



Workshop for teachers working in multicultural classrooms

CLIL METHODOLOGY

Transcriptions of webinars from Poland, prepared by the Mikołaj Rej
Foundation for the Support of Polish Culture and Language

Workshop 1: CLIL Part 1

Description: The first workshop is an introduction to the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology. The presenter explains key concepts that will serve as a foundation for the subsequent sessions. The acronyms

CLIL, **JES** (Language of School Education), and the two basic levels of language competence are discussed: **BICS** (everyday communication) and **CALP** (the academic language needed in school). Participants will learn why proficiency in the formal language used in subject lessons is crucial for the academic success of a student with migration experience.

Workshop 2: CLIL Part 2

Description: The second session focuses on the process of language acquisition and the teacher's role. The workshop answers the question "who teaches the Polish language?", arguing that the responsibility lies with every teacher, not just language instructors. The presenter explains the difference between the conscious

learning of a language and the subconscious **acquiring** of it through immersion. Four theoretical paradigms of learning are presented, along with Lev Vygotsky's key concept for CLIL – the **Zone of Proximal Development**, which helps teachers plan support tailored to a student's individual abilities.

Workshop 3: CLIL Part 3

Description: The third workshop delves into the essence of the CLIL methodology, presenting its two main models: **Hard CLIL** (teaching a subject in a foreign



language) and **Soft CLIL** (incorporating subject-specific content into a foreign language lesson). A key element of the session is the discussion of the so-called

CLIL effect – research results showing that students taught with this method achieve better results in analytical thinking without falling behind in subject knowledge. The presenter also discusses how to plan language support depending on the child's linguistic biography.

Workshop 4: CLIL Part 4

Description: The final workshop is practical and presents a specific application of the CLIL methodology in a Polish language lesson at the high school level. Using an excerpt from Homer's

Iliad as an example, the presenter shows step-by-step how to adapt educational requirements for students with migration experience, how to use visual materials (film clips), and how to design tasks that allow for the assessment of subject knowledge while bypassing language barriers. The workshop serves as an inspiration for creating one's own CLIL-based lesson plans and includes a reference to a ready-made lesson outline.

Workshop 1

Hello. Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Urszula Majcher-Legawiec and I represent the Foundation for the Support of Polish Culture and Language as a Foreign Language, which has prepared a series of 4 meetings for you. This is the first one, dedicated to CLIL. In a moment, we will explain what this acronym means. I assume there is no such thing as obvious knowledge, and today's meeting is an introduction, which is essentially necessary to feel comfortable listening to the second, third, and fourth meetings. Today during this meeting, we will explain 4 acronyms: the first one, the second one is then BICS and CALP. We start with CLIL. And today we will limit ourselves to explaining this acronym. Because this is the main theme of all 4 meetings, you will have the opportunity to see how this theme develops. I have the impression that at the end, the CLIL methodology will be clear to you. CLIL, or Content and Language Integrated Learning, is often translated into Polish as integrated subject-language teaching. It is an approach that assumes that during a subject lesson, we teach students content from the core curriculum of that subject, but at the same time, we provide new language competencies, we teach a new language. The language in which we convey specialized information, information from a given field.



So it is worth asking ourselves, what does the success of a student with migration experience depend on?. Unquestionably, one of the conditions for this success is knowledge of the language. Language can be and certainly is the key to success. The problem is that when we think of the Polish language, we often think of it as some kind of monolith, whereas we know it exists in many varieties. And school success will depend on whether the student has communicative competence in a specific code, type, or variety of the Polish language. In Polish schools, we have additional lessons in Polish as a foreign language. There are 4 hours per week. At the moment, this number was temporarily smaller, then larger; in Polish as a foreign language lessons, we use textbooks for teaching Polish as a foreign language. I will not list their titles; you certainly recognize at least 1 or 2, maybe more. However, I want to ask, what kind of Polish language do we teach using these textbooks for Polish as a foreign language?. That is, what variety of Polish, or to put it another way, what does a student know thanks to these lessons, where can they use the skills acquired in this lesson, and is it really in a subject lesson, like biology, geography, or physical education?. Do Polish as a foreign language lessons prepare a student to learn in the Polish language?.

What language codes might a student encounter in school?. Firstly, it will be the language for contact with peers during breaks - colloquial, informal language. It will be the language for contact with a teacher or an adult school employee - a more formal, less colloquial language. It can also be the languages of emigrants, the language of migrants, national and ethnic minorities, and finally, a dialect. There are schools in Poland where a foreign student may encounter a dialect. It is also a foreign language that the foreign student, like a Polish student, will learn as part of their education in the classroom. It will also be the language in the subject called "Polish language," whose goal is not to teach the Polish language, but for example, to teach about the Polish language or to teach literature and culture. And finally, it will be the language used in other subjects. In any other subject: the language of biology, the language of physics, mathematics. These three varieties of language will constitute, from the perspective of a foreign student, the language of school education. The language of school education, for which we use the acronym, is key to understanding what is.

It is an analysis of the lexical resources activated in different situations in which we use the language. Vocabulary, the lexical resource, can be divided into three levels. At the first level, there are words used daily. This is vocabulary known to students, vocabulary that usually has one meaning, and the words that make up this lexical resource are learned by talking in very specific situations, very often face-to-face, knowing the topic and the context. At the second level, we will have words that are still quite frequently used, but these words may already have more than one meaning, though they are not necessarily used in daily conversation. At the third level are words rarely used, strongly associated with a field of knowledge, concepts, and terms. And the language of school education is made up of the second and third levels.



Another term announced at the beginning is BICS. This is also an acronym from English: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills. And accompanying BICS is the acronym CALP. Which stands for Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, or in Polish, cognitive academic language proficiency. Here, the use of the term "academic" can be a bit misleading. It refers to school language proficiency, not just the proficiency needed at the university level. In Polish, we would associate this level with post-secondary education. No, that is not the intention in this acronym; it refers to any school situation requiring a certain cognitive, or learning-related, language proficiency.

Let's take a closer look at BICS and CALP, and try to characterize these levels of language competence a bit. It is no coincidence that a visualization of an iceberg appears here. BICS is what is above sea level, while CALP is what we can crash against. It is what constitutes a challenge. This is the area where problems arise, and it is here that we must react and solve these problems. What is BICS?. It is the language of daily conversation, of everyday social contacts. A certain level of communicative proficiency can generally be achieved here within one to three years of study. Of course, this depends on many factors, not only on individual predispositions but also on whether the new language we are learning belongs to the same language family as our first language, as well as our age or which foreign language it is in sequence. BICS often includes a so-called "silent period" or period of silence, when the learner understands a great deal but has not yet made the internal decision to become active in that language. From a psychological perspective, this is a very important period and it requires an attitude of, I would say, respect. This silent period is very important and should not be artificially shortened, or in other words, activity should not be forced upon the student, meaning we should not expect them to start using Polish when we want them to. Let that decision be on the learner's side.

And CALP, which is the academic language, the language of school education, the language of textbooks. It is definitely more advanced than BICS. Proficiency at an intermediate level requires a minimum of 5 years of study here, while a proficiency that could be compared to that of a native speaker is developed throughout one's life. To continue characterizing these two levels, we must say that BICS is a competence, a level of proficiency, that is not cognitively demanding. This means that this level of language proficiency does not serve us in acquiring information about the world. It is a language embedded in the here and now. When using it, we know the context, we know the topic, and very often we are face-to-face with the interlocutor. This proficiency is built on high-frequency vocabulary; research often shows it is about 2000 words to remember, and it is characterized by simple sentence structures. However, when it comes to social or psychological pressure, BICS is characterized by low pressure. This means that not much depends on our mistakes or how fluently we use the language at the BICS level. The internal situation can be more complicated because we can use BICS, embedding it strongly in context; this would be a face-to-face conversation or a joint activity. Or, as a person using the language at this level, we can be in a situation where the context is reduced, and an example of such a situation is



a telephone conversation. And you, ladies and gentlemen, learning any foreign language, know well how difficult it is to have the first telephone conversation in that language, how often we use avoidance strategies and definitely prefer to talk face-to-face.

In turn, CALP is a cognitively demanding language. This means it is the level of language proficiency that allows us to acquire information about the world. What characterizes CALP? It is experiencing and having contact with culture; it includes lectures, written texts full of specialized terminology, and also humor and idiomatic expressions—a special kind of linguistic and cultural competence. And, of course, non-verbal communication, which is not necessarily clear to us as learners of a new language. In the characteristics of CALP, we must also note that it is a formal register, the language of textbooks, and that here too, there are sometimes issues of register and appropriateness that are difficult to sense in a foreign language, such as socially fitting how we speak to the situation and the person. We also have limited interaction here because it is primarily work with a text. The language is quite abstract, we are less familiar with the context, and we may not know the topic at all because we are just acquiring information that constitutes that topic. The use of this language is often decontextualized. And the vocabulary has a rather low frequency, meaning it does not appear in daily communication; it is less common vocabulary.

What characterizes CALP from a social and psychological perspective is the high stakes, meaning high pressure. My grade and whether I get promoted to the next class depends on whether my proficiency at the CALP level is sufficient. So, a mistake can have significant consequences. And just like at the BICS level, here we can also have some contextual embedding. In that case, we are dealing with a structured text containing, for example, graphics, diagrams, internal divisions, or subheadings. Or it could be a lecture with a presentation that helps to better understand the content being delivered. Or we can also have a situation with reduced context, such as an unstructured text without graphic support or a lecture without a presentation.

Ladies and gentlemen, this brief introduction concerned the explanation of 4 basic concepts that will appear in the following meetings: CLIL, JES, BICS, and CALP. Understanding these concepts and using them will be important for us in each subsequent meeting. That is why during the introduction, we devoted some attention to them. Thank you very much for this meeting, and I invite you to the next one.

2. CLIL Part 2 - Teacher Workshop

Hello, ladies and gentlemen, to the second meeting of the CLIL series. Urszula Majcher-Legawiec, from the Mikołaj Rej Foundation for the Support of Polish Culture and Language. Today, we will briefly review the most important information from the first meeting, answer the question of who teaches the Polish language, what the difference is between



learning and acquiring a language, and also what the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development is. I will also present to you four theoretical paradigms of the process of learning any foreign language, and thus also for some, Polish as a foreign language.

During the first meeting, we explained the acronym CLIL. It is an acronym from the English language, Content and Language Integrated Learning, in Polish, integrated subject-language teaching. We explained what JES is, the Language of School Education. It is composed of the many varieties of language that a foreigner encounters in a Polish school; it is made up of the foreign languages taught in the Polish school, the language of the subject "Polish Language," and the language of other subjects like biology, chemistry, physics, and so on. We also explained that JES should be characterized by its lexical resources and that second and third-level vocabulary constitutes the language of school education. Finally, we characterized BICS and CALP, stating that BICS is the language of daily conversation, of everyday social contacts, a language we learn relatively quickly—sometimes a year, two, or three is enough—and that BICS includes a so-called silent period. In contrast, CALP is the language of school, academic language, the language of textbooks, and proficiency at an intermediate level requires a minimum of 5 years of study, while a proficiency comparable to that of a native speaker is developed throughout one's life. We can essentially say that CALP corresponds to JES.

