

# TEACHER COLLABORATION: A STUDY OF TOPICS IN PLANNING SESSIONS BETWEEN A SCIENCE AND A BILINGUAL TEACHER<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The education of recently-arrived language minority pupils involves subject teachers, second language teachers and bilingual teachers. Even though these teachers collaborate in one or other way, these relationships have largely been under-researched. In this article, I explore planning sessions between a science teacher and a bilingual teacher at a lower secondary school in a Norwegian context collaborating about a recently-arrived pupil from Poland. Hereby, I show that collaboration between two teachers with different foci and pedagogical knowledge is not straightforward. Using a discursive approach and studying the notion of topics in planning sessions, I explore the dynamics of the teacher–teacher interaction. Topic initiatives indicate the teachers' foci and areas of responsibility and the analysis highlights factors which influence the extent to which the teachers are able to discuss these foci, including the relations of domination between them. I will argue that despite the institutional discourse which favours science over bilingual subject teaching, it is interesting to explore how these teachers negotiate their relationship locally. An important finding is that in order to gain deeper insight into the collaboration, further field work is needed, i.e., observing the teachers in informal conversation, classroom sessions and interviewing them about their experiences with regard to the collaboration.

## Introduction

Teacher collaboration in multilingual classrooms is a common response to meeting the needs of language minority pupils in different educational contexts. However, until recently, there has been little research

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a pilot study conducted in connection with my PhD project.

on teacher collaboration in multilingual classrooms especially in understanding the nature of the collaboration.

One of the few contributions from the Norwegian context is a study by Randi Myklebust (1993) who investigates teacher collaboration in multicultural classrooms and the role of the first language (L1). She concludes that, as a rule, the monolingual teacher is in charge of the teaching and that the bilingual teacher<sup>2</sup> functions as an interpreter, hereby calling attention to the power asymmetry. Based on answers to a questionnaire, she also finds that almost all teacher pairs collaborate in one or other way. Half of them have regular meetings while the others co-operate informally during lunch breaks. Whereas Myklebust explores the organisation of collaboration, Gunn Vedøy (2008) focuses on the teachers' attitudes. In her PhD thesis on leadership in multicultural schools, she interviews the Principle Teacher for supporting language minority pupils about teacher collaboration.<sup>3</sup> This teacher reports that some of the contact teachers<sup>4</sup> do not understand why they should collaborate with bilingual teachers. The bilingual teachers confirm this by adding that they do not feel they are on equal footing. The contact teachers describe their relationship with distance, solely as observers of the bilingual teachers work. Both Myklebust and Vedøy point to the bilingual teachers marginalised position. In addition, others have drawn attention to the low status of the subject for native language for linguistic minorities in the 1997 and 2006 national curricula – L97 and K06 (Lund 2004; Ryen, Wold, Pastoor 2005; Hvistendahl 2009).

To sum up, the above-mentioned studies shed light on teacher collaboration and/or bilingual teachers with regard to the education of language minority pupils. They show that collaboration in itself is not evident. In addition, they point to the asymmetry of the collaboration and to the marginalised position of the bilingual teacher. However, none of the studies mentioned above have a discursive approach studying the interaction between teachers. Sophie Arkoudis and Angela

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<sup>2</sup> In a Norwegian educational context the terms *bilingual teachers* and *mother-tongue teachers* are used in different ways. Sometimes they are based on the person's educational background; other times on the work he/she does irrespective of his/her academic background. In this article, I will use the term in the second sense indicating staff who conducts bilingual subject teaching.

<sup>3</sup> In Norwegian often called «migrasjonspedagogisk kontakt».

<sup>4</sup> In Norwegian the term «kontaktlærer» is used referring to the teacher with the particular responsibility for a pupil's practical, administrative and social pedagogical tasks, among others contact with the pupil's home.

Creese (2006) argue that it is precisely through discourse that we can begin to conceptualise these professional collaborative relationships. Arkoudis' and Creese's research is part of a small body of research on teacher collaboration in multilingual classrooms from the English-speaking world.

