

# CLIL w dzisiejszej Europie: wyzwania i zagrożenia

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## A Strong Call for Content: reflecting on Austria's Needs in CLIL Vocational Schools

O zwiększoną rolę treści przedmiotowych: refleksje  
nad potrzebami austriackich szkół branżowych  
wykorzystujących metodę CLIL

**Key words:** CLIL, vocational school, Austria, content, translanguaging.

**Abstract.** Austria has quite an experience in vocational CLIL. It has been implemented on a compulsory level, and now it is a method of teaching in about one hundred Austrian schools and this number is rising. In the last few years about three hundred Austrian vocational teachers have successfully completed a CLIL course at Pädagogische Hochschule Wien.

The project “CLIL-VET – Implementing the CLIL-VET model in vocational schools” with partners from Poland, Romania and Spain offered a possibility to take a step back and view CLIL in Austria through another perspective. Especially the differences in vocational teaching and language proficiencies of teachers and students in other countries gave us a chance to explore the needs of Austrian vocational CLIL.

This paper is a strong call for content in vocational CLIL. The need for improvement roots in different factors, some of which are the language proficiencies of vocational CLIL teachers and students and the CLIL subject's content. This paper describes two methods of pushing vocational content, both using translanguaging.

**Słowa kluczowe:** CLIL, szkoła zawodowa, Austria, treść, translanguaging.

**Streszczenie.** Austria posiada znaczące doświadczenie w kształceniu metodą CLIL w szkołach zawodowych. Metodyka ta została wdrożona jako obowiązkowa i jest wykorzystywana w około stu szkołach austriackich, a liczba ta nadal rośnie. W ciągu ostatnich kilku lat około trzystu nauczycieli zawodu w Austrii z powodzeniem ukończyło kurs CLIL w Pädagogische Hochschule Wien.

Projekt „CLIL-VET – Wdrożenie modelu CLIL-VET w szkołach zawodowych” realizowany z partnerami z Polski, Rumunii i Hiszpanii umożliwił spojrzenie na CLIL w Austrii z zupełnie

innej perspektywy. Zaobserwowane różnice w szkolnictwie zawodowym oraz biegłości językowej nauczycieli i studentów z innych krajów umożliwiły redefinicję potrzeb austriackiego kształcenia zawodowego i dotychczasowej roli CLIL w tym kontekście.

Artykuł ten jest silnym wezwaniem do rzetelnej analizy założeń metodycznych CLIL oraz uwytądnienia nauczanych tą metodą treści zawodowych. Konieczność ta spowodowana jest różnymi czynnikami, m.in. umiejętnościami językowymi nauczycieli zawodu i ich uczniów oraz jakością opracowania treści przedmiotowych. W artykule opisano dwie metody, które ułatwiają przygotowanie lekcji według wymagań metodyki CLIL; obie wykorzystują model translanguaging.

**Introduction.** Looking back on a time of fascinating work always ends up in satisfaction, and, to some extent, also in defining special needs for the future development. This applies specifically to Austria's part in the CLIL-VET project and the position in the CLIL movement.

In Austria CLIL is quite well established in the primary, lower secondary and the upper secondary school. In the vocational sector CLIL is gradually and steadily developing quite well; yet there is one problem getting more and more into the focus of discussion, and that is the perfect equilibrium of content and language. And those CLIL teachers directly working with students very often complain about the lack of sufficient content as compared to language.

This paper will offer an evaluation of the CLIL standing in the vocational schools with, however, a particularly critical analysis of what could be called the ideal mixture and quantity of content on the one hand and language on the other.

It is a matter of fairness to add that the author himself has been working in the vocational sector for nine years, in a technical college stressing on IT, and, in his special function as a CLIL-expert, has strongly been involved in implementing CLIL in vocational schools.

