was really happy, and then the frog how he was sleeping he did sh-h- the frog did jumped out of the the jar, and how the boy did wake up, there was no frog in the jar, so he did started to look, but nowhere he didn’t see that frog, but then the the the the I think that the did did the jar did stuck on his neck, or or only put it on his, put it on, and then he did he did say “Frog, where you are”, and then the the the the the the the dog did jumped out of the window, because he was not steady with the jar, and then the dog did did think I think that it was the frog and then he did caught the dog. Then he did say “Frog, where you are”, but he didn’t find the frog, he did he did look in the house and the the the the dog was was was cl- I think that that barking at the beehouse, and then and then I think that something like a mouse or hamster came out of the hole, I think that he he was he was um um angry on him and a and and the boy did say the the the doggie that “Please, don’t don’t do that the the the bees w-w- um will um will bite you or something like that, so he did look in the house in the tree, but but the the dog wa-was wasn’t listening, and and he did he did he did shake the beehive, to the ground, and under this were coming out but the boy d- couldn’t find the frog, and then he did he did seen how the the dog is running away from the bees, and then he did he did go on a rock and say “Frog, where you are”, but he couldn’t find it, and then something did take him and galloped somewhere, but he couldn’t uh recognise it, and then the that thing was that that thing did did put him down, and and mm from his house and it was a um a bi- a like a something like a hole, was a hole like something like that, and then he did only throw the boy

and the doggie down, and then they were down down down in the uh like a little pond, so they did I think that swim to the [incomprehensible], and and go on a mm a tree, a fallen tree, and they did found two frogs, and they did see the frogs and I think that he has one here, he did take one there. And and the end.

Katerina

Once upon a time there was a little boy, and he had a frog. One day the the er frog climbed out of the jar. The boy woked up, they couldn't find the frog. They looked everywhere, the the dog looked in the jar, and the jug got stuck, and he fell down, and the boy made sure he is he is OK. Then he, they went in the forest, and said "Frog, where are you?" And they, the boy looked in a hole, and said "Frog, where are you?", and um and the dog did bark at the beehouse, and the bees did come out, and out of the hole came a gopher. The the the boy found a hole in a tree, so he call "Frog, where are you?" And um the beehouse did fall down, and um the bees did chase the dog, and out of the hole a owl came. He she chased, or he, he sh-she chased the the the boy. And the boy did climb on the rock, and he didn't see the um deer, so the deer picked the boy up, and um stopped in a hole, and the boy fell down with the dog in a little pond, into a lake, and they they hear the sound that was um quiet good, so they looked behind the log, and they no, the boy said to the dog stop stop barking, and um they looked behind the log, and they did saw a mother frog, a daddy frog, and um little froggies. One frog did like the boy, so he did wanted to get home, and he did...

Wilma

Once upon a time it was a boy and a dog and a frog, and the boy when did he see the dog or the frog jumped away at the night, so they put him into a little bowl and then he slept and then the frog climbed out and then they waked up and then they first saw that the frog was gone. And they and they started to find they they shouted "Frog!" and the oh I thou I think on the no? The the dog put the head in the mm the bowl, he was stuck. And then he the boy shouted "Frog!" and then he fall down, the doggie, and then he did fit in the bowl went to pieces and the boy went down and looked if he were OK, and then they went to the forest and shouted to Frog "Frog, where are you?" But they didn't hear anything. To then the boy looked in a low hole at the ground and a and there out came a low animal and the dog were barking at some b- beehole. And the boy looked in the low hole at the tree and the the dog was still looking er barking at the bees and accidentally it fall down and then the bees began to chase, an owl pushed the boy out, and then the um bees chased the dog, and then he went up on a

stone, and then he hold in a branch, and then the h- then the branch lift him up, and then he falled him down in a little pond, then he heard some quack-quack, and then he looked behind here, and he said “Sh, dog”, then he looked, then it was the froggies, they had some babies and one liked the bo- the boy so, so so much that he followed home with him. Then they lived happily ever after, and they lived happily ever after.