Today I would like to ask the question, who teaches the Polish language?. Very often, in response to such a question, I have heard that it is the teacher of Polish as a foreign language, and of course, it was difficult to agree with that answer. No, definitely not. Every teacher teaches the Polish language, but they do not always do it consciously and are not always aware that they are, in fact, teaching. Let's look here at the difference between learning a language and acquiring a language. This is also somewhat the difference between a teacher and a teacher of Polish as a second/foreign language, a lector of a foreign language, for example, Polish. In the process of acquisition, to a question asked by someone gaining new competencies in a new language for them, a subject teacher—so not a teacher of Polish as a second/foreign language, not a Polish language lector—can answer the question of why something functions in a certain way in the language simply by saying, "because that's how it is," "because that's the language," "because that's how we say it in Polish.". This acquisition process often happens subconsciously, meaning there is no decision to specifically learn something new from the language. It happens through immersion in the environment, and this environment can be multimedia—games, films, radio—but it can also be the actual school environment and contact with the language, for example, during a subject lesson, not a lesson for teaching Polish as a foreign language. Here, vocabulary is expanded through use and in a situational context. And this path of acquisition leads us to the competence designated here as L2, meaning second language, or SL, second language.

And a parallel process is the process of learning. Here, to the question "why?", there must be an answer, a specific explanation must be given, and we acquire the language with every



teacher, whereas we learn the language and obtain information about how the language works from a teacher of Polish as a second/foreign language. Learning is a conscious following of instructions, a conscious process, a process whose beginning we identify and make a decision: "Yes, now I am starting to learn a new language". Here we also have a completely natural and justified correction of errors, for example during a language course. Here grammatical awareness is also built, for example, language drills appear, and this is a process different in its qualitative characteristics from the process of language acquisition. So, while the teacher of Polish as a second/foreign language is responsible for the process of learning, acquisition also takes place in the presence of any other subject teacher. Thus, to the question "who teaches the Polish language?", we can say with certainty, every teacher. Everyone can be a language model for the learner, can be imitated, and can influence the process of learning a second language.

These two processes of language acquisition and learning, considered from a theoretical perspective, lead us to four theoretical concepts: behaviorism, nativism, the so-called monitor theory, and social constructivism. Behaviorism should be associated with names like Pavlov or Skinner, and this paradigm influenced the audiolingual method, which assumes that the best way to learn a language is through exercises. Through them, we memorize. And besides exercises, also dialogues; here, as work techniques during lessons and lectures, language drills, exercises, repetition, and multiple-choice tests appeared. In the nativist concept, with which the name Chomsky should be associated, we start from the assumption that we are all born with a universal grammar, an innate ability to understand the grammar of our first language. So if someone has learned to speak in their own language, they will also learn to speak Polish. It is enough to be among Polish speakers, and this process of acquisition will happen without much effort on our part. The monitor theory should be associated with the name Krashen, the author of five hypotheses that focus on the relationship between a student's ability to subconsciously and consciously acquire a language. These hypotheses are the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. Quite important here is the belief in the so-called self-direction of the learner, for example, in terms of the topic, content, sharing in action, spontaneous learning, spontaneous groups of contacts, and the creation of knowledge in and through these contacts. And Vygotsky's theory, the theory of social constructivism, assumes that human development is embedded in society, has a social dimension, and thus knowledge is constructed through interaction with others. Discovery and cooperation in groups are very natural and highly recommended processes in learning. We also build cognitive scaffolding, and self-direction results from personal experiences and needs, from self-assessment and peer assessment.

For us, two of these four paradigms will be of significant importance, those that have a strongly inclusive character, that are very interactive, social, inclusive, and that use the environment as a resource. This will be the monitor theory and the theory of social constructivism. And these interactionist paradigms, in contrast to the non-interesting behaviorist and nativist paradigms, will be characterized by the following elements: when it



comes to the source of initial language data, we are dealing with the natural language of the teacher, friends, or from books. As for the nature of the output data, it is unstructured but focused on communication between the student and other learners. From a school perspective, the ideal class composition assumes that native speakers of the language learn together with learners of the target language for social interaction, which is aimed at communication. The student's utterance occurs naturally in communication with other people using that language and is quite spontaneous in terms of the pressure to speak. In essence, we are not talking about the presence of pressure. This pressure is a natural impulse to communicate, so in principle, it is not pressure, but the realization of a need. And such a criterion for treating errors: errors that hinder communication are very naturally corrected during the negotiation of meaning. Some errors will require correction, but it is not of an academic nature, but serves the fluency of communication and mutual understanding. If you would like to read more about these four theoretical paradigms, I am pasting a link here to a publication that is entirely in English, and those interested in these paradigms can deepen their knowledge on this topic. I used this publication, which is available online.

Another thing that interests us is the concept of the zone of proximal development. This is Vygotsky's concept, later developed with some changes by Bruner. This chart here shows two levels: the lower level of independent performance, which is what an individual can do without outside help, and the higher level of assisted performance, which is what an individual is capable of doing with help, with someone's help, with the help of a teacher. The zone of proximal development spans between these levels. Determining the zone of proximal development is quite important from a teaching perspective and involves identifying the child's area of development, limited from below by the child's current abilities and from above by the limits of the child's abilities at a given moment. This determination of the zone of proximal development is, of course, the teacher's task. It means that the child, learning with support from an adult, masters new skills that in the near future will become part of their repertoire of independent competencies. The difference between the level of tasks solved independently and the level of solutions performed under the guidance of an adult precisely defines this zone. The child's zone of proximal development indicates their potential, strengths, and those aspects of development that require stimulation. Professor Gruszczyk-Kolczyńska speaks very interestingly on the topic of the zone of proximal development; you will easily find a film with fragments of her lectures on the internet. She is a mathematics methodologist, but learning a foreign language has much in common with learning mathematics, and she proposes practical methodological solutions concerning the zone of proximal development. For example, the adult formulates a task for the child that is within their capabilities. The child solves the task and creates a similar one for the adult. The adult solves the task and creates a task of a higher difficulty level, which is then solved by the child, who subsequently creates a similar one for the adult. The adult solves that task and increases the difficulty level of the next task intended for the child. This process of performing tasks continues, and during this process,



the child can always count on the support of the adult and move within the zone of proximal development, acquiring ever new skills.

Ladies and gentlemen, I assume that after this short meeting, we know, we are aware, that every teacher is a teacher of the Polish language. We know the difference between learning and acquiring. We know what the zone of proximal development is, and we understand why inclusive paradigms are crucial for communication in a foreign language. I invite you to the third meeting.

3. CLIL Part 3 - Teacher Workshop

Ladies and gentlemen, good day. Urszula Majcher-Legawiec, from the Mikołaj Rej Foundation for the Support of Polish Culture and Language. We are meeting for the third time to develop the topic of CLIL. During this meeting, I will briefly remind you of the content of the first and second meetings. We will touch upon the essence of CLIL. I would like you to understand after the meeting what hard and soft CLIL are, what the CLIL effect consists of, and also how to plan the education process, taking into account the child's linguistic biography.

During previous meetings, we deciphered the acronym CLIL, which stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning, or in Polish, integrated subject-language teaching. This is a teaching process during which we simultaneously and in parallel teach subject content and strengthen and develop the student's language competencies. We explained what JES is, the Language of School Education, and that this language is composed of both foreign languages taught in school, the language used in the subject called Polish language, and the language of every other school subject—biology, geography, physics, as well as physical education. We also explained the difference between the levels of language competence known as BICS and CALP. We said that BICS is the language of daily conversation, of everyday social contacts, a language in which we achieve proficiency quite quickly—communicative proficiency, which may sometimes be laden with errors. We need one to three years for this, depending on various conditions, and also that using this language at the BICS level often includes a so-called silent period. In contrast, CALP is the language of school textbooks, the language of school education; proficiency at an intermediate level requires a minimum of 5 years of study. In fact, it is developed throughout life to the level of native speaker proficiency. We also said that CALP is [JES], and we explained the difference between learning a language and acquiring a language, and thus we defined the difference between the role of a teacher and a teacher of Polish as a foreign language. To the question of who teaches the Polish language, we answered that every teacher does, but contact with one subject teacher, for example, promotes the acquisition of the Polish language, while contact with a teacher of Polish as a foreign language is a process of learning that language. We also discussed four theoretical paradigms of acquisition and learning of a foreign language, Polish, and we emphasized that two of them are important to us due to their characteristics, their quality, namely the inclusive or interactive, social, inclusive, environmental paradigms—that is, the



paradigm known as the monitor theory and social constructivism. We also presented the concept of the zone of proximal development, according to which, as part of a diagnosis, it is worthwhile to assess the student's level of independent performance and to plan the level of supported performance in order to determine this zone of proximal development, as well as a certain progression. What is today the level of supported performance—that is, what the learner can do with the teacher's help—may tomorrow become the level of independent performance.

The conclusions from our meetings so far are as follows. Every teacher teaches Polish as a second/foreign language, even if they do not have a specialized degree; the student either learns or acquires the language with them. The tasks of a teacher of Polish as a second/foreign language are, of course, different from the tasks of a subject teacher. We showed this during the second meeting. To the question "why do we say something in one way and not another?", a subject teacher has the right to answer "because that's how it is," whereas a teacher of Polish as a second/foreign language expands this answer into a justification that often, colloquially speaking, explains how the language works. CALP is a much greater challenge for a child than BICS; it is a condition for school success. BICS is important, but it is not sufficient for this success, and CALP is what happens in a subject lesson. The student not only learns Polish as a foreign language but also acquires this language, and the development of language competence is facilitated by the inclusive paradigms of Krashen and Vygotsky. A multilingual classroom naturally creates an environment conducive to inclusive paradigms, which require interaction and, indeed, an environment.

A certain challenge for the teacher is to identify the zone of proximal development, which means a reliable, good diagnosis, performed essentially on a continuous basis, not just once at the beginning of the school year, and to plan activities in the context of this diagnosis or the many diagnoses that make up the diagnostic process. And today we are dealing with the essence of CLIL.

CLIL is said to be an approach to the educational process, an approach that favors the achievement of two goals at the same time. Simultaneously, the student learns subject content and masters the foreign language in which this learning takes place. The genesis of CLIL is partly the history of Europe in the 1990s, which were characterized by globalization and, at the same time, a growing demand for language skills. Increased mobility meant an increase in the number of contacts between representatives of different cultures and languages. Hence the growing demand for people who speak different languages, and at the same time, the European Parliament in 2003 defined the goals of the European Union's language policy, and one of them was the goal for every European citizen to master, in addition to their mother tongue, two foreign languages. The language in CLIL is referred to as a vehicular language or language of instruction, meaning it is the language in which education takes place, regardless of whether it is a foreign language, a second language, another language of a national or ethnic minority, or some other additional language.