**Vocational Schools in Austria.** The report from Austria on the state of CLIL in VET [3] described vocational schools in Austria to some extent. The following review is meant as an elaboration of what has been described before. Vocational schools in Austria have always had a very specific position in the country's educational system. One of the reasons for that is the fact that they have been estimated as the academic branch of what is called apprenticeship training, which in fact is a dual training consisting of the training on the job supported by a traditional school training, either once a week in cities or a combined six-week-school course a year in the country. This so-called dual system had been "exported" to a number of countries, because it combines practical training with school education.

The advantage is that there is a wider range of training including, on top of the practical training on, a theoretical foundation of the job's qualification which would not have been possible within the range of practical work, and the amazing thing is that this dual system of apprentice training, as one possibility of entering a job, is still in existence.

Starting from this given background, there are now four different types of vocational schools in Austria:

- Technical colleges,
- Business colleges,
- Tourism and Commercial colleges and
- Agricultural colleges.

All of these school types were, with the exception of tourism, creations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and were meant to act in between the secondary schools and the training on a university level.

These four types of vocational school offer three options each:

- either only a one year programme on a very basic level,
- or a three years' course as a substitute for apprenticeship training,
- or a five years' course finishing with the university access or special diploma for a specific vocational profession.

After World War II, and particularly after a general school reform in 1962, foreign language education has been mandatory in lower secondary education, starting at the age of ten. So pupils have at least four years of English before they enter the vocational school level, and in most cases even one or two years more, because English has become a voluntary subject even in primary schools, which consequently means that any vocational school student has a good command of English to start with.

It is a self-explaining fact that there is no learning and no teaching without language, and any teacher, regardless of his/her subject, is a language teacher; language in any given subject comes along in a sort of side effect. There is no learning without content either, and it is the equilibrium of content and language that creates the positive result, and this very equilibrium is so different in vocational schools, with the scales showing more weight on content than on language.

**CLIL in Austrian Vocational Schools.** As mentioned in the CLIL-VET Framework [2] the term CLIL was coined by David March [1] and defined as

*dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of content and language with the objective of promoting both content and language mastery to predefined levels.*

While CLIL may be implemented with any two languages, the most common implementation in Austria is with German as L1 and English as L2. This article will focus on this very kind of implementation.

A main theoretical basis of CLIL is the 4C Framework [5]:

*The 4C Framework integrates four contextualized building blocks: Content (subject matter), communication (language learning and using), cognition (learning and thinking processes) and culture (developing intercultural understanding and global citizenship).*

The 4C Framework is a fundamental basis for the CLIL Matrix [6] that was developed by the Austrian organization ÖSZ. This CLIL Matrix had quite an influence on the development of vocational CLIL in Austria. A research in language teaching and learning in Austria can be found in [8]. A study on CLIL in the technical vocational sector is described in [9].

Two central aims of the method CLIL are to make education more individual and more student centered. One common way of achieving that is by constructing a CLIL lesson using “CLIL activities”. Rosie Tanner and Liz Dale [4] describe in their book a large collection of such activities. The author of this article thinks that the vast majority of those activities are not age appropriate for teenagers in the age of 16 to 18 and too language-focused for Austrian vocational CLIL. In the opinion of the author the activities described in that resource may assist to teach vocational CLIL for content that was previously covered in L1 and it can be a companion to L2 resources, especially for audio and video. But they do not allow to push content nearly as fast and deep as lessons in L1 because of the complexity of vocational content.

The report from Austria on the state of CLIL in VET [3] describes the different types of vocational schools where CLIL is implemented and how the compulsory regulations are defined. One important fact is that CLIL in vocational schools in Austria is implemented in the school year 11, 12 and 13. The students English language proficiency is usually B1 or B2. And in most cases the vocational CLIL teacher is not an English language teacher and not an English native speaker.

**Survey.** As part of the work on the CLIL-VET project a survey was conducted. The participants were Austrian vocational teachers who have completed a CLIL course. The results are shown in the report from Austria on the state of CLIL in VET [3].

The interpretation of the author focuses on the following two aspects:

- It seems that