

# 2 Austria



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## 2.1 Linguistic Situation

### Primary level

Foreign language (FL) teaching in primary schools has had a long tradition in Austria. The first attempts were started in the 1960s and from 1983/1984 onwards each Austrian primary school child was exposed to a foreign language at the upper primary level for one hour per week. Topics followed the seasonal cycle and other areas of interest to young learners. Taking the short attention span of young children into account, it was considered advisable to split this weekly hour into two shorter units. As a consequence, primary teachers themselves took over foreign language teaching in their classes after one year of additional in-service training.

The great success of this model led to a further development: teaching of modern foreign languages from the first year of lower primary school, using a new methodology adapted to this early age. The holistic learning process of six-year-old children required an *integrated approach* with topics closely related to the compulsory subjects.

### Secondary level

Since the early eighties the importance of foreign language learning in order to be able to use one or two additional languages in every-day communication has been acknowledged. At the beginning of the 1990s the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture started a 'foreign language offensive': one or two foreign languages (English and French) at lower secondary level and at least two foreign languages (usually English and French/Italian/Spanish/Russian...) at upper secondary level are compulsory, and even a third or fourth modern language may be offered.

### CLIL and language instruction for acknowledged minorities

In general, German is the language of instruction in Austria. Languages other than German can be used as languages of instruction in the following cases:

- In foreign language classes.
- For autochthonous minorities (Croatian, Czech, Hungarian, Slovak, Slovene as official minority languages, and Romany).
- In any type of CLIL provision.

The following combinations of language instruction are possible in Austria:

Organisation and status of provision	Language status	Names of languages	ISCED level <sup>2</sup>
Mainstream school provision	1 state language +1 non-indigenous language	German-English German-French German-Italian	1-3
	1 state language +1 minority/regional language with official language status	German-Slovene German-Croatian German-Hungarian German-Czech German-Slovak	1-3
	1 state language + 1 minority language with official language status +1 non-indigenous language	German-Slovene-English German-Slovene-Italian	
	1 state language +1 non-territorial language recognised as a minority language	German-Romany	1
Pilot projects	1 state language +1 non-indigenous language	German-English German-French	1-3

<sup>2</sup> ISCED

Level 1 corresponds to primary education in Austria from 6-10

Level 2 corresponds to lower secondary education (10-14)

Level 3 corresponds to upper secondary education (15-18/19)

## 2.2 How did CLIL start and develop in Austria?

### Primary level

Today, the Austrian primary school curriculum includes integrated foreign language learning from the very first year. In the two years of lower primary school the foreign language (usually English, but in some schools also French or languages from neighbouring

countries) is taught in a cross-curricular way, integrated into the compulsory subjects maths, early science, art, music, and physical education. Short sequences amounting to a total of one hour per week introduce the child to the foreign language and are the foundation for future language learning, with special emphasis on CLIL. In the two years of upper primary school this concept is carried on with additional focus on everyday communication. In addition, special bilingual classes have been established with a mixed student population, about half Austrian natives and the other half with English as native or second language. These classes are mainly in Vienna and other larger cities where these requirements can be met.

Secondary level: The Austrian model of CLIL at secondary level ('Fremdsprache als Arbeitssprache') was 'born' in 1991 when a project group (Dagmar Heindler, Gunther Abuja et al.) was set up at ZSE III (Zentrum für Schulentwicklung in Graz, now Austrian Centre for Language Competence – ÖSZ). Setting up of this national project group was the Ministry's response to many individual bilingual initiatives and pilot projects in secondary schools. Together with these pilot schools the concept of bilingual education in Austria was continuously developed up to the end of the 90s.

The results of the work of the national project group were a series of theoretical and practical publications as well as extensive in-service training and several thematic conferences on this topic. Close co-operation with other European countries interested in bilingual education (Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Sweden), the Council of Europe and the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz has proven very fruitful in this process. In the mid-nineties reports were published and teaching materials were provided, aimed at supporting teachers and schools interested in CLIL. Since that time the number of CLIL activities has been steadily increasing and a variety of organizational forms has evolved. § 16/3 of the Austrian 'Schulunterrichtsgesetz' (School Education Act) provides the legal basis for CLIL. This law was originally passed to provide for minority language instruction but it is also the basis for any form of CLIL. There are no admission requirements for CLIL students.