It is worth noting the relationship between CLIL and the Polish as a foreign language lesson. We have already asked ourselves what Polish as a foreign language lessons prepare students for. Please consider, because we do not have the opportunity to exchange ideas, please consider in what situations a learner of Polish in additional Polish as a foreign language lessons will be able to use what they have learned during these lessons. And is it really useful in biology, physics, chemistry, mathematics lessons, and so on?. Those of you who teach Polish as a foreign language know well that the fundamental structure of most Polish language textbooks is a grammatical-lexical axis, and the textbook is divided into thematic chapters. It is not our goal now to analyze any of these textbooks, but if we had such an opportunity, or if you can recall the table of contents, it would show that practically none of the chapters in the textbook gives the learning child, the student, the opportunity to get closer to the challenges they face in subject lessons. And the point is to introduce CLIL into the school reality, thus giving the child a chance to simultaneously learn subject content and the Polish language.

One of the primary goals of teaching Polish as a foreign language is to acquire skills that give us relative communicative freedom, but at the BICS level—informal, mostly outside the classroom. The curriculum is focused on developing skills, functions, and structures of the language and vocabulary, and the topics are related to daily activities and the student's interests. Thus, very often, Polish as a foreign language is the language of competence at the BICS level, the language of everyday life, used in a specific situational context. So, asking for directions, shopping, well-being, hobbies, interests, ways of spending free time—but these are not topics that we develop in any other school subject. Therefore, we can say that it is a kind of language for "just in case" use in the future, although we don't necessarily know what kind of future that will be—certainly not the immediate school future, when a biology lesson starts after the bell rings. So let's ask ourselves, what kind of Polish language do students need in subject lessons, and let's consider which topics from Polish as a foreign language lessons prepare students to communicate subject content?.

There are very few points of contact, and if we now had the opportunity to have a discussion, we would certainly, perhaps with a bit of effort, find such points, but there are definitely too few of them. This means there is a large gap between what a student learns in a Polish as a foreign language lesson and what they need in a subject lesson.

What is the relationship between CLIL and a subject lesson?. CLIL is based on the curriculum of a given subject. The curriculum determines the sequence of content, which results from the requirements of a given field of science; we have this in the core curriculum. Often, the language of instruction is simplified, and the language structures depend on the needs related to the taught content. So, it's not exactly a concept of grammatical-lexical progression, but rather lexical clusters around which, or parallel to which, certain language competencies are built. The target language, the one we use in subject lessons, the target language in a CLIL lesson, can be described as CALP. It refers to the ability to understand and express, both in speech and in writing, concepts and ideas that



are related to success in the school environment. And if in a subject lesson we teach using the CLIL method, we can say that we are teaching the language "just in time".

A very interesting result of many years of research is the so-called CLIL effect, which I would like to introduce to you. The primary goal of CLIL is to enhance the effects of foreign language teaching, partly because, in addition to general language lessons (the BICS level), students also have contact with academic language during the study of a specific subject. And research indicates an improvement in language skills, especially in areas such as speaking or writing. But it is not the exposure itself that determines the development of these language competencies, but the specific materials and methodological approach observed in CLIL. This is the conclusion that closes many years of research planned to answer the question of whether CLIL has a negative impact on the level of knowledge and skills in subjects taught in a foreign language. You may have encountered such an accusation from Polish parents that the presence of foreign children in the classroom slows down the teaching process, as a result of which Polish children learn less. And these are studies that show, that prove, that CLIL not only does not lower the results of subject teaching but actually strengthens them.

This is the result of a long-term experiment that was conducted from 1991 to 2002 in the Basque Country, a bilingual region where both Spanish and Basque are used, and both of these languages have the status of official languages. In 1991, some schools with Basque as the language of instruction decided to take part in an experiment and began teaching English from the age of four, not, as was previously the case, when they were 8 or 10 years old. Then, two years implemented with the CLIL methodology were planned: a year of teaching history in the ninth grade and a year of teaching geography in the tenth grade, exclusively in English. This experimental group of students from 80 schools—a fairly large experimental group—participating in this project was given a history test in 2002, and this test was conducted in the Basque language, because the control group had been learning this subject in Basque. The research assumption was that conducting this exam in English would not provide a reliable comparison. This, of course, was an additional challenge for the students who had learned in English and were taking the exam in Basque, because they had learned specific vocabulary and concepts from history in English. And now I will present the results of this exam. The lighter blue is the control group, and the darker blue is the experimental group. Type A are closed-ended questions and type B are open-ended questions, and it is clear that in both types of tasks, the experimental group achieves better results, both in closed-ended tasks and in open-ended tasks. These results in the closed-ended tasks were slightly, but nevertheless, higher. However, quite surprising, and perhaps expected by some, was the comparison of the results of open-ended tasks, which require students to interpret data and draw conclusions, and to independently formulate opinions, often in the form of a longer written response. And these results were higher in the experimental group by as much as 25%, despite the fact that the students took this exam in a different language than they had learned in. And this effect was precisely defined as the CLIL effect in the area of thought processes and language production in written form. The



conclusion is that the higher abilities, the better performance of the students, were related to the modified approach of the teachers to the teaching process and the fact that they worked based on methodologically, substantively, and professionally prepared materials.

What is also important for this CLIL effect is that there was no selection of students who participated in the program. These were not classes created for the research, but naturally formed ones. And here is also an argument that debunks the myth that a weaker or average student would not be able to cope with CLIL material. The results of these studies prove that a student who struggles with learning conducted in their native language can cope better in a class implementing CLIL. This is partly thanks to the fact that a properly trained teacher changes their teaching methodology, looks for new forms of conveying knowledge, speaks more slowly, says less, and at the same time gives the floor to student activity, and also checks the understanding of a concept more often. After the publication of the results of these tests, this CLIL effect, of course, became the subject of heated discussions, but CLIL also began to be looked at as a method that would probably work well in linguistically heterogeneous classes. And in principle, it does.

The intention of the creators of CLIL was to support teachers of subjects other than foreign languages, precisely those who, due to a lack of philological education, cannot answer the question of why we say something in a language in one way or another; they can only answer "because that's how it is," "because that's how the language works," "because that's how we speak.". And by definition, they may have difficulties in preparing, conducting, and assessing lessons taught in a language that is foreign to them and their students. And this subject teaching in a language that is being learned at the same time is called "hard CLIL". However, over time, a milder version of CLIL developed, which is based on subject content but is implemented in foreign language lessons. In our case, Polish as a foreign language lessons, and these lessons are conducted by teachers prepared to teach Polish as a foreign language, and these teachers introduce elements of the core curriculum from school subjects into their lessons. And we will call this variation of CLIL "soft CLIL.". So, hard CLIL is subject teaching in a language that the student is learning simultaneously with the core curriculum of that subject, and soft CLIL is the teaching of the Polish language, the planning and implementation of Polish as a foreign language lessons, that takes into account subject content.

The content of hard CLIL comes directly from the program of a given subject, and hard CLIL supports language education in non-language subject lessons. In contrast, soft CLIL weaves selected subject content into Polish as a foreign language lessons, meaning soft CLIL supports the learning of subject content in foreign language lessons.

At this point, we return to the already explained acronyms BICS and CALP to look at the needs of students in terms of BICS and CALP, to look at planning support for the language competencies of these students depending on their linguistic biography, on the kind of migration experience they have. Please note that among migrant students, or students with



migration experience, because they are not always migrants—we will soon see the so-called returning students—we can distinguish different life models. We can have a group of migrant children born abroad who may not know Polish at all or know it poorly, or who may have a good command of the communicative language. And now, depending on this diagnosis, on the level of language proficiency, the decision on the scope of support should follow this diagnosis. In the absence of knowledge of the Polish language, in additional Polish as a foreign language lessons, we should primarily teach the language of communication and, at the same time, the language of school education, i.e., BICS and CALP. However, with a good command of the communicative language, these lessons should concentrate on JES, around the language of school education.

In the group of migrant children born in Poland, it is very likely that they will have a good command of the communicative language because they were born and raised here. However, they may need support in the language of school education, if only because these children often do not have support from their parents, who know Polish worse than they do. In the group of Polish children born or raised abroad, this is precisely the group often referred to as "returning children". They are not migrants in the intuitive and fundamental sense, but at the same time, they are not Poles. However, the term "returning" is more adequate for their parents than for themselves, because very often these children were born abroad and started their education there, and they are not so much returning as migrating to their parents' home country. In this group, we may have people with a good command of the communicative language and with a poor command of the communicative language. The recognition of this situation will determine whether we will support such students in the language of school education or in the language of school education and the language of communication. And finally, a rather interesting group: children from bicultural families, in which there may also be people with no knowledge of Polish or with poor knowledge, or people with a good command of the communicative language. And the scope of support will depend on the recognition of these language competencies, meaning either JES and the language of communication in parallel, or only JES.

In school practice, subject teaching and teaching Polish as a second/foreign language require cooperation and co-planning, assuming that this planning takes place in an atmosphere of cooperation. That is, in agreement with the teacher of a given subject, the subject content of the core curriculum can become the starting material for more systematic work within Polish language lessons as a foreign language, which will implement soft CLIL. Thus, every lesson with a teacher of Polish as a foreign language can prepare a student to enter the classroom for a specific subject lesson. For this to happen, both teachers must answer several questions: what will be the subject of the didactic process, what will be the teaching content?. And besides linguistic, communicative, cultural, and literary content, it would also be necessary to identify the content from the core curriculum. Who will be the participant in the didactic process and how will it be organized?. Where and when, under what circumstances?. In what teaching situation will this process be realized?. Why?. That is, what is the goal of teaching?. The goal set by students and teachers, and probably also



parents. What are the educational requirements and how, that is, using what methods and techniques, within what approach, teaching and learning strategy?.

And a fairly universal answer is CLIL, so let's look at the features of this method. Above all, it is characterized by systematic work in groups and in pairs. This stems from the interactional paradigms of Krashen and Vygotsky, which we talked about during the second meeting. Methodological adjustment is required here: the selection of exercises that take into account the different types of intelligence of the students, and also taking into account the polysensory nature of the learner. Also, individualization of the process in the context of the theory of the zone of proximal development and learning through different sensory channels. Finally, quite important is the support of the verbal channel, so that contact with subject content in a language that is still foreign is not exclusively contact with a so-called "talking head," but that elements of visualization appear there, that materials appropriate for integrated teaching are used, i.e., CALP in context with diagrams, charts, support of body language, or any other form that complements the verbal message.