Arkoudis (2006) has explored the planning conversations of an English as a second language (ESL) teacher and a science teacher planning the curriculum for a year 10 science class in the state of Victoria, Australia. Using appraisal and positioning theory, she shows that these teachers struggle to find a way of effectively working together as they attempt to balance language and content teaching. The teachers have differing power relations which reflect the power relations of science and ESL within the secondary school context in which they work. Arkoudis argues that the ESL teacher needs to be more skilful than the science teacher in positioning in order to gain epistemological authority.

In this article, I wish to contribute to the field by staging and studying four planning sessions between a bilingual teacher and a science teacher in a Norwegian educational context using a discursive approach. As pointed out above, we know little about the content of these planning sessions. What do the teachers talk about when planning science lessons with regard to a recently-arrived language minority pupil? How are these conversations constructed? To answer these questions, I will do a conversational analysis of four planning sessions. In order to do this, I will first discuss cooperation and joint action in conversation and the notion of topics in discourse analysis, central in conversations. Thereafter, I will describe the site and informants of my study. Finally, I will explore the concept of topics in four extracts from the teachers' planning sessions and discuss their possible implications.

### Cooperation and joint action in conversation

How can I study the content and structure of sessions where two teachers plan the consecutive science lessons with regard to a recently-arrived language minority pupil? Jan Svennevig (1999) cites Herbert H. Clark who argues that in conversations «[t]wo people realize they have common goals, realize their actions are interdependent, and work backward to find a way of coordinating their actions in a joint action that will reach those goals» (quoted in Svennevig, 1999, p. 13). For Clark, then, a joint action consists of on the one hand mutually accepting a common goal and on the other jointly accomplishing this goal. What is

the common goal of collaborating teachers in multilingual classrooms and how do they accomplish their goal?

Social relations between people are partly linked to their positions in institutional networks. Svennevig (1999) points to institutional discourse where some have certain pre-allocated rights and obligations for contributing to the conversation. The representative of the institution is usually the one who has the right, and even the responsibility, to introduce a topic. In addition, he emphasises that «the relations have to be established in interaction between these individuals and they may then be redefined and developed» (p. 25). There are a range of features which are not fixed in advance and which are managed locally, such as turn order, turn size or content, distribution of turns and length of conversation. So even though science has a higher status than bilingual subject teaching, it is interesting to see how the teachers in my study negotiate locally.

Deborah Tannen (2001) who studies cross-sex communication, points out that even though linguistic strategies such as interruption, silence versus volubility and topic raising have been claimed by many researchers as a source of domination, it is important to bear in mind that «the «meaning» of any linguistic strategy can vary, depending at least on context, the conversational styles of participants, and the interaction of participants' styles and strategies» (p. 155).

Returning to my study, in the next section, I will explore the concept of topics in conversations and I will argue that exploring topics in the teachers' planning conversations helps me to gain insight into what the teachers' common goal is and how they accomplish it.

### The notion of topics in discourse analysis

Svennevig (1999) argues that the notion of topics is intuitively a natural unit for analysing discourse since interlocutors routinely characterise their conversations in terms of what they are about. Defining topics in conversation is, however, no straightforward matter. Discourse topics may be studied from different perspectives. According to Svennevig, the essential difference lies in the general view of discourse. Discourse can either be studied as a text or as an action. In the former, the focus is on the discourse structure; in the latter the emphasis is on the interactional procedures and cooperation between the participants.

Traditionally, discourse topics have been looked upon as semantic structures in a text or as representations of certain aspects in the

world which the text is about. Both Per Linell (1998) and Svennevig (1999) point out that these are the options in a monologicistic approach. However, they both take a dialogistic approach where discourse is studied as an action where topics are viewed as activities of discourse-in-contexts. Topics are then seen as *processes* where interlocutors establish boundaries and coherence patterns through a set of techniques. Therefore, the notion of topics should not merely be considered in terms of *content* but also in reference to its *action patterns*. In my study, I follow Linell and Svennevig, studying both the content and the interactional procedures of the teachers' planning sessions, hereby shedding light on the nature of the teachers' collaboration.

Linell (1998) argues that the way a topic is structured is closely linked to the initiative–response structure. An individual may try to establish a new topic by introducing a <candidate> for a topic, but it is up to the other to take it up and turn it into a discourse topic. Therefore, topics are joint products. One way of initiating a topic is by posing a question aiming at eliciting information. Linell and Gustavsson (1987) call such conversational contributions strong initiatives. Yet Tannen (2001) found that the nature of dominance is different if a person initiates topics concerning him or herself than if they are all about the other. In my study, it is therefore interesting to explore which teacher initiates a certain topic, what the nature of the initiative is (a question, a statement, etc.) and how the other teacher responds. In addition, in light of Tannen's comment, we may ask ourselves what the initiative means and how strong it may be seen in terms of dominance.