### 2.3 Aims and Structure of CLIL in Austria

CLIL is known under the term 'Englisch als Arbeitssprache' (EAA) meaning the use of English (or any other FL) in teaching situations ranging from short projects to bilingual education throughout the whole school year. With the exception of a few 'Bilingual Schools', this definition does not suggest the exclusive use of the FL as the only medium of instruction.

3 § 16/3 of the Austrian School Education Acts says: "... Furthermore, the Provincial Educational Board, following an application from the head of a school (...), approves the use of a modern language as the language of instruction (working language) of this (...) seems to serve the purpose of improving education in foreign languages and does not prejudice the general accessibility of the individual formats and subject directions of different types of schools. This approval may also be granted to individual classes or individual subjects taught. (...). Education Act, Federal Gazette no. 767/1996, 18)

In EAA we view language as a tool that can be employed to teach subject-specific content, by temporarily merging content teaching and language learning. Use of the terms 'content teaching' and 'language learning' imply that the organization of lessons should promote conscious subject tuition leading to conscious learning of content and a foreign language at the same time.

The linguistic and educational aims of EAA are as follows: Increasing linguistic ability (including in the subject matter), increasing reflection on the usefulness of the FL through use in the subject matter (increasing motivation), better preparation for the future, for professional careers and for social changes, improving the learners' knowledge of and communicative competence in the FL, and equipping the learners with skills necessary to cope successfully with a variety of workplace-related settings in a FL.

The current CLIL (EAA) situation in Austrian secondary schools is characterized by a spectrum of organizational formats ranging from 'mini-projects' of just a few lessons to bilingual schooling. In the majority of cases English is the target language of CLIL provision. The variety of CLIL models gives different school types ample opportunity to adapt CLIL instruction to

- the provision of teachers and materials;
- the target group;
- the school's individual setting.

In practice, schools use CLIL in projects (one or two weeks) in a phased-in approach for a limited time of the school year in one or more subjects, or throughout the school year, again in one or more subjects. Schools in which CLIL is employed for a considerable time and in more than 50% of the subjects could (arbitrarily) be called 'bilingual schools' in Austria. CLIL is used all over Austria and in all types of schools, including vocational schools. Bilingual schools exist in almost every federal state in Austria. They are highly successful, with a target group of very motivated and interested students. Very often native speakers are employed to support Austrian teachers. Native speakers play an even more important role in vocational schools where many CLIL teachers are not language teachers. In Vienna the local school board has developed a network of bilingual schools (Vienna Bilingual Schooling – VBS) in order to cater for different educational needs in the region<sup>4</sup>. Classes are formed by including 50% German-speaking and 50% English-speaking students, if possible. Teaching is carried out according to the national Austrian curriculum by German- and English-speaking qualified primary and secondary teaching staff in team teaching. Native speakers of English are employed whenever possible.

4 Network for Bilingual Schools in Vienna: see: <http://wien.gv.at/ssr/allgemeines/vbs.htm> (list of schools, German) and <http://www.lehrerweb.at/ssr/europabuero/fremdsp/> (model description, German/English).

In addition to linguistic improvement, aims such as raising intercultural awareness and enhanced motivation may be seen as reasons for the introduction of CLIL. English is by far the most popular CLIL target language in Austria: this can be accounted for by the importance attached to English as a lingua franca throughout the world. In particular, at upper secondary level it is regarded as essential for pupils to be able to read and discuss relevant information in English (historical, geographical, biological etc.).

## 2.4 Subject Choice and Statistics

### *Primary level*

Foreign language teaching is to be integrated in all compulsory subjects at primary school with the exception of German. English is by far the most popular language, but there are schools that offer French or languages of Austria's neighbouring countries.

### *Secondary level*

No national statistical data are available as to the extent to which individual subjects are being taught in a language other than the primary language of instruction. From experience we can state that geography, history and biology seem to be the most common subjects in this regard. The choice of subjects very much depends on the provision of qualified teachers and teaching materials.

In recent years there has been an initiative by the School Board of Lower Austria to encourage teachers to use CLIL in mathematics, physics and chemistry at academic secondary schools. (Teachers were offered special in-service training to meet the didactic and linguistic challenges.) As has already been mentioned, English is by far the most popular CLIL target language, followed by French and Italian.