For CLIL, three dimensions are very important: the concept, which is what is to be assimilated in the teaching process—this is a specific topic from the core curriculum, for example, photosynthesis or the Great Fire of London, or the classification of triangles based on side lengths and angles, or the characteristic features of particular climatic-vegetation zones. The procedure, which is "how I will do it"—this is a rather important methodological answer from the teacher, "how will I do it as a teacher, with what methods, in what form, and how will the students work?". And the Language, which is used to communicate both the concept and the procedure. It is, of course, an essential element, but it can play a supporting role in the implementation of the core curriculum. And this supporting role will appear when we place emphasis on visual elements that supplement the verbal channel.

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope that after this meeting, you can answer "yes" four times to the questions: Do I know what hard CLIL is? Do I know what soft CLIL is? Do I understand the so-called CLIL effect? And do we know how to adapt the educational process to the child's linguistic biography, meaning do we choose the BICS path or the CALP path?. I invite you to the last, fourth meeting, during which we will present specific applications of CLIL in school practice. Thank you very much, and see you then.

4. CLIL Part 4 - Teacher Workshop

Good day. The Mikołaj Rej Foundation for the Support of Polish Culture and Language. Ladies and gentlemen, we are meeting for the fourth and final time for a meeting dedicated to CLIL. As before, I will briefly remind you of what we talked about earlier, and today I will show you a practical application of CLIL in a Polish language lesson in the first grade of a general high school, in a preparatory unit.

So far, we have explained what CLIL is—that it is an acronym for the English Content and



Language Integrated Learning, or integrated subject-language teaching. What JES is, which language codes, which varieties of language make up the Language of School Education. We also explained what the acronyms BICS and CALP mean and what the characteristics of these two different levels of language proficiency are. We answered the question of who teaches, which teacher in school teaches the Polish language; we answered that every teacher does, and we defined the different tasks of teachers—the subject teacher and the teacher of Polish as a foreign language—and the difference between learning and acquiring a language. You also learned about four theoretical paradigms that define how we acquire and/or learn a language, and we accepted two of them—Krashen's monitor theory and the theory of social constructivism—as interesting to us because they have an inclusive, interactional, social, and environmental potential. We also explained the relationship between CLIL and Polish as a foreign language lessons and subject lessons. A Polish as a foreign language lesson primarily develops competencies at the BICS level, thus teaching the language "just in case" for future use, though we don't quite know when that future will come or what it will be like. However, CLIL in subject lessons allows for the development of competencies at the CALP level and is learning that we could say is "just in time," meaning we learn exactly what we need at that moment in the educational situation. We also discussed the surprising CLIL effect, the result of research conducted in Spain, and we explained the difference between hard and soft CLIL. We also talked about what decision to make regarding the scope of support for a student with migration experience, depending on the analysis of their migration experience and level of Polish language proficiency. We also indicated the three dimensions of CLIL: concept, procedure, and language.

And today I will show you the solutions I applied in a Polish language lesson in a preparatory unit at a general high school. This unit was established in the year 2019, so just before the pandemic, in 2019-2020. And in this preparatory unit, I taught both Polish as a subject—meaning I implemented the core curriculum for the first grade of a general high school—and Polish as a second/foreign language, meaning I taught the language. From the many topics covered, I have chosen one for today, namely, the core curriculum provides that a Polish language teacher in the first grade of high school has a choice to cover a fragment of Homer's

Iliad or *Odyssey*. I chose the

Iliad, specifically the fragment that presents the scene of the duel between Hector and Achilles. And to realize this fragment of the core curriculum, I primarily used the film titled

Troy, specifically the fragment of the film that presents the duel between Hector and Achilles.

The first thing we do in professional practice is to define the specific requirements. A certain problem arises here because those defined for Polish students cannot be the same as those we define for foreign students. And here we differentiate the process; we have the



right to do so, we can adapt and individualize. Please do not be guided by the numbers here, which for some unknown reason have been rearranged, especially on the right side where the specific requirements for foreign students are, but we will analyze it in parallel, so you will not get lost. Please look at the first requirement for a Polish student: "presents the history of the duel between Achilles and Hector"—"presents" in the sense of verbally telling the story. I could not formulate this kind of requirement for students who had been learning Polish for 4 or 5 months. Therefore, this requirement reads: "reconstructs the history of the duel between Achilles and Hector". I will tell you in a moment how the students reconstructed this. The second requirement, "presents the course of the duel using drama techniques," I change to "takes part in drama scenes". The third requirement, "indicates the elements of the presented world in the work"—I am forgoing this requirement. The students are not yet linguistically ready to indicate, discuss, and characterize the elements of the presented world in the work. Fourth, "analyzes the motives of the characters' actions"—I am definitely forgoing this for the same reasons as above. Fifth, "evaluates the characters, lists their character traits". I can leave this as "evaluates the characters and justifies their opinion in a simple way, names character traits," which is basically characterizing and justifying. The sixth requirement, "justifies the universalism of Homer's work"—I am absolutely forgoing this. It is a typically verbal task requiring great linguistic proficiency. However, I am adding two requirements that are specific to the students' stage of language development and which I am developing on the occasion of the curriculum content from Polish as a subject. Namely, "develops the skill of constructing sentences with a predicate nominative" and "reinforces the use of dependent case forms—accusative, genitive, and locative—in utterances".

Right now, you see a photo of a blackboard written on during a lesson in this class. The column on the right side contains the names of kinship terms. If you remember the scenes from the movie

Troy, there is a moment where Hector's entire family stands on the walls of Troy. And using a freeze-frame, you can not only introduce the characters who take part in the events of the

Iliad but also practice the names of kinship terms. The middle column consists mainly of adjectives, but you will also find nouns here that the students need to understand, so we can translate them using paraphrases or a dictionary. And on the left side, there are a few concepts that have the status of terms describing literary phenomena or belong to the field of knowledge known as literature in general. And a few words that are related to the course of events in the

Iliad. I want to draw your attention to a term like "epic". It appeared here secondarily to a homework assignment that the students received before the lesson. In the subject literature, we find a term like the "linguistic interdependence hypothesis". It states that if we have a concept of a phenomenon in our head that we learned in our first language, the language we feel most comfortable with, which is our native language, then thinking about



this concept in a foreign language is much easier for us, because we already know the concept; so in the new language, we are just naming what we know with different words. This is a hypothesis that very nicely supports the rational planning of the didactic process and results in us assigning homework before the lesson, not after, for example, to reinforce selected curriculum content. I assigned such a task whenever a term or concept could not be drawn, danced, or explained in any other non-verbal way, and when knowledge of this term was crucial for the didactic process. Therefore, the word "epic" written here was just a reminder that we know this word, and it activated the associations that everyone had in their own language, and in a previous lesson, we discussed this term as a literary genre. The same words on this slide are rewritten to be more visible, but I think you could also read a lot from that photo. This is the lexical resource that the students learned during the lessons dedicated to Homer and the

Iliad. And I remind you that this is the fifth month of study in a Polish school, in the first grade of a preparatory unit in a Polish high school, so it is quite advanced vocabulary that you certainly cannot count on in Polish as a foreign language lessons, but it becomes very natural when implementing the core curriculum with the CLIL method. In the preparatory unit, all students knew and understood these words.

Another photo, one of the subsequent blackboards. If you remember, one of the requirements was to reconstruct the story of the duel between Achilles and Hector. At the top of the slide, it is written in white font: "Reconstructing the story of the duel between Achilles and Hector". We have an action plan, in this case, a plan of events, which I wrote on the board. But I preceded this with watching a fragment of the film, and at the moment when the event, the action, was happening before the students' eyes, I named that action with these specific words, and then I wrote it on the board. If I remember correctly, I only marked number 9, "Hector dies, passes away". However, the students' task was to come to the board and establish, which they could do in consultation with the class, which event was first, second, third, but they no longer saw these events replayed as a film fragment; they had to remember the wording, and in the process, read it. So, "Hector leaves the gate"—the first event, we assign it the value of one. The same events are rewritten here for those who had trouble reading. And if you go back to those educational requirements, I am quoting here at the bottom the requirement "evaluates the characters and justifies their opinion in a simple way, names character traits". "He is a good husband because he loves his wife"—this is a simple justification. "He is wonderful because he thinks about..." or "he is honorable because he is brave". The point here was the construction, not some insightful and in-depth reflection. And on the board, we have a set of adjectives describing character traits, and the students' task was to match these adjectives to the characters: what is Hector like, what is Achilles like, and possibly, why do you think so?. I will only say that the group was quite strongly divided. Namely, half were Slavs and half were non-Slavs, and this task, as you can guess, was easier for the Slavs than for the non-Slavs. So, the non-Slavs were a more passively participating part of the class in some tasks, which simply resulted from their starting potential. Unexpectedly, a conflict arose here. The reason for the conflict was the



term "handsome". The boys claimed that Hector was handsome, and the girls, that Achilles was. Ultimately, it was decided that we would write down this term as characterizing both Hector and Achilles.

I will return for a moment to the educational requirement "reconstructs the story of the duel between Achilles and Hector". The students remembered the Polish terms for these events and were able to repeat them. Some used the blackboard or their own notes, because of course, there were quite a lot of these words at the beginning. However, how did they reconstruct it? After watching the scene several times and learning these terms, they received from me these events written on narrow slips of paper. There are 9 of them, so everyone got 9 such slips. And without notes and without the film, their task was to arrange these events in the order that was in the film, i.e., from 1 to 9, but without the prompt that is here. And this is a way to obtain information about a student's state of knowledge, bypassing their language competencies, or rather, incompetence. A student can reconstruct these events by ordering the events written by me on previously prepared cards, and the correct ordering is proof that they know the scene and can reconstruct the events of that scene. I return to the characterization of the heroes, and you already know the story with the term "handsome".

And here is one more photo. When I assign homework: the hero Helen, in this case, the Trojan War, i.e., the event, the Trojan horse, Achilles' heel—these are all elements of the presented world, and here I ask the students to work at home, explaining who Helen is, who Helen was. The question asked is "who is Helen?" and as you can see, I encourage the students to write it in their own language, for example, in Ukrainian, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian, or Vietnamese, plus in Polish, thanks to which they undertake a kind of micro-translator activity, at the same time answering the question for themselves first in the language they understand best. So we have again the use of the linguistic interdependence hypothesis. And here is that blackboard rewritten on a slide so that everyone can read it clearly. "Achilles' heel" is, of course, a term that I will not explain to you, but which was also an opportunity to show certain things, and it was also the students' task to point out where their heel is, and at the same time to say what their "Achilles' heel" is, thus understanding the metaphorical nature of this expression. And from what I remember, it was quite good fun together.

Ladies and gentlemen, in the cycle of these lectures, there is also a CLIL lesson plan, which I have prepared for you based on this very lesson, fragments of which I have just discussed. I now cordially invite you to familiarize yourselves with this attachment. It will be available on the Rej Foundation's website, where the webinars will be, and it will also serve as a starting point for you in thinking about creating your own lesson plan. I am keeping my fingers crossed for good lesson plans and thank you very much for your participation in this series of meetings. Goodbye.