Before exploring four topics in the teachers' planning conversations, I will briefly describe the site and the participants of my study in the next section.

### The site and participants

The participants of my study are a bilingual teacher whom I will call Ewa and a science teacher whom I will call Kari.<sup>5</sup> They work at a lower secondary school which is situated in a medium-sized Norwegian city. It is a school with around 300 pupils divided into 24 groups in

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<sup>5</sup> According to the regulations of the Norwegian Education Act §1.1 special teaching in Norwegian for linguistic minorities can either be given by using the special curriculum for basic Norwegian for linguistic minorities or by adapting the ordinary curriculum in Norwegian to the needs of the language minority pupils.

addition to a transition class for recently-arrived pupils with no or poor Norwegian language skills. 36 pupils at the school get special teaching in Norwegian<sup>6</sup> and of those 28 receive bilingual subject teaching which consequently involves a bilingual teacher.

Ewa is in her early twenties and moved from Poland to Norway when she was ten. She speaks Norwegian fluently and without a foreign accent. At present, she is a student in her final year of teacher training and has one year of experience as a bilingual teacher. She has specialised in social sciences and ICT and is studying multicultural education in her final year. She works at two lower secondary schools and one primary school in the municipality. At my research school, she teaches three hours a week and is responsible for two pupils from the same linguistic background. Kari is 30 and has training in science and multicultural education. She has worked at a lower secondary school teacher for four years. In one of those years, she was as a teacher responsible for a transition class.

Paulina, the pupil who is the focus of the planning sessions, came to Norway two months earlier from Poland. It is the first time that she attends a mainstream science lesson. Prior to my study, Ewa taught her alone in a group room. Also, she is the only recently-arrived language minority pupil in the classroom.

Prior to my study, Ewa and Kari had talked to each other in the staffroom but had never had meetings with regard to a pupil before. For the sake of my project, I requested them to plan four consecutive science lessons in which they could discuss anything they felt was relevant with regard to the education of a language minority pupil.<sup>7</sup> The planning sessions were held between 8 and 8.30 a.m. in a meeting room<sup>8</sup> before school start and they lasted between 15 and 20 minutes each. Importantly, these teachers were brought together for a real-life purpose and were going to continue the collaboration in the future. As Svennevig (1999) puts it in connection with his PhD dissertation *Getting Acquainted in Conversation*, «[t]he conversations are thus personal investments in future social interaction» (p. 2).

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<sup>6</sup> The informants are anonymised and the names are therefore pseudonyms.

<sup>7</sup> This is in contrast to Arkoudis (2006) who specifically instructed the teachers to balance talk about language and science in the meetings.

<sup>8</sup> If it had not been for my project, the planning sessions would have been held in the teachers' team room where other teachers would be present as well. The science teacher proposed to find a meeting room not to be disturbed.

## Topic initiatives at planning sessions

Let us now look at four different topic initiatives from the four planning sessions.<sup>9</sup> As the teachers could discuss anything they felt was relevant with regard to the pupil, it is interesting to see which topics arise, both with regard to their content and their structure. 28 different topics were initiated, 6 by the bilingual teacher and 22 by the science teacher, giving an indication of the science teacher's dominance during the meetings. When choosing the four topic extracts below, I have opted for a wide variation, i.e., including both topics which are initiated by both the bilingual teacher and the science teacher and topics which concern practical matters, subject-specific matters, roles and social matters.