“Hungarian” group

Lili

Once there was a a a dog and a boy that had a frog, and when they did go to bed, the frog did jump out, and when it was morning the boy and the dog wake up and they didn’t find the frog. And the the and they looked everywhere, and the dog did um put his head in the jar, and it did stuck on his head, and they did look out of the window, and they did “Frog, where are you?”, and the and the dog did fall down, and and the boy did come down, and he did see if the dog is well, and they went next to a forest, and they did “Frog, where are you?”, and they went in the forest and the the boy looked in the hole, and the and the dog did bark at the bee um at some bees, and uh a little animal did bit the boy and on the nose, and the bees did fall down, and they did and the boy did look into a hole and then the bees and then the the bees and then the bees did fall down, and they did chase the dog, and an an owl came out of the tree, and and and it did chase the boy, and the boy ca-climbed on a rock, and and he said “Frog, where are you?”, and and he did hold on some branches and they ra- uh a a big animal, and and it and it did pick up the boy, and it did run, and and di- it did drop them the boy and the the dog, and they did fell in a pond, and and they did um he-hear a a a sound, and they did look behind the log, and and there was two frogs and little frogs and one little frog did ju-jump to the boy, and it did go with the boy.

Márk

Once upon a time there was a boy and a frog and a dog. One night the fo- the frog jumped out of the box, and go away, and at morning the boy has seen the frog disappeared. They started to look for it, and the dog s-had stuck into the box where the frog frog lives. And the box was so heavy so the frog dog fell down from the window. And the boy came to help. And they shouted to the fr- o- frog to “Where are you, frog?” And the f- boy find a hole, and the dog bark at the bee- s, and wha- and something hit the boy’s nose, and the boy clinged climbed up

to a tree, and the dog barked so much at the bees, and the bees got angry, and the boy fall down from the tree, because out of the hole came an owl, and the owl chased the boy, but he climbed up to a big rock, and he hold a tree, but it was not a tree, that was a deer, and the deer ran into the pond, he threw down the dog and the boy into the puddle. And then the boy hear something voice, said to the dog “Be quiet”, and or the lo- lond there lived a frog family, and one frog like him so much and he go with it home.

Zsófi

Once upon a time there was a boy, a dog and and a frog. And um one time the frog jumped out from the jar. Jumped out from the jar. And the he go-, and the boy boy um um get up and he can't see the frog. But the dog we- um seen in the jug. And the dog um um put um put his head in the jug, and he can't take them out. And um the boy said “Frog, where are you?” Nobody answer. And then the dog um fall out from the window, because the jug was very hard. And the dog or the boy um made sure h- the dog is um um fall out of the window, so he is there. And then they get to the forest. And um the boy said “Frog, where are you?” But nobody answer. And then um the boy um found a big hole. Th- um “Frog, you are here, inside?” And the dog um pushed the um another jug or I don't know, and then the jug almost fell, and the jugs fell, and the um insect um co- co- come out from the jug and chased the er dog. And the dog or the insect chased the dog very long way. And the boy fell out from the tree. And the tr- um and then and then and then um um the owl um um get out from the tree, and um chased the boy over to the the I don't know and then um the boy sawed saw a big animal, and the animal um get him the boy and the uh dog and he run run and he pushed off um on the ground, and they um was in the pond. And the boy said “Ssssh, dog” and they s- um the fordid- um um the frogs and they said “Frog, where are you?” But there was just pukk, and there was the frogs, and two frogs, the mummy frog and the baby frog and then the um little frog. And there was f- um little dogs, and one little d- um frogs um jumped to the boy, because he loved him. And then they got home and what the frog um um um get for the um the boy , then um they um put they um get it home. The end.

Appendix G

Little Red Riding Hood stories

“English” group

Abigail

Once upon a time there was a little girl who called Little Red Riding Hood. She was picking um some flowers, and then her mum mum d-did call her “Little Red Riding Hood, come!”, and then she said “Your grandma is sick. You have to take food for her.” And then she said “I’ll give her apple” and then um they did just go and then he did met his father, fo- his dad was cutting wood, and then he did say um “Where are you going, Little Red Riding Hood,” “I’m... I’m going I’m going to my grandmother” “Look out for the big bad wolf” “OK”, and she went on, and then the fox did heard her, run to grandma, the grandma did saw him, and she did run in the cupboard, then Little Red Riding Hood come in, and she said “Oh grandma, how big ears you have” “To better to hear you”. “Oh grandma, the how big eyes you have” “To better to see you” “Oh grandma, the how big mouth you have!” “To better to eat you up”, and she was shouting “Help me, help!” And his dad did come, he saw or hear that he scared her away, she take grandma out, window, they live happily ever after. The end.