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Podcasts for teachers working in multicultural classrooms

**Transcripts of podcasts from Poland,
prepared by Fundacja Understanding**

Podcast 1

Title: Inner Strength: Building a Teacher's Mental Resilience

Description: This podcast focuses on mental resilience as a key skill in the work of a teacher who faces pressure, stress, and change daily. The difference between resilience (coping with difficulties) and resiliency (the ability to rebuild and grow after a crisis) is discussed, emphasizing that these are skills that can be learned. Methods for strengthening resilience are indicated, including self-reflection on one's own reactions, building a social support network, and stress-coping techniques like breathing exercises or symbolically "destroying" a piece of paper with negative thoughts written on it. The podcast also references good practices from Norwegian schools, such as providing each teacher with their own workspace, regular meetings of pedagogical teams, and a training model that prioritizes pedagogical and psychological knowledge.

Podcast 2

Title: Oasis of Calm: How to Care for Teacher Well-being and Avoid Professional Burnout



Description: The podcast addresses the topic of teachers' mental well-being, referencing the alarming results of a 2023 study that showed high levels of burnout and stress in this professional group. Sources of stress are analyzed, including individual factors (e.g., perfectionism), interpersonal factors (demanding attitudes from parents, lack of support from colleagues), and social factors. Listeners will learn about the symptoms of professional burnout—from emotional exhaustion and indifference to physical symptoms like headaches or insomnia. Effective self-care strategies are proposed, such as self-reflection, physical activity (e.g., walks, yoga), relaxation techniques (mindfulness, meditation), and enjoying small pleasures. The importance of setting boundaries between professional and private life and practicing gratitude by writing down positive events daily is also emphasized.

1. Inner Strength - a podcast for teachers

SPK_1: Welcome to another episode of our podcast, which is titled "Inner Strength, a teacher's mental resilience." Why this title? Because in the previous episode, we talked about burnout, about what is difficult in a teacher's job, and how to partially cope with it. And today? We would like to complete this topic with another important element. That is, building mental resilience, because everyone knows that a teacher not only teaches but also faces many daily challenges, pressure, stress, and constant organizational and systemic changes—things over which they have no influence. And in these difficult situations, they must be able to cope. When we talk about coping, we talk about our mental resilience. So, we warmly welcome you and invite you to listen.

SPK_2: We invite you warmly. We'll start by asking what inner strength is.

SPK_1: Inner strength, as we can metaphorically call mental resilience, is the ability of each of us to cope with difficulties and with our stress. We can compare it to the skill of jumping on a trampoline, for example. We fall down, but if we have resources within us, we bounce back, and the trampoline mat propels us upwards. If we lack these resources, we might fall and just lie there. More visually, we can say it's like a spring. As a child, I had a colorful, stretchable spring toy. We stretch our abilities to react to difficult situations. And mental resilience is about what happens when we let go of that spring—will it return to its previous shape, or will it stop? If it returns, it means we have significant resources within us and our resilience is well-developed.

SPK_2: Can you tell us, since we have two concepts, resilience and resiliency, how do they differ?



SPK_1: Yes, these are two concepts that are often used interchangeably, but some scientists distinguish between them, saying that inner strength, our mental resilience, is the ability to cope with difficulties. Resiliency, however, goes a step further, as it is the ability to rebuild one's resources and move on after a difficult situation. That's how they differ. We often confine ourselves to the first pool, mental resilience, because in difficult situations, we often throw ourselves into a whirlwind of work, for example, saying that this work allows us not to think and to function well. But there comes a moment...

SPK_2: We shut down feelings and emotions.

SPK_1: But those feelings and emotions will eventually reach such a high level that they will have to spill out somewhere, as they say, with the bathwater and the baby. And often, because of the proverbial misplaced spoon, a huge argument breaks out. This is caused precisely by what has been boiling inside us for a long time. So it's worth remembering that it's worth striving for resiliency, if we stick to the terminology correctly, and after every difficult moment, give ourselves time to be able to return to ourselves, rebuild our resources of strength, and only then move on.

SPK_2: Is this resiliency a kind of mental resilience?

SPK_1: It is mental resilience with an added element. The element of giving ourselves time after a difficult situation to rebuild our strength and resources before re-engaging with life.

SPK_2: So it's more.

SPK_1: It's more, yes, it's like a step further.

SPK_2: I remember. Where do we get it from? Are we born with this ability, or can we acquire it? Where does it come from?

SPK_1: The good news is that mental resilience is a skill that can be acquired and learned. Of course, our genes and character have some influence, because each of us is different, each grew up in a different environment, and each has had different life experiences that have shaped them differently. Nevertheless, resilience is something we can learn, so if we are currently having a hard time and difficult situations are overwhelming us, by applying a few methods, we can raise our level of stress resistance.

SPK_2: So let's move on to how to develop this resiliency, since resiliency is what we need.

SPK_1: There are several methods, really. And just as we talked about professional burnout, we said to start with self-awareness and self-reflection, and it will be similar here. It's worth considering and answering the question: how do I react to difficulties? Do I panic? Do I blame myself for failures? Or do I get a power boost in difficult situations and work much better and more effectively, and then adjust my strategies accordingly? If we give up easily,



then we are in the lower pool, so it's worth strengthening ourselves from the basics. As we've already mentioned, even with burnout, starting with building a support system—surrounding ourselves with people who will support us, give us positive feedback and energy, or suggest solutions when we can't see them in a given situation. This will involve reducing stress, which we've also talked a bit about.

SPK_1: Do you have any simple, de-stressing exercises that come to mind?

SPK_2: It depends on the level, but movement, as we mentioned earlier, is super universal and good for everything. Spending time with kind people with whom you can talk things out and say everything that's on your mind. And breathing, too. We will attach some methods for coping and building this resiliency under this podcast.

SPK_1: Yes, some short tips on what can be done. I wanted to mention one exercise that I really like and which is the opposite of what I talked about in the previous podcast, where I encouraged writing down positive things daily, your accomplishments from that day. But in a difficult situation, you can also reverse this a bit and do it this way: if you're having a bad day and have no one to talk to—because talking and having another person usually gives us the best results and a reflection of our thoughts—you can take a piece of paper, write down everything bad that happened to you, thus cleaning out your mind a bit. Then destroy that paper—I'm not saying burn it, just tearing it up and throwing it away is enough. You don't have to resort to drastic methods like burning it with a candle or tying it with red ribbons. The very act of getting those thoughts out of you will give you relaxation, and the symbolic act of tearing and throwing it away is also a way of cutting yourself off from the problem.

SPK_2: Great. And regarding stress, when we are already stressed and haven't taken care beforehand to come with enough energy, and the stress gets to us, what should we do then?

SPK_1: Well, we can't avoid stress because it affects us everywhere. The only thing we can do is work on it, and as we said earlier, the key here will be to focus a bit on the body, that is, paying attention to our basic needs—let's call them biological, following Maslow's pyramid—which means ensuring we get enough sleep and proper nutrition. This means not just sugar to boost our energy for a moment, but also taking care of ourselves in this regard by eating food that serves us internally, which includes vitamins, plants, and other things, also according to our preferences, because everyone is different here. Nevertheless, the pool of healthy eating exists and is easy to refer to. And, of course, movement, which was also mentioned.

SPK_2: I generally think that a healthy, balanced lifestyle, where we genuinely care for our physical activity, what we eat, and our environment—who we are with, where we are, the places we spend time in—so, approaching the matter holistically, we take care of ourselves and the entirety of our lives. And if we don't find this at work, we must find a space for it outside of work.



SPK_1: That's partly true, but we also need to find a resource at work that will allow us to calm down in a given difficult situation, because we are not able to... I don't know, you walk into a classroom and there's a conflict between two students. This is a stressful situation for the teacher and for the rest of the class. We can't just put it aside and leave, saying, "Oh, after school I'll go out, disconnect, relax, and everything will be beautiful." We must react and react appropriately here. This profession unfortunately has the specific characteristic that there will be many stressful situations, and here we might be afraid for the students, or afraid of whether we will resolve the conflict correctly. Here, we must have a resource of trust and faith in ourselves and our abilities and skills, and also the ability to make quick decisions and act on them. There are moments in our lives when, unfortunately, it's not possible to analyze everything, examine every side, and only then make a decision. There are such...

SPK_2: ...moments, difficult moments, and how to do it, that is the...

SPK_1: Yes, you have to make a decision, believing that it is the best decision you can make at that moment with your current resources. You also need to have some understanding for yourself and remember that a teacher is not a robot. They are not omniscient, nor are they artificial intelligence that has an answer, whether true or false. They are just a human being and they also have their resources, their own life, and they enter the classroom filled with all of this; they don't switch it off. So, the reaction often depends on what their day is like, what they have encountered, what their attitude is. I think that this attitude and positive thinking about oneself and one's abilities will also be key for mental resilience. We talked a bit about the self-fulfilling prophecy in the previous episode, but it's worth remembering that our beliefs about ourselves and the world affect how others perceive us. And if we believe that we are an agentic person, that we have the ability to act, to do something, or to resolve a given situation, then we enter the classroom with a completely different attitude than when we doubt ourselves and are having a weaker day. There was a study, I don't remember the name of the American psychologist at the moment, about how even our body posture conveys how we feel and what state we are in. She asked several students to perform certain so-called power gestures, such as sitting up straight with legs crossed, either on the desk or on themselves, and she studied how people observing from the outside perceived the person who looked like that. Whether it has an impact or not, that people from the outside perceive us differently, I think is very easy to see because by looking at another person, we can sense whether they are self-confident or not. But what was interesting was that depending on how our body was positioned, the person who was the active element of this study, let's call them that, also perceived themselves differently.

SPK_2: Yes, that's it. It's also partly what NLP talks about, that there is no separation. Everything is together; we cannot smile and feel sad. If we feel that way internally, the smile itself, straightening our body, changes our mood. And vice versa, if we hunch over, bend our neck and walk with a sad posture, that's how we will feel. So, let's straighten up, smile, and the rest will follow.



SPK_1: Yes, and let's remember that we are indeed an organism connected to itself, that it's not just the body, just the psyche, just my mood, but we form a whole.

SPK_2: Let's talk about good practices, perhaps?

SPK_1: Mhm.

SPK_2: Mentioning Norway.