The first extract is from the beginning of the first planning session. The teachers have talked about a booklet the subject teacher has made and now the bilingual teacher Ewa opens a new topic by asking a question:<sup>10</sup>

### *Extract 1*

Ewa:	e= hvordan ser du for deg at vi skal sitte, hvor?	Ewa:	e= where would you like us to sit, where?
Kari:	.. ja, nei, jeg tenkte litt på det for nå sitter de jo to og to e= noen sitter tre. så jeg tenkte at e= .. vi skal ha en del gjennomgåelse e= som sikkert gjør at hun trenger litt [oversettelse].	Kari:	.. yeah, no, I thought a bit about it because now they are sitting two and two e= some of them are sitting in threes. so I was thinking that e= .. we will review quite a bit e= which probably will imply that she needs a bit of [translation].
Ewa:	[oversettelse]	Ewa:	[translation]
Kari:	den ser jeg for meg at er .. luredt at du sitter, eventuelt at vi setter inn en .. altså tar en ekstra pult.	Kari:	this I would think that it is .. best if you sit, perhaps if we put in an .. that is use an extra desk.
Ewa:	mm.	Ewa:	mm.
Kari:	eller om vi bare tar en stol for det er jo god nok plass ..	Kari:	or if we just take a chair for there is, after all enough room ..

<sup>9</sup> The original language in all conversations is Norwegian (left column). The translations into English (right column) are my own.

<sup>10</sup> Transcription symbols:

Speech overlap	[]
Pause	
Long (>0,3)	... (N)
Medium (<0,3)	..
Laughter	@
Researcher's comment	((comment))
Uncertain hearing	<X X>
Indecipherable syllable	X

- |       |   |       |   |
|-------|---|-------|---|
| Ewa:  | kanskje ikke <X foran for ikke å X><br>forstyrre de andre og sånt & | Ewa:  | perhaps not in <X the front not to X><br>disturb the others & |
| Kari: | nei.  | Kari: | no.   |
| Ewa:  | & mens vi oversetter.   | Ewa:  | & while we translate.   |
| Kari: | ja, hun sitter nest bakerst.  | Kari: | yeah, she sits in the second last row.                        |
| Ewa:  | ja.   | Ewa:  | yeah.   |
| Kari: | så jeg tror ikke det.   | Kari: | so I don't think so.  |
| Ewa:  | nei.  | Ewa:  | no.   |

Ewa's question refers to a practical topic which has pedagogical implications, i.e., where she should sit in the classroom. The question bears evidence of the fact that Ewa has never been in Kari's science lessons. She elicits information and thereby makes a strong contribution (cf. Linell and Gustavsson). It is interesting that Ewa uses the personal pronoun «vi – we» and not «jeg – I». By doing this, it is possible to argue that she defines her role in the classroom as being linked to Paulina and not to the curriculum as subject teachers generally do. Kari responds by telling how the pupils' seating is organised in the class. First, she suggests that they use an extra desk, but then later she suggests that they just put in an extra chair. She uses the singular pronoun «du – you» to refer to the Ewa and does not link Ewa to the Paulina by using the plural pronoun «dere – you». To the first suggestions, Ewa responds through minimal responses. Later, she makes an additional comment saying that she does not want to disturb the rest of the class while translating. Kari reassures her by saying that Paulina sits in the second last row so that this will not be a problem. She does not, however, elaborate on why sitting in the second last row is not a problem. Even though it is Ewa who introduces the topic, it is Kari who first makes the suggestions and then decides what to do. It is also Kari who closes the topic.

The second extract is also from the first planning session and follows right after the first extract cited above. Here, Kari initiates a new topic where she informs about the content of the upcoming science lesson.

### *Extract 2*

- |       |  |       |  |
|-------|--|-------|--|
| Kari: | nei. ehm. sånn at i begynnelsen av timen nå så blir det en del litt repetisjon av der vi stoppet sist. | Kari: | no. uhm. so that in the beginning of the lesson now there will be a bit of repetition of where we stopped the last time. |
| [...] |  | [...] |  |
| Ewa:  | ja.  | Ewa:  | yes.   |



Kari:	vi har kommet til at vi holder på med .. med ... (0,4) litt grunnstoff-familier, altså vi har begynt .. vi er ferdig med edelgasser og halogener [og]	Kari:	we have come to where we are dealing with .. with ... (0,4) a bit about element families, that is we have started .. we have finished noble gasses and halogens [and]
Ewa:	[ja]	Ewa:	[yes]
Kari:	alkalimetallene, men tar nok litt opp igjen det for det som på en måte er hensikten med den timen her er at de ut i fra periodesystemet .. hvis jeg sier .. fordi de får oppgaver etter hvert at for eksempel atomnummer [fire]	Kari:	alkali metals, but we will probably repeat it again because the purpose of this lessons is that they from the periodic table .. if I say .. because if they after a while get exercises that for example atomic number [four]
Ewa:	[ja]	Ewa:	[yes]
Kari:	da skal de se på .. da skal de vite @ at de skal se på atomnummer fire.	Kari:	then they should look at .. then they should know @ that they should look at atom number four.
Ewa:	Ok.	Ewa:	Ok.