Olivia

Once upon a time lived a little old woman and a Red Riding Hood. And “Mum, I will bring this to grandma” but uh “But go on the path and there lives the Big Bad Wolf. That always hungry. “OK, mum.” And Little Red Riding Hood went. And he she saw his dad um working. And then grandma saw the Big Bad Wolf, and then grandma did tiptoe into the cupboard, and came in Little Red Riding Hood. “Oh, grandma, how big ears you have!” “Better to hear you!” “How big eyes you have!” “Better to see you!” “And how big um nose you have!” “Better to smell you!” “How big mouth you have!” “To better to eat you!” “Help me, help me, help me!” And then “Dad, look at this hat!” “I doesh been hiding from the Big Bad Wolf”. And they lived happily after together.

Soma

Once upon a time there lived um um girl called Little Red Riding Hood, because she always liked beautiful red um towel. And her mummy said: “Little Red Riding Hood, um Grandma

does sick in her bed". And Little Red Riding Hood said um "Mummy, can you give some apple, and I bring it for um grandmother." And she did. "But stay on the path, look at there's a um a lit- a Big Bad Wolf. He met her daddy, and he said "I'm bringing apples from my for grandmother" but daddy said "Be careful, because there is a Big Bad Wolf um in the forest. And the Big Bad Wolf heard that, so he ran to Grandma's house before. But Grandma saw her, and tiptoed in the cupboard door. The Little Red Riding Hood called the he said "What big ears you have" "All the better to hear you darling" um "What big eyes you have" "All the better to see you" "Oh, Grandma, what big teeth you have" "All the better to eat you." And she jumped out of the bed, and ran away. The Wolf jumped out of the bed bed, too just um just he couldn't catch him, and Little Red Riding Hood said "Daddy, daddy, the Wolf is here!" So the um daddy came and chased away the wolf or the bad wolf. Um she ran back to the cottage and said "Where are you Grandma?" And she opened the door and came out of the a a um the shelf. And that day always they will stay on the path.

"Foreigner" group

Katerina

Once upon a time there was a girl who lived with her mother called Little Red Riding Hood. One day her mother said "Your grandma is sick, wh... will you take the basket to her?" "Yes" said the Little Red Riding Hood. Sho she sss- shhh- sho she go on, and she she walked through a forest. Um a wolf was very hungry, did came along grandma's cottage. Um Grandma did hide in the cupboard, and um the wolf was like grandma. Little Red Riding Hood came, and said "Why are your eyes so big?" "So I can better see you" "Why are your why are your ears so big?" "So I can better hear" "Why is your mouth so big?" "So I can better eat you up!" Um the wolf um um jumped out of the uh bed, and run with Little Red Riding Hood. Little Red Riding Hood scream, and the cot- the... her father came, and saw that she is behind her is a big bad wolf. So he killed him, and um then they went ho... then the Little Red Riding Hood and her father went to the grandma, and they lived happily ever after.

Małgosia

One ti- once upon a time a girl um named Little Red Riding Hood lived with her father and mother, her father was a wood-cutter, and one time sh- her mother did packed some food into a basket, and said to the Little Red Riding Hood "Go to grandma, and and and give her this

food she is sick in bed, the and the Little Red Riding Hood did said "I know the way to gran", so so mother said "OK, you can go, but be c- stay on the path, because in the forest lives the Big Bad Wolf, and he is always hungry", so the the Little the Little Red Riding Hood ran on on the path and and and and say "Bye", and then sh-she on the way she did met the her dad how how he were he was cutting the wood, and he did she did say h- um um "What what you" hát she um er "I am going to get this basket to gran", and her her her mm mm mm her father said "But be careful for the big bad wolf!", so the girl said bye and she she did go to gran, and then the the wolf did hear it, so he did ran fast to grandmother's house and he did were fast there, and how how the her the grandmother did see the Big Bad Wolf coming to her house through the window, he she did quickly go go in the cupboard and lock and how the Big Bad Wolf saw her nightcap, he did put it on, and waited for the Little Red Riding Hood, and then Little Red Riding Hood did came, and say "Gran-" and and see the the the door are open, so so so he she went in, and and say "Oh, no" and because he she didn't recognise the grandma, and she did say "What big ears you have!" "All to better see you my dear", "And Grandma, what big eyes you have!" "All to better see you, my dear" "But Grandma, what big teeth you have!" "All to better eat you my dear", so sh- so the the the did cry "Father help me", so did hath- father did help her and and and and and uh pu- pu- and and and chased the wolf away, and they then live happily ever after.