SPK_1: Before Norway, I'll tell you about one more thing. If we're talking about the mental resilience of a teacher in the context of a Polish school, it's worth realizing that there are four key elements, some of which we've mentioned but haven't singled out, that influence it. This is our personal sphere, our sense of self that we just talked about. It's a social matter, meaning whether we have a social support system, whether we have friends, loved ones, people with whom we can talk even at school in a difficult situation and make it easier for ourselves. It is also a matter of space, which we think little about in Polish schools, or rather, I am increasingly coming across offers for schools and educational institutions that propose ergonomic solutions for classrooms and corridors, something that was not previously available in our schools. And let's agree, I think that for some time, at the level of public schools, this will be difficult to implement due to the financial resources of the institutions, but it is extremely important. And the last context that affects the resilience of teachers, but is extremely significant because it somewhat takes away their sense of agency, is our legislation, our law, that is, the changing curriculum frameworks. Or in recent years, the subjects that are introduced or removed with the change of government; this is something that causes great uncertainty. Because we don't really know if, teaching one subject one year, we will have a job the next year, or if we will be looking for other things, so all this affects the teacher's resilience. And how can we ensure that they feel better? You mentioned Norway here. Yes, we very often refer to Norwegian education as a good vision for the future. I think this is due to many factors. I wanted to tell you about one example, a job shadowing, where Polish teachers went and visited preschool facilities, the primary school stage, and secondary school, and they identified four things that were key for them. And these stood somewhat in contradiction to what is happening in our schools. Firstly, it was this space that we also mentioned here, with an emphasis on the fact that in Norway, every teacher in the school has their own place. It's not so beautiful that everyone has their own separate office and classroom, because that would probably be difficult in terms of space and management, but everyone has their own little corner where they at least have their own desk. A locker where they can leave their things, and this place is theirs alone, and they can go there at any time, whether to prepare for classes if they have a free period during lessons, or after lessons, or even to sit and rest or do something. I think this is something that is lacking in our schools, because of course we have our teachers' rooms, but that is a common space. And there is no such place where I know that this is my desk and if I put my coffee cup there in the morning, I will come back and the coffee will still be there. So I think this has a much greater impact on well-being, but also on self-confidence, that it has a huge



influence on teachers and is a weighty aspect worth thinking about if we are talking about Polish schools. The second thing they emphasized was that in Norway, teachers have regular meetings. Most often, they are on a weekly basis, where the whole team meets and they can exchange comments on an ongoing basis about classes, about students, about situations that are already happening at school or between them. We in Poland do not have this custom; we have our pedagogical council meetings a few times a year, but that is too infrequent.

SPK_2: Formal and also with different goals.

SPK_1: Exactly. However, I think it significantly increases the comfort of cooperation if we go to any job and know that we have a well-integrated team there, that we have people we know, people who think similarly to us, who can advise us. Well, as we mentioned earlier, in Poland, even at this stage of working in several schools, getting integrated and making friends can be difficult, especially since those few free minutes between classes are most often spent changing the register—if a traditional one is still used in the school, because nowadays they are increasingly electronic—but also on supervising students, so our time for ourselves disappears. What else was so interesting? The approach to preparing for the teaching profession. The fact that in Poland, we concentrate very much on the subject we will be teaching and add elements of pedagogy and practical exercises in schools or internships to it. In Norway, the approach is from the other side; first, they concentrate on how to work with...

SPK_2: ...children, building relationships.

SPK_1: Exactly, but also the skills of taking care of one's own pedagogical and psychological knowledge, and only then comes the subject. And I think, looking at the world we live in, at the dynamics of our development, where information can be found everywhere and every child, even a small one, can now open... the last few years have brought us enormous development in this area. There is an overabundance of this information everywhere; a child no longer has to, does not acquire knowledge like in our times...

SPK_2: ...learn by heart.

SPK_1: No, we don't have to learn by heart, and I think the challenge is to be able to find that information, for one, and then to verify it. And this will be... this is the task for which, in my opinion, the Polish school is not prepared, but must grow into, because in the world we live in, it is precisely the verification of information and its use that will be the key aspect, not just cramming this knowledge into our students' heads. What else could be inspiring? Regarding this space, we've already said a bit about each teacher having their own place, but these places, along with a well-equipped kitchenette, are most often open to teachers all the time, so at any moment you can go there and do something. We don't run to the teachers' room or, as in the old days, send a student to make us tea; we can just go to such a



kitchenette and use it. I think that it is the dream of every teacher to enter the school in the morning, go to their own private desk, take out materials from it instead of carrying huge bags from home, make their own coffee in their own cup that is lying there. To prepare like this and only then enter the classroom. And may this change come one day.

SPK_2: Great, we still have many things to do.

SPK_1: I think so, that education is an area that is always evolving and will continue to develop. And that's why the teacher's resilience is so immensely important, because in this dynamically changing world, the teacher must keep up. Our system, our school, does not keep up with this, but the teacher must strive for it, and very often, on their own.

SPK_2: We have to search on our own, seek information, solutions, good practices. So we invite you to look at the materials that you will find in the project, and also the practices that we will attach under the podcast. You can also visit the Understanding Foundation's website, where there are several projects concerning mental resilience for teachers and materials.

SPK_1: Yes. There are materials for both preschool and school levels, so we cordially invite you to our free platform. I think we will also post a link under the podcast if possible.

SPK_2: Thank you.



2. Oasis of Calm - Well-being for teachers

SPK_1: Today's podcast is titled "Oasis of Calm. How to care for a teacher's mental well-being."

SPK_2: And today we will talk about a topic that concerns every teacher: our mental well-being. A teacher's job is quite specific because on the one hand, it guarantees great satisfaction, but it also brings us enormous stress, pressure, and great responsibility. And more and more teachers are talking about professional burnout, about being affected by a lack of motivation and fatigue, or even depression. Therefore, in this episode, we will look at how we can take care of our mental health, whether there are any effective relaxation methods, and how we can avoid difficult situations on a daily basis.

SPK_1: Great. Tell us, where did the topic of burnout among teachers come from?

SPK_2: The topic of burnout emerged, among other reasons, because recently, in 2023, one of the largest studies on this target group—teachers—was conducted in Poland. It was conducted by Dr. Mateusz Paliga from the Institute of Psychology at the University of Silesia, together with the company Librus. The mental state of Polish teachers was studied there. 7,500 teachers took part, and the results are quite alarming. This is because the study showed that among Polish teachers, as many as 67.5% of the respondents experience a high level of exhaustion. Additionally, over 57% of teachers report a sense of meaninglessness in their work, and over 52% state that they experience daily stress and psychosomatic symptoms of stress, such as sleep problems, worrying, anxiety episodes, or sudden tensions and outbursts. These results show... well, I think rather alarming data, because the mental state of each of us affects our daily functioning, not only privately but also professionally, so it also affects the level of education in our country.

SPK_1: It would seem that a teacher's job is not such a stressful one. What are the sources of stress for teachers? Because that's quite interesting.

SPK_2: I think there are many sources, and they are of various kinds. We can divide them into three groups: individual, interpersonal, and also social or organizational factors. And maybe we'll start with the theoretically simplest ones, although I don't think there's a single simple factor here—that is, individual factors. These would be things like our personality traits. It could be the level of our self-esteem as a person. It could be the attitude we display in life, whether passive or open. It could be our approach to how we react in difficult situations—do we avoid them, or do we get a power boost, tense up, and do everything perfectly? It could also be poor emotional regulation, our bad habits, our striving for



perfectionism, for example, or on the other hand, leaving everything to the last minute—the famous procrastination. It could be our beliefs, for example, that every teacher would like to be liked by everyone, but it's not possible for every student they meet to be a huge fan of theirs, and this is quite a significant stress factor. I think for each of us, we can include social expectations here. On the one hand, we have the depreciation of the teaching profession, because if we look at how people think about this profession, we most often hear that a teacher is someone who goes to work for a few hours a week, doesn't have to do much there, has free winter and summer holidays. We don't consider that this teacher also has to grade tests, prepare lessons, and undergo further training after hours, most often at their own expense because the school doesn't finance it. And on the other hand, as parents, we also have quite high expectations, because we expect a teacher to be a person of high ethics, an outstanding specialist in their field, and also a psychologist who, from a group of 100 children in a class, will be able to identify and single out every child who has problems and address them. So, there are an awful lot of these expectations and categories here.

SPK_1: These relationships with parents are also very stressful, I think.

SPK_2: Very, and not just with parents. If we are talking about parents, I think we are increasingly encountering a somewhat demanding attitude, and we are slowly starting to approach the teacher as a client, in a way, presenting them with a series of our expectations of what they have to fulfill, not focusing on the fact that our child is not the only person they have to take care of, but that they have many, many more students under their care. But if we're on the topic of relationships, I think that the mutual relationships within the teaching staff at the school are also very stressful. This is because the Polish school does not really foster the building of good relationships, as a teacher usually has neither their own space in most cases—not every teacher has their own classroom, their own desk, their own locker where they can leave their things—nor a place during the 6-7 lessons they conduct during the day to go and rest. During breaks, they have duties where they must supervise children between classes, so there is no space to sit down and quiet down. And often, teachers now work in more than one school, especially subject teachers, to complete their full-time hours in 2-3 institutions. So there is also this difficulty in building relationships within the team, because if you work in 3 different places during the week, you don't have a chance to get into and integrate with that team. So no, it's not an easy job, nor as pleasant as it might seem on the surface.

SPK_1: Please, what are the symptoms of burnout? How can teachers recognize it and know whether they are burned out, or if it's just fatigue, or if something is wrong with them?

SPK_2: If we feel tired for a long period of time, have no energy, and feel less and less motivated, if we start to isolate ourselves, for example, meaning we have less desire to interact with other people not only on a professional but also on a private level, this is a red flag to stop, look, and reflect on what is happening. The most common element is this energy I started with. If we lose all our enthusiasm, all our energy and desire to work, if we



start to treat our work as a huge chore and have to force ourselves to go to it, we feel overwhelmed by the excess of information, the excess of expectations from all sides, and if we start to perceive other people negatively—whether it's the teaching staff, the students, or even our loved ones outside of school—it can manifest as indifference and distancing, or it can manifest in us reacting very nervously to anything, words or things, that don't go our way in the long run. This is not just a matter of a bad mood, but it indicates that something bad is happening. Here, factors such as a lack of satisfaction from work, a lack of contentment with what we do and how we do it, also often come into play. Not all of us are perfectionists, so the moment we start to score ourselves negatively for everything we've done is another indicator that something is not right. And how can we recognize it? We talked about those studies with those huge groups, over 60% of people who feel unwell. We can also recognize it by how we feel physically in our bodies, meaning we can have problems with sleep, we can worry, we can have episodes of anxiety, we can feel tense and tired. These physical symptoms translate into chronic fatigue, headaches, insomnia or stomach problems, stomach aches, frequent colds. We've already talked about this withdrawal and changes in behavior. All these symptoms can lead to a point where we start to feel worthless, we have no goals, we don't want to do anything, and even if we want to, we assume we won't be able to, so we don't take action. We start to feel an inner emptiness, which, if not addressed, can even lead to depression. And depression, unfortunately, is already a disorder that requires specific treatment.

SPK_1: At this point, one should seek advice.

SPK_2: From a specialist. Besides, with a strong sense of burnout, this is also recommended, especially since burnout as long-term stress in the workplace was entered into the classification of diseases in January 2022. If I'm translating it correctly, its symbol is ICD-11.