This extract is related to pedagogical matters and focuses on subject-specific expertise. We see that Kari not only initiates the science topic with a statement but that she also takes on the full responsibility for it. Kari uses the pronoun «vi – we» to link herself to the curriculum. The bilingual teacher answers with minimal responses. According to Svennevig (1999), minimal response tokens such as ‘yeah’, ‘mhm’ etc. may signal different things. They may be *continuation markers* indicating that the other may continue. Alternatively, they may be *acknowledgement tokens* and be used in order to acknowledge that the message is received and at the same time open up for a topic shift. Here, Ewa uses both «yes – ja» as a continuation marker. The final «ok» is used to mark that she has understood Kari’s explanation. At the same time, she closes off the explanation of this example and hereby opens up for either a topic shift or the possibility for Kari to introduce a new element related to the same topic. Kari chooses the latter by saying that after the pupils have understood the system, they should be able to draw it.

The third extract is taken from about ten minutes into the first meeting. The teachers have talked about the fact that it is important for Paulina to learn the Norwegian terms for science concepts. Kari concludes that it is enough if she is able to explain what they are in her native tongue. Now she introduces a new topic by asking Ewa how she sees her role in the classroom:

*Extract 3*

- Kari: ehm. jeg vet ikke om du har sett for deg noe hvordan du ønsker at din rolle skal være?  
 Ewa: ... (0,4) ehm det blir for det meste å gjøre det samme som du gjør.  
 Kari: ja. mm. og jeg-- hun blir også del av da en gruppe hvor jeg da-- .. i-- .. jeg kommer til å sette opp hva de skal på en måte finne ut på tavla, så kan du eventuelt du da bare oversette det &  
 Ewa: ja.  
 Kari: & i hva de skal gjøre på de arkene her. ((Kari peker i arbeidsheftet))  
 Ewa: ja.  
 Kari: ... (0,4) ja, det er det jeg har tenkt å gjøre den timen her.  
 Ewa: mm. jeg tror på en måte du bare leder an timen sånn som du--  
 Kari: ja.  
 Ewa: .. slippe å bruke så mye tid på den oversettelsen i plenum for det <X trenger jo ikke X> noen andre å høre.  
 Kari: nei for det-- det er nok heller ikke-- elevene er jo ikke vant med hva-- så jeg ser at i A-klassen hvor vi har hatt inne en .. som som ikke tar X så-- det blir .. veldig merkelig undervisning av det noen ganger for at @ den ene eller de to da som trenger det og så blir det egentlig sagt veldig høyt @  
 Ewa: mm.  
 Kari: så det tror jeg er lurt.  
 Ewa: ja.
- Kari: erm. I'm not sure if you have thought about how you would like your role to be?  
 Ewa: ... (0,4) erm it will be mainly doing the same as you do.  
 Kari: yeah. mm. and I-- she will also be part of a group where I then-- .. in-- .. I will put up on the blackboard what they sort of have to find out, and then you could perhaps translate it &  
 Ewa: yeah.  
 Kari: & in what they should do in these pages here. ((Kari points at the booklet))  
 Ewa: yeah.  
 Kari: ... (0,4) yeah, that is what I have planned to do this lesson here.  
 Ewa: mm. I think in a way you just lead the lesson as you--  
 Kari: yeah.  
 Ewa: .. not having to spend a lot of time on the translation in front of the whole class because no one else <X needs X> to hear it.  
 Kari: no because that-- that is not either-- the pupils are after all not accustomed to what-- so I see that in the A class where we have had some one in ... who who does not X so. It results .. sometimes in very strange teaching sometimes because @ the one or the two who then need it and then it is in fact said very loud @  
 Ewa: mm.  
 Kari: so I think that's a good idea.  
 Ewa: yeah.