There are several 'bilingual schools' in Austria (see above) that provide CLIL instruction throughout almost the whole school year in almost all subjects taught. Usual exceptions are German, religious instruction and other foreign languages, which are taught as separate subjects.

On average about 15% of all Austrian Secondary schools provide a kind of CLIL instruction. The rate for lower secondary 'Hauptschule' is about 7%, for secondary academic schools about 27%, and for vocational schools about 30%. These numbers are estimates and based on a survey carried out in 1997.

## 2.5 Teachers and Teacher Education

### *Initial training*

To become a qualified teacher at an Austrian primary or secondary modern school a person needs to graduate from teacher training college ('Pädagogische Akademie'). To teach at academic secondary schools (Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule) a teacher has to hold a Master's degree from an Austrian university in his/her subjects. For CLIL no additional formal qualifications are needed for Austrian mainstream schooling or pilot projects. Most secondary teachers in Austria hold a degree in two subjects. Consequently, language teachers in CLIL sessions very often teach their second subject in the foreign language in which they are qualified. Another solution is team-teaching (subject teacher + language teacher), often with native speakers of the target language.

Most teacher training colleges now provide CLIL training within the framework of methodology courses. The amount of time spent on this topic may vary from just a few lessons to up to one or two semesters; in this case students get certificates. Training in CLIL is also offered in so-called 'Akademielehrgängen' (continuing education seminars, also as postgraduate seminars, see below).

Most universities in Austria do not yet offer intensive CLIL education for trainee teachers (the topic may be integrated in methodology courses, however), but interest in CLIL has been growing recently and several theses have already been written on CLIL theory and practice.

### *In-service training*

- For teachers at primary schools  
There have been several stages of pre- and in-service training since use of a foreign language at the primary level was introduced into the Austrian curriculum. Since the obligatory implementation of 'foreign languages from form 1 of lower primary school with a cross-curricular approach', initial teacher training has included eight hours of language training with the main emphasis on appropriate methodologies and enhancement of student teachers' oral language skills.
- For teachers at lower and upper secondary schools  
Some Pedagogical Institutes offer two- to four-semester continuing education seminars on CLIL; for such extensive courses diplomas may be awarded (see above, 2.5). Curricula are usually designed by the teacher training colleges on an individual basis: there is no nation-wide coordination. The following example may illustrate such a training course: [http://www.pze.at/studien\\_r/index\\_files/Foldertext/ea.pdf](http://www.pze.at/studien_r/index_files/Foldertext/ea.pdf) (10/01/2005).

Four-semester university courses organized by the University of Klagenfurt in co-operation with the Austrian Centre for Language Competence (ÖSZ) started in 1997. The target group is secondary school teachers with a minimum teaching practice of three years.

Apart from theoretical and practical input the participants learn to reflect on and assess their own teaching methods in CLIL by using action research methods. They receive certificates at the end of the course. (See <http://www.iff.ac.at/ius/lehrgaenge/pfl.php>)

The Vienna Board of Education has designed a 90-hour in-service teacher training programme ('Dual Language Programme' – DLP, see <http://schulfuerher.at/vi/information/mehrfremdsprachen.htm>). Teachers in lower secondary education follow this programme over an academic year. It consists of several modules, each module being split up into input phases and self-study:

In addition to these extensive continuing education programmes a great number of

Module 1 Methodology and Didactics	Understanding the principles of CLIL – DLP
Module 2 Material Development	Identifying (a) CLIL – DLP topic(s)
Module 3 Language Development	Researching (a) CLIL – DLP topic(s)
Module 4 Subject-Specific Methodology, Didactics and Language	Developing (a) CLIL – DLP topic(s)
Module 5 Lesson Observation and Teaching	Implementing (a) CLIL – DLP topic(s)

individual workshops are offered every semester by regional pedagogical institutes and other educational institutions.

## 2.6 Curriculum and Certification

Language curricula are part of the general curricula for certain school types ('Hauptschule, Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule/Gymnasium, Berufsbildende Schule). These curricula are based on a communicative, task based and functional approach to language learning and teaching. There are general aims and objectives for all languages taught in schools. The European dimension and especially the idea of a multilingual and multicultural society are emphasized in these general aims.