SPK_1: Yes, as a fun fact, last year, taking leave from work due to depression was one of the leading reasons why people left their jobs and were absent from work, and teachers were a fairly large group that took leave for this reason. So you can see how it's happening. But there is a chance, so we also want to talk about how we can take care of ourselves and how teachers can care for their well-being, their stress, so as not to overwork themselves and to prevent burnout from happening.

SPK_2: Well, as we were saying, we have to start with self-insight, because our environment, whether at school or in private, or our loved ones, can point out that something is wrong with us. But unfortunately, it is the task of each of us to stop, look, and reflect on how much this issue already affects me and is important to me. How can a teacher check? If we're talking about this self-analysis, it's worth asking ourselves questions like: do I feel constant fatigue and lack of energy or rest? Does my work exhaust me physically and emotionally? Do I feel empathy or enthusiasm at the thought of going to school, or is it easy for me to face another day at work? Do I feel distanced and detached from my students? Are they still close and important to me, and can I interact with them and have warm contacts?



Do I treat my students, colleagues, or even my loved ones as objects, or are they still people to me? Do I feel a loss of enthusiasm at the thought of teaching? Let's remember that teaching is a highly mission-driven profession, and a lack of that faith and desire significantly affects the results it brings. What else can we reflect on? Whether we have an impact on our own lives, on the lives of our students, whether we feel failure, or if a light of success and satisfaction shines for us somewhere. Do we feel confident in ourselves as a person, as a teacher? Do we believe in our abilities to convey knowledge and work with people? Or is our sense of satisfaction and contentment significantly decreasing? If we answer most of these questions negatively, then I think it's a moment when it's worth considering going to a specialist and talking about it. There are a number of standardized tests that can be found and done independently online to check your level. Nevertheless, when things are this bad, I think it's the moment to see a specialist. And how can we work on ourselves to feel better? I think it's worth starting with self-care and remembering that our head, our brain, and our body are a single unit. We often focus on certain psychological solutions or certain physical solutions, but here it's worth thinking that our mental well-being is really a balance of challenges against our resources, both physical and psychological. And that we can also work on certain things through the body. For example, if we feel bad and very discouraged, and we go for a few-minute walk in nature, without headphones in our ears—we're just talking about going out and looking around—we already achieve a certain state of calm. Nature is very calming, and movement also quiets us down. I'm not talking about long-distance marathon running; we're talking about a gentle walk or things we can do right away, in this moment—I get up, I go out, I walk, I don't have to prepare for it. Anything that relaxes our body, like yoga... it sounds daunting, but we can just get up in the morning and stretch 2-3 times, which will also cause our blood to circulate differently in our body, and we will have more energy and enter the day with a different attitude. Physical activity, I think, will be key, the simplest factor that each of us can introduce to a small extent at any time, even during lessons. Because, really, if we take a walk during that break—if we don't have the opportunity to leave the school, but we walk down the corridor or stand by the window and look out, if we have such an opportunity, at some green space—research shows that this already relaxes us and affects our well-being. But there's a lot about the body here, and the mind and our attitude are also important. Because if we start with the assumption that nothing will work out anyway, nothing will come of it, and there's no point in trying because nothing will change, it's a self-fulfilling prophecy, and then truly nothing will change. Let's remember that our brain is an extraordinary organ that does not distinguish reality from what we think. So if I, for example, tell you not to think about a blue cup right now, the first thing you will think about will be precisely a blue cup. If I say you have a fever, even if you don't, you will start to show symptoms of illness. That's how our brain works, and it's worth being aware of this to be able to work on ourselves. And how can we relax our mind? Monika, maybe you?

SPK_1: The mind... well, there are many methods here, also starting with mindfulness and meditation. There is a lot of material on this, something that will put us in a good mood or



give us an optimistic approach to life. And also breathing exercises that calm and relax us, helping us to get rid of that stress. But also some small pleasures, hobbies, anything we can find where we can focus our attention, relax, find ourselves. And let's surround ourselves with things and people that do us good, that are a good influence, positive. Let's do things that give us pleasure, where we feel good. An evening bath, hot water, something small to reward ourselves for the whole day's work. Also, looking at the good things we did, what we learned, what the day gave us, and seeing the positive things in our work as a teacher and at home around us gives us a completely different approach to reality. So, small things add up to big changes.

SPK_2: Exactly. So, I might quickly add, from my own experience, a few things that my teacher friends do during their workday to feel better. For example, Kasia, who teaches mathematics, starts every day with a 5-minute stretch. At school, upon entering the classroom, she goes in a minute before the students and does a series of short breaths. She says it calms her down, quiets her, grounds her in the place, and it's much easier for her to start each lesson then. Wojtek, for example, doesn't relax before work because he doesn't have time; he's on the run. However, the journey from school to home is very important to him; he always tries to separate his professional life from his private life. Therefore, he rides his bike to work or, if he has more time, he walks, just to treat the way back as a point of closing his professional work, switching it off, and focusing on his loved ones, himself, and his family. Aldona finds great relaxation in scents. She can't light candles at school because she works in a special needs school and it's a big risk. She also doesn't keep such things in the classroom, fearing for the students' safety. But to give herself that set of relaxation, she uses her favorite perfume and sprays her wrist, and upon entering the classroom, she smells it. This is a different side of sensory relaxation, let's call it aromatherapy, because we most often use essential oils for this, but that favorite scent always puts her in a good mood. That's why she says it's something she can do without much effort, and she uses it.

SPK_1: Everyone has to find their own ways—what gives us pleasure, what relaxes us, where we find ourselves accordingly. So for some, yoga, breathing, and meditation are great; for others, reading a book, watching a movie, going out with friends for coffee, a meeting, a walk in the park. Everyone finds something for themselves.

SPK_2: Exactly. And here you touched on another important thing, because we've already started to talk about it between the lines, but the ability to close that stage of work and move on to time for oneself is very important in a teacher's job. I think that teaching is one of those professions where this is extremely difficult, because we inevitably bring that work home with us. Because we always have the obligation to prepare for the next lesson, prepare some materials, or we have some training courses, or we have tests to grade. Nevertheless, it is worth introducing a habit into your life of separating yourself, that I'm leaving work, I find something that allows me to disconnect from work for some time, and I devote this time to myself, to my family, and to my hobby. Why? What gives me pleasure? And if I have to go back to that work, it's for a limited time, for example, I assume that I will



work an extra hour, an hour and a half at home at one go, for example, when my children go to sleep. I finish the tasks, close them, and also do something that is pleasant for me, like the bath you mentioned. And I end the day positively disposed. An exercise that I always recommend—I also recommended it to students in school, and which is very simple, though not always liked by children, I'm speaking from the example of my daughter, with whom I failed to implement this—is what you said, that positive attitude, to sit down at the end of the day and reflect. And a magical habit for me is to write down 3 to 5 good things that happened to me today, that I succeeded in, what I did that I am happy about. This shifts our brain to positive thinking and to looking for positive results. We concentrate on what is good. This gives us more power, more energy, but it also sets us up positively for future tasks, because we feel our sense of agency and satisfaction.

SPK_1: Great. Thank you very much for this podcast and for the many interesting pieces of information and methods. Look for your own ways, and see you at the next podcast.

SPK_2: Exactly. Have a positive and successful day, everyone.



Podcasts for teachers working in multicultural classrooms

**Transcripts of podcasts from Poland,
prepared by Mikolaj Rej Foundation for the Promotion of Polish Culture and
Language**

**Interview: The story of a migrant mother in a Polish school: An interview with
Raisa Kirylovska**

**Description: In this interview we get to know the story of Raisa Kirylovska, a
mother from Moldova who came to Poland with her children 12 years ago. She
shares her personal experiences and valuable advice on integrating into a new
country and the Polish education system. Raisa talks about the initial
difficulties, the language barrier, as well as her own crisis and depression.
However, she emphasises the crucial role of a supportive environment -
teachers, neighbours and friends. She shares the successful language
immersion method that helped her son, and advises other migrant mums to be
brave enough to ask for help and come up with initiatives. This is an inspiring
story about overcoming challenges, the power of community and how to find a
common language, for example through cooking workshops, building bridges
between cultures.**



Interview with Raisa Kirylovska

Interview with Raisa Kirylovska

SPK_1: Hello. Today we welcome Raisa Kirylovska, who will share her insights with us on what it's like to be a foreign mother in a Polish school and how to care for the development and education of one's children. Hello, Raisa.

SPK_2: Hello. A warm welcome to you.

SPK_1: Please, introduce yourself, tell us something about yourself, where you come from, which of your children we will be talking about, and how long you have been in Poland.

SPK_2: I came from Moldova, and I am of Gagauz nationality. It's a place that very few people have heard of. It is an autonomous region in Moldova called Gagauzia, and that's where we come from. The largest Association of Poles in Moldova is located in this region. It's called the "Poles of Budjak" Association, and our family came from that association to Poland in 2013, already holding a Pole's Card. We came with two children.

SPK_1: 10 years... it's already been 12 years. You've been here?.

SPK_2: Yes, we have been in Poland for 8 years.

SPK_1: How old are the children now?.

SPK_2: Now my daughter is 29, and my son is 22.

SPK_1: They are adults now.

SPK_2: Yes, I think so. But when they came to Poland, my son went into the sixth... wait a moment... into the fifth grade of primary school, and my daughter into the first grade of high school.

SPK_1: And what were those beginnings like?. Did they speak Polish, or did they have to cope with a completely new educational reality in a new place that was foreign to them?.

SPK_2: Yes, despite everything, the children had very high academic results, and when I had their documents and certificates translated, every principal and teacher was delighted, in the sense that the children had their education at such a good, high level, speaking of our country. But here in Poland, the children arrived after taking a short course at our association, where two teachers would come. My daughter attended one, and my son attended the other teacher's classes at the association. One could say that the children had heard the Polish language a little, but as for speaking it, certainly no one spoke it, not even me, who attended those classes much more than the children. But since I had to handle



various matters, the situation forced me, and I started speaking first. However, my son was the first to pick up the Polish language here in Poland. We had this idea to arrive for the entire month of August before the school year started, so the children would be in Poland and could absorb the Polish atmosphere. It was the only thing I could do, so I did it. And as soon as we rented an apartment....

To this day, I can tell you that many people have been very supportive in every kind of situation I've had, but it was especially important at the beginning. Our neighbor and the lady from whom we rented the apartment immediately told us that there was a community center on the estate, and my son went there. He attended the community center for about two weeks in August, where the children had activities, and teachers organized various programs for them, like trips to the cinema or the swimming pool. And thanks to the fact that he was younger and was among these children every day, he picked up the Polish language very quickly.

SPK_1: Additionally, did this method of immersing the child in a Polish environment before the formal start of the school year work out?. Would you recommend it to other parents?.

SPK_2: I recommend it to every parent, whatever their situation may be, to leave their child in a Polish environment. At the beginning, the child might have a very difficult, short period, but later it helps a lot. I am a witness to this, and I confirm that this is one of the best methods one could think of.