Kari's question seems to be a way of inviting the bilingual teacher in. However, we see that Ewa finds it difficult to come up with a good answer with regard to her role. Also, it takes four seconds before she answers and the end of the utterance is spoken in a low voice. Studying this extract in detail, it is remarkable that Kari several times uses the personal pronoun «jeg – I» and hereby refers to herself whereas Ewa uses «you – du» orienting herself to Kari and what Kari does. The subject teacher quickly moves on to talk about the pupil and closes off by stating that this is what she has planned for this lesson. This could both be seen as an invitation to close off the topic and a strong initiative. However, as conversation is a joint project, both interlocutors have to agree. Instead, we see that Ewa reintroduces the topic of her role by saying that Kari can just lead the lesson as she normally does. Next, she

brings in the translating aspect and hereby takes an independent initiative to develop the topic further. Kari responds to this reintroduction by relating this to the A class where a bilingual assistant translates in a loud voice which sometimes leads to very strange teaching. Ewa confirms this by a minimal response.

The extract above is the only time that the teachers talk explicitly about the division of roles. At the end of the meeting, however, the science teacher says that they can use this first lesson to feel their way and invites the bilingual teacher to make any suggestions as to what she might do differently.

The fourth extract is related to a social aspect which was initiated by the science teacher at the end of the second meeting. As I sit in the back of the meeting room, Kari turns to me and asks «Kan vi og snakke om alt alt mulig? – Can we also talk about anything anything we like?» Interestingly, Kari does not solely feel the need to discuss subject-related matters but also wants to talk about Paulina's social well-being. Having confirmed that they can talk about anything they want, Kari addresses Ewa again and says she noticed that Paulina's class mates showed an interest in Paulina in the beginning but that they are not quite as keen anymore. Therefore, Kari asks Ewa if she can talk to the pupil about how she feels about her class mates. In the third meeting Ewa initiates this topic at the end of the meeting with a statement:

#### *Extract 4*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Ewa: jeg snakket litt med henne om det sosiale sist.  | Ewa: I have talked a bit with her about the social side of things last time.   |
| Kari: ja.   | Kari: yes.   |
| Ewa: hun synes det var helt greit. hun &  | Ewa: she thought things were quite ok. she &   |
| Kari: ok.   | Kari: ok.  |
| Ewa: & hun [synes det var] ålreit, og det virket som at de andre tok vare på henne.   | Ewa: & she [thought it was] all right, and it seems that the others took care of her.  |
| Kari: [jeg ser at hun nå--]   | Kari: [I see that she now--]   |
| for hun har begynt å trekke sammen med jenter i C litt sånn. de-- .. noen av de elevene fra mottaksklassa der, men som også er eller nei de går ikke i mottaksklassa uhm .. to av de gjør det, og hun to av de gjør ikke det. så jeg ser at hun av og til setter seg med de med de litt og, men det fungerer -- i klasserommet så fungerer det veldig greit, og jeg [tenker] at det kanskje og er et valg hun tar selv. | because she has started hanging out with the girls in C a bit. they-- .. some of the pupils from the transition class there, but some of them are or now they don't go in the transition class ehm .. two of them do, and she two of them don't. so sometimes I see that she sits together with them a bit, but it works-- in the classroom it works very well, and I [think] that maybe that is also a choice she has made herself. |
| Ewa: [ja]   | Ewa: [yes]   |
| mm  | mm   |

- Kari: sånn at e--- .. men da har du fått tatt det  
Ewa: ja. med henne og hørt,  
Kari: & og da får vi bare følge med litt.
- Kari: so that e--- .. but then you have talked to  
Ewa: yes. her about it and asked,  
Kari: & and then we just have to keep an eye on how things go.

First, Kari responds by two continuation markers indicating that she is listening to Ewa and encouraging her to go on. Then she interrupts Ewa and follows up by contributing to the development of the topic and closes it. It is difficult to say if this interruption is a sign of dominance. Tannen (2001) calls the phenomenon of interruption/overlap «a paradigm case of the ambiguity of power and solidarity» (p. 157). Some may look upon overlap as a way of showing enthusiasm (solidarity, creating connectedness), while others may assume that only one voice should be heard at a time and would perceive interruption as power play. In order to understand the nature of an overlap, Tannen points out that one must consider the context. In this extract, it may very well be that Kari becomes enthusiastic and is able to create connectedness between the two teachers with regard to their common goal, in this case, the social well-being of Paulina.