CLIL is always used within the framework of the national curriculum. A certain percentage of teaching hours of the curriculum, however, may be adapted to individual needs ('school autonomy'). This is frequently used for the support of CLIL instruction; in some schools, the International Baccalaureate has been introduced as a pilot project. There are no specific exams that CLIL students can or have to take. During exams they usually use the CLIL target language, but are allowed by law to switch to their mother tongue if use of the foreign language would impair their performance in the exam. CLIL is recognized in school certificates, and usually mentioned, when its use exceeds 50% of the teaching time.

## 2.7 Materials and Methodology

### Materials

Materials do not present many problems in CLIL teaching in Austria. Some teachers design some of their materials specifically for their teaching purposes (especially in vocational education). Most teachers, however, use existing (authentic) materials in the target language or adapt such materials. The Internet is very widely searched as a source of information, and many Internet pages already offer prefabricated teaching material for many purposes. Most teachers, however, are very often not aware that they infringe copyright laws when they use downloaded materials in their CLIL classroom.

### Methodology

We consider CLIL as an approach to improve the use of a foreign language by students that does not aim to supersede the (formal) teaching of this modern language as such. Therefore, we believe that the teaching of the subject is at the centre of interest and that a modern European language is mainly used as a 'tool' or 'vehicle' to learn the subject. In our understanding, it follows that the methodology of teaching the subject matter and that of teaching a modern language should be combined in order to accommodate both aims: learning about the subject and improving the knowledge of a modern language at the same time. We must also bear in mind that – compared with a 'normal' learning situation – students in a CLIL classroom have to face a double challenge. They are expected to process speech in a foreign language in order to take in new information and at the same time they have to integrate new knowledge into an existing corpus (i.e., learn). If a learner's linguistic proficiency is low, this may practically form a barrier to understanding and learning, of course. This double challenge for the learner is what many teachers have long known or felt intuitively when using CLIL in their classrooms. As a consequence, most CLIL teachers:

- slow down their pace of presentation considerably;
- break down information into smaller, more easily 'digestible' units;
- support their presentations by using visual stimuli and artefacts in order to better exemplify meaning and content;
- give sufficient time for repetition, thus reinforcing the learning process;
- are very tolerant as regards language mistakes (in the process of learning);
- simplify content as much as they can/the curriculum allows, and
- adopt as many useful methods from communicative language teaching as possible.

These 'general rules' have been reported as being successful by CLIL teachers over and over again and form a 'core' of methodological advice.

## 2.8 Future Developments

In the year 2000, the Austrian Centre initiated a big national conference with international guest-speakers for Language Competence (Österreichisches Sprachen-Kompetenz-Zentrum – ÖSZ). This conference aimed both to take stock of current developments in Austria and to plan future activities in the field, at the same time preparing for the European Year of Languages (2001). As a result of the conference it can be stated that CLIL (EAA) is a well-established part of mainstream education in Austria. It is widespread and there is sufficient provision of materials as well as pre- and in-service teacher training. A variety of teaching formats has stimulated the use of CLIL in very different school types. A specific working group at the conference discussed future activities in the field. The results were as follows:

- CLIL should remain a teaching concept for a wide target group in mainstream education
- Curriculum changes could make subjects more 'suitable' for the use of CLIL (e.g. combining the separate subjects of Physics, Biology and Chemistry in one subject 'Science').
- Instruments for the analysis and evaluation of teaching materials should be created
- CLIL could become a more integral part of subject-related teaching materials (e.g. of geography books).
- More incentives for CLIL teachers should be created, and the employment of native speaker teachers should be facilitated.
- Stronger networking and exchange of information (national and international) should be supported by a co-ordinating body, such as the ÖSZ.
- The formal evaluation of CLIL teaching should help define parameters of successful implementation of CLIL.

Apart from these concrete suggestions and recommendations it will certainly be necessary to define the future roles of general language instruction and CLIL teaching in order to best exploit both forms of language instruction within the educational system. A further wish would be the extension of CLIL to languages other than English. Although there is CLIL teaching in French and Italian in some of the bigger academic secondary schools, English still remains predominant. Concepts such as using CLIL for complementing general foreign language instruction on a higher educational level still remain to be developed and piloted.

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