SPK_1: Did it also work in your daughter's case?.

SPK_2: My daughter didn't have such an opportunity because the program I'm talking about was for younger children, and my daughter was older, which made it more difficult. The situation with my daughter was that she went to the first grade of high school, and she was silent for a very long time. Firstly, she was ashamed of speaking incorrectly, and the child was used to getting good grades in school. She was used to success and was a perfectionist to some extent. On top of that, she had another girl in her class, also from Moldova, who had arrived a bit earlier, and they sat together. The teacher, the class tutor, did a very good thing by asking them not to sit next to each other. They knew it would help my daughter, but it was only for a moment, because later it creates a very, very bad situation. Honestly, I observe more mothers now who come here for various reasons. I know that some plan to leave again, which is why they don't start learning Polish right away. But in my opinion, whether the family stays for a year or just for a short while, giving the child the opportunity to learn Polish immediately is the best thing you can do. They are children, and children feel good when they can speak and can say something.

SPK_1: I'm glad to hear that, because it seems to me that regardless of what happens to us in a month, two months, or a year, by entering a new linguistic and cultural reality, we are



entering a realm of richness. It's something that is new and has value, regardless of how long we will benefit from it.

SPK_2: Definitely, definitely.

SPK_1: Returning to your own country, but returning with a souvenir like the knowledge of a language and culture, even if it's a very happy return, you can't say it's associated with a loss because "I wasted time learning Polish". "I wasted time getting to know Polish culture."

SPK_2: Yes, I see that, well, firstly, we all know that the more languages a person has in their memory, the richer they are, right?. But on the other hand, they are more confident. I want to say this to every parent who will hear us: if you want your child to be bold and confident in anything else, first let them, while they are here in this country, or maybe somewhere else if someone else is listening, have that initial connection with the language. Then they will have the confidence for something else and they will have success. It's an important thing.

SPK_1: It's a mechanism that emboldens us and gives us strength. I would like to focus for a moment on the foreign mother in the Polish education system, that is, on you 12 years ago. Because the children went to school, but the mother also went to school with them. It was different.

SPK_2: Thank you so much for asking.

SPK_1: What problems did you have?. How did you cope with those difficulties and barriers?. Today you speak Polish fluently, but you also say that 12 years ago it wasn't like that.

SPK_2: There was immense stress, and I was afraid of everything. I had to manage my life while understanding almost nothing about how this world in Poland works, and on top of that, there was the responsibility for the children. To say it was fear is to say nothing at all. I'll talk about myself; I don't know about others. After the first year, when I thought I more or less understood what life was about here, I fell into such a deep depression that I didn't even realize I was depressed. It was terribly difficult for me to leave the house. I only wore black; I had one pair of jeans for all occasions. I was always in those jeans; I didn't even use cosmetics. Really, mothers experience a different kind of stress, not like children's, but it's intense, maybe more intense, I won't compare, but it's very hard. And the most powerful support for mothers comes from other mothers, of course—mothers in schools. There are mothers like that in your child's class, teachers, class tutors, counselors, and neighbors among whom you live are very important. I don't know how it is for others, but if you rent an apartment in a block, the situation will surely be more difficult. We rented an attic in a private house. And it was such that you know your neighbors.

SPK_1: Yes.



SPK_2: Yes, the extent to which the community supported us... I am so grateful to every person I have met in my life in Poland; everyone helped so, so much.

SPK_1: So you are highlighting the very important role of a supportive environment and saying that it can be very different people—both the local community in the sense of where you live, but also the local community in the sense of the school your child attends. Was the support you received from teachers spontaneous, or were the teachers obliged to provide that support?.

SPK_2: God forbid, what obligation?. Every single person did what they could. So if we're talking about the curriculum the children have in school, both in my daughter's and my son's case, in different schools, everyone did everything they possibly could on their own initiative. I must emphasize this because this was 12 years ago. Can you imagine how few foreigners there were here?. We were such an exception that sometimes they didn't know how to approach the topic. And the second thing, from a perspective of... how to say it?. For mothers, today I can speak about it calmly, for mothers for whom it is very difficult to ask for help in their terrible, minimal Polish, one of the most important things is to talk about what help you need. Because the environment, no matter how nice, good, or open it is, even if it's closed, it cannot read minds. There's no such option. The more mothers and fathers—because we're talking about mothers here as I'm speaking for myself, but fathers too—the more opportunity there is, it's worth trying to talk and step out of that discomfort zone and say, "Listen, do you know how I can look for this and that?" or "Do you know where I can find information about this and that?". Or "Do you know anything at all?". I don't know, like a bus schedule, you know nothing, right? Because you know absolutely nothing, you're at zero. And I know, I know that up to a certain point it's a huge difficulty, but the more parents, mothers, and children, bit by bit, millimeter by millimeter, show by their own example that we do what we can today, the more they will reach out to the community, to the school, to the teachers with questions. Of course, you can also use the internet, but contact with a person always opens the heart. And then a kind of word-of-mouth network starts, where one person thinks, then asks another, then a third person approaches you, then a fourth gives you a tip. Then another person who has already been through it is found. And a supportive circle is formed, and the next step, and the one after that, doesn't seem so difficult anymore.

SPK_1: I understand.

SPK_2: A revolution in how you proceed, mhm.

SPK_1: Yes, yes, I understand. I understand that from your story, one can draw the conclusion that a migrant mother must take the initiative. That the community around her is ready to help, but you have to inform people what kind of help you need, to take the initiative, although it may be difficult if you don't speak Polish well. But you can count on people; it worked out, you know this. And if you were to recommend any actions to other



new migrant mothers, the first thing would probably be what you said. Take the initiative, ask questions, step out of your comfort zone. People want to help you, but they don't read your mind. What else would be your recommendation?. How to find your way in Poland, in a Polish school?.

SPK_2: To find your way in Poland and in a Polish school, to find your way as parents, as a family, because we came as a family. Remember that you are a foreigner and try to have as much additional information as possible about the country you live in—what their customs are, what the traditions are, what people talk about, what days they celebrate, where they go for what. For some, church is the most important; for others, there are specific moments that are certainly important in every country. When a person comes to another country, it's like that. So, while remembering that you are a foreigner, don't create an even greater distance from it; try to get closer to the topics that connect us. In fact, I can now talk a bit about your program, right?. That today I am conducting culinary workshops. Do you know why?. Because there are a million topics that connect people, and everything happens during cooking. Yes, yes, and even the system, the cooking, even the dishes are very similar, and there are many such topics in life. I'm talking about cooking briefly now, but there are many such topics, and people have enough topics that divide them. And just as a child will watch you and see that you can find at least one common topic with, I don't know, a neighbor or a teacher, or anyone you communicate with—and there are many common topics. Then, watching this, the child will not only listen to what you say to them but will look at your example, that you are doing it, and they will repeat it with other children.

SPK_1: Yes, I am happy that you are talking about your idea for cooking workshops, during which you present the cooking methods and dishes of your culture, because it seems to me that this is a fantastic idea. And it's good that you are raising this topic; it is very interesting, and it also shows exactly how you can implement your own initiative when you are a migrant. It is an opportunity to truly present your culture in a rather universal way. The table, in fact, unites people in many cultures. You also reached for other ways of showing your culture, because you approached and continue to approach Polish culture with great respect, and you talk about it. "I feel like a foreigner here.". We sometimes say that these are our guests, and we also expect this respect for our customs and culture. And this is a very good way. But we are also interested in your culture. Culinary workshops are one way of presenting that culture. Did you also reach for other ways?.

SPK_2: Yes, I have. I can talk a lot about the methods, I don't know how much time we have. I have been to pedagogical-psychological clinics with my children, and that helped us a lot too, because they conducted assessments there, and the children had additional Polish language lessons. My son even had a few speech therapy lessons. After that, the children received an opinion from the clinic. And the school had these opinions for my children for their exams. One child had the tasks explained in more detail—that is, a regular child had the tasks described in the Polish way, while my child had a broader description of what to do—and every child had the right to use a dictionary during exams. My son in sixth grade



and my daughter during her high school exams, because of course, a child's vocabulary wasn't the same as a Polish child's. And later, for any "green schools" or sports schools, my son's team was very supportive because he played football, and his class tutor also supported him on trips to Radziszów. The PE teacher and my daughter had support from the school, from teachers who, on their own initiative, gave her extra lessons in various subjects. She had them in chemistry, in addition to what the school provided. I'm talking about what was extra, not just what the school training provided, but teachers gave additional lessons. I had extra meetings with several teachers, besides the usual parent-teacher meetings. When the class tutor meets and talks with the parents of the whole class, I also had separate meetings like that. A very good method, which is also simple but obvious, is when children play on the street and have games like football, just normal conversations like kids on a playground. Meeting the parents of these children, because when a child sees you meeting with that parent, or that dad talking to that other dad... you know, we even had a meeting by chance that looked negative at first, because you know, boys will be boys, life is life, things happen. And later, the boy's father and my son's father, who is my husband, after they had settled the issue, they talked about work because my husband was looking for a job, and the other man recommended him, saying, "I'll ask here, I'll ask there." I could talk about this a lot.

SPK_1: Yes, but you've listed several forms of support that you remember, which concerned you, your children, and the whole family, including your husband looking for a job. And these forms of support were not always institutional, because some were at school, and some were in the community outside of school. It seems to me that each of these supporting activities is indeed worth talking about and, above all, keeping in mind. And how is it now? You have adult children. How do they feel?.

SPK_2: Now, now the adult children speak Polish very well, and sometimes... they don't complain anymore, because I remember after 3 or 4 years, someone was talking to my child and said, "Mom, how can you still have that accent?". Meaning, they didn't understand.

SPK_1: Yes, yes, they had very high expectations of you. How is it in your family with preserving what is your culture, what is part of your identity?. Living here in Krakow, living in Poland, do you take care of that?.

SPK_2: We celebrate some of our holidays together with the Polish ones now, like Christmas and Easter, because they are connected and have a great deal of similarity. But for us, maintaining what we had in our family traditions is more present and stronger when we travel to our home country, or we have part of our family in Germany. Our family is such that we were not only in Moldova but also a part in Ukraine, and now they have moved to Germany. You know, I won't go into it now because... a lot of people have complicated, tangled, and not-so-simple lives. And so we try to meet with them or invite them to visit us, and that's how a lot of our life looks now. It seems we are closer to being half-and-half with these traditions.



SPK_1: Okay, you have mostly adopted the Polish traditions and customs in this place, while a part of your own is still alive and you constantly return to them. Thank you very much for the conversation. We were talking today, or rather, we women were talking, with Raisa from Moldova, who has been living in Krakow for 12 years but still remembers her beginnings as a migrant mother and her children's beginnings in a Polish school. Thank you, Raisa, for sharing these memories.

SPK_2: Thank you. Thank you very much for the invitation, and I wish everyone good luck. May everyone who comes to Krakow feel like one of their own.