## Discussion

Having analysed the four extracts, I will now discuss their possible implications and see them in a larger Norwegian educational context. The teachers' common goal is to adapt the education of the language minority pupil in science. The content and structure of their planning sessions will therefore be contingent on the conversation context and their common goal. In the light of Clark's notion of joint projects, it is the subject teacher who often proposes the projects whereas the bilingual teacher accepts them. Looking at the participant structures at this stage of the collaboration, we see that the subject teacher dominates quantitatively with regard to topic initiatives. As pointed out above, 22 topic initiatives are made by Kari and only 6 by Ewa. Seen in the light of the four extracts from the planning sessions, what could possible reasons for this quantitative difference be?

In an Australian context, Arkoudis' (2006) argues that the relative status of the subjects seems to influence the position the teachers are able to take during meetings, i.e., the science teacher dominating the ESL teacher. This can be said to be part of the institutional discourse as science has high status and is a subject with a long and stable tradition. ESL has a shorter history and its position has un-

dergone many changes. In a Norwegian context, science also has a stable tradition. It is, however, more difficult to link a specific subject to bilingual teachers. The bilingual teacher in my project does not teach according to the curriculum for native languages for linguistic minorities. She does, however, conduct bilingual subject teaching.<sup>11</sup> Turning to the Norwegian Education Act, language minority pupils only have the right to mother-tongue teaching, bilingual subject teaching or both if it is seen as necessary. Importantly, this right is linked to special teaching in Norwegian, i.e., only language minority pupils who get special teaching in Norwegian have the right to native language teaching. From this, it is possible to argue that bilingual subject teaching does not have a high status and hereby not the bilingual teacher conducting the teaching either.

Planning sessions are institutional conversations between two or more teachers who are all professionals which indicates symmetry. However, there are other asymmetries to consider. Often bilingual teachers are second language speakers which may mean that they do not have access to the same linguistic resources. Secondly, as pointed out above, subject teachers have a higher professional status than bilingual teachers. Higher status may indicate more responsibility. In my study, Ewa speaks Norwegian fluently and is therefore on an equal footing when it comes to access to linguistic resources. However, it is Kari who is responsible for teaching the subject; she is also both more experienced and older than Ewa and she works full-time at the school. These features may point at an asymmetry between Ewa and Kari. Having said this, however, Svennevig (1999) reminds us that individuals define and redefine their relationships locally, through negotiation.

Turning to the first extract once again, as suggested in the analysis, Ewa defines herself through Paulina by using the pronoun «vi – we». In the second extract Kari also uses «vi – we» but she links this to the whole class and to the science curriculum. Similarly Creese (2005) found that in classroom situations, subject teachers generally used the pronoun «I» linking this to student action in getting them to do a curriculum task (e.g. «And I want you during the day today to think up a design...»

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<sup>11</sup> Jill Bourne (2001) calls this bilingual support for curriculum learning «to attempt to enable full access to the curriculum through bilingual support in order to enable children to draw on their full linguistic competencies in the development of cognitive concepts and knowledge of the different subject areas of the primary curriculum» (p. 251).

( p. 73)). ESL teachers used «I» to define a place for them in the classroom and not to the curriculum (e.g. «... What I am going to do when Miss Rubins comes back.» (p. 78)). As Creese pointed out, the difference in pronoun use may suggest status difference, i.e., talk about curriculum content having a more powerful position. I will therefore argue that the different usage of «we» leads to Kari taking a dominant position to Ewa. It is, however, important to remember that prior to the project Ewa's sole task was to teach Paulina. When Paulina's language skills improve, it may be possible that Ewa starts defining her differently.