Wilma

[incomprehensible] grandma and a mum and a Big Bad Wolf, and he she wants to take a basket to Grandma, because she is sick. Mummy said that she could bring it, mm and then she went in the forest, and she she followed the path, then she met her father. Um Grandma was laying in the bed. Then she saw someone outside, and then she went in hiding the cupboard, and then the wolf came in, and took on the hat and laid in Grandma's bed. And then Little Red Riding Hood came in, then she saw how big ears he had and how big eyes he had and how big teeth he had, and then she asked why, then she he is a "Because because better I could eat you" and then he rumped off bed ru- hu- jumped off the bed, and she did run away, and shout father. Then the father came and took him chased away the wolf, then she went in, then they saw the hat on the floor, then she is speaking "Grandma, where are you?" And then she opened the cupboard door, and then she was there, Then Little Red Riding Hood came home, and then Grandma came to them, their house, and they lived happily ever after.

“Hungarian” group

Lili

Once there was a girl named Little Red Riding Hood, and her mother, and her mother said that she should go to her grandma's house, and bring some apple, bread, jam, flowers, and she saw her dad and she said that she is going to her grandma and, and and and and and and and and and she is bringing some jam, bread, flowers to her grandma, but the wolf did hear and saw her. The wolf run to grandma's house, and grandma saw the wolf, and tiptoed out of the bed and and did go in the the the in the in the cupboard. And then Little Red Riding Hood came, and said “Grandma, how big eyes you have! Grandma, how big ears you have!” “All the better to see you with, all the better to hear you bith with”, “And grandma, do you know how big teeth you have?” “All the better to eat you with”, and Little Red Riding Hood run out of the cottage, and run to his da-father, and Little Red Riding Hood and he-is father did chase the wolf away, and did go in the cottage, and they found grandma. And the end.

Márk

There was a Little Riding Hood, and a wolf, a woodcutter and a sick grandma. One day the Little Red Riding Hood's mum called him to go to grandma's house, but the Bad Wolf was get there first, and then grandma saw the wolf, and then grandma's disappeared, and Little Red Riding Hood camed in the oh, to the fox, and he said “What big ears you have. What big nose, what big teeth. And then the fox [incomprehensible] Little Red Riding Hood. But the woodcutter, Little Red Riding Hood's dad, camed. And he killed the fox. And then grandma get better.

Zsófi

Once there was a girl who lived his with h- he lived with his mother and his father, and mum said um um um “Grandma is is sick. Can you er um give that to him? But um but watch for the big bad wolf.” And then then the girl, Little Red Riding Hood um go to his mother and he's kn- he know where he is living. And he he met his father and s- and s-ha- um Little Red Riding Hood said um “Father, um hi” “Hi um hi, Little Red Riding Hood, where are you going?” “I am going to my um Grandma, I will give him this um food and drink” and and “OK, but” the um dad said um “OK, just watch for the um the wolf”. Um um um Grandma did see the wolf in the window, and um Little Red Riding Hood will almost there, but the wolf got there first, and Grandmother um got out from the bed, and go to the st- um to the er

to um uh door of th- door and then the wolf get gets um inside and the wolf get inside and then and then he he put on hi- um Grandmother's hat um and his he got um he put on hi- um the um blanket. And then Li- Little Red Riding Hood um gone inside, and he said "What big ears you have" "To better to hear you" "But what big eyes you have" "To better to see you" "But wh- um what big um mouth and teeth you have" "To better to eat you!" And Little Red Riding Hood um run out of the door and the wolf c- um um want to catch him and eat, but Little Red Riding Hood could see his father and father sai- um um chased the um the wolf, and the wolf gone to the um tree, and um and then um um "Grandmother, where are you?" said Little Red Riding Hood. "I am here, just the Big Bad Wolf came here, and I was scary he will eat me." "Oh, I will give you a hug um um um "Grandmother, my dad did chase the um um the wolf, and the wolf get get um to the tree and then we they have all lived happily.