The discussion about where the bilingual teacher should be seated is, on the one hand, linked to translation and on the other, to the consequence this has for the entire class. One of the interesting findings of Creese's (2005) research is that subject teachers view bilingual teachers as providing a short cut to subject knowledge through translation and hereby reinforcing the transmission pedagogies of the subject teachers. During the planning sessions, translation comes up several times; Kari asks if it would be an advantage for the pupil to take the test in L1. Ewa affirms this and translates the pupils' answers during a later meeting. At another occasion, Kari mentions that the Paulina has taken a good mathematics test but that sometimes she could have needed a bit of translation to answer the mathematics questions involving a lot of text.<sup>12</sup>

In the *second extract*, I would argue that it is not surprising that it is the science teacher who is the strongest contributor, and the bilingual teacher more passive. The talk focuses specifically on the science teacher's academic field. On such occasions, it is not easy for the bilingual teacher to make a contribution. A possibility would be to relate it to more didactical challenges for minority language pupils. Then again, Kari also has teacher training in multicultural education. It may therefore be easier for Ewa to make a contribution to relate the subject matter to the likelihood of the pupil's prior knowledge of the theme or her prior schooling. These would be topics about which the subject teacher would not have knowledge. It would open opportunities for a somewhat more symmetrical division of topic initiatives or turns which, in turn, would lead to more equal conversational partners. However, having suggested this, it may be that the bilingual teacher does not see the need to express this explicitly during the meeting and considers this as a matter between her and the pupil. This would have to be further explored by observa-

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<sup>12</sup> Kari is also the pupil's mathematics teacher.

tion in the classroom or through interviewing the bilingual teacher for further contextualisation (cf. Tannen 2001).

Turning to the third extract in which Ewa is asked to define her role, it is important to remind ourselves that she has not been in Kari's science lesson before and has up till now taught Paulina in a group room. As has been pointed out in the analysis, by using the personal pronoun «du – you», she orients herself towards Kari and what Kari does. This is perhaps not surprising. After all, it is Kari's teaching they talk about. The pronoun usage could hereby be read as one of the ways Ewa shows willingness to cooperate. At the same time, this usage may also indicate an asymmetry, which in itself is not negative as it occurs in all conversations. However, it is possible that Ewa's orienting towards the other becomes so strong that it overshadows the possibility to define herself more distinct in her role as bilingual teacher.

It may also be easier for Ewa to define her role after having tried out different roles. To answer this would require longer field work. Jill Bourne (2001) argues that «bilingual assistants have had to make their own niche within the broad continuum of expectations for general classroom ancillary workers» (p. 253). Ryen, Heen Wold and Pastoor (2005) have shed light on the wide range of roles that bilingual teachers may have. Nevertheless, Ewa's answer of «for det meste å gjøre som du gjør – mainly doing what you do» – can be said to be in accordance to Creese's (2000) study where she found that the bilingual teachers aimed at conveying rather than accessing information, focusing primarily on conveying the subject content and only secondarily on simplifying so that pupils could learn English. Creese argues that «the bilingual teacher, through translation and interpretation, is seen to be demonstrating and teaching in ways similar to the subject teacher» (p. 463).

Finally, looking at the fourth extract, Kari has requested Ewa to talk about Paulina's social situation in their common language in the first meeting and Ewa is thereby able to play a central role. However, also here it is obvious that Ewa is only at the school three hours a week. She does not have the same opportunity to observe Paulina in social interaction as Kari has. The fact that Kari takes over the topic may be a way of dealing with Ewa's part-time position at the school, i.e., a strategy of filling Ewa in about things that have happened while she was not around.

## Conclusion

The extracts above show that a discursive approach to teacher–teacher interaction is fruitful to gain deeper insight in teacher collaboration. The quantitative dominance of topic introduction and the way the topics are developed may indicate that the collaboration between the science teacher and the bilingual teacher is asymmetric. This follows prior research such as Myklebust (1993) and Vedøy (2008). However, Svennevig (2001) reminds us that in conversations a range of features are managed locally. In future research, it would be interesting to further explore if there are any topics in which the bilingual teacher has stronger initiatives and makes stronger contributions than in others.

As Tannen (2001) has emphasised, dominance is no straightforward matter. Therefore, more field work is needed to fully understand the nature of this collaboration. In future research, observation of informal conversations between the two teachers, observation of classroom sessions and team meetings, document analysis of week plans and national curricula and interviewing the teachers about their experience with regard to the collaboration could all shed more light over and deepen our understanding of the dynamics underlying interaction. Are some topics more likely to be talked about during informal conversations and others more at formal meetings? When the bilingual teacher only works part-time at the school, who initiates to update the other? Who do parents contact about their children's schooling, the subject teacher or the bilingual teacher? How do teachers converse about these matters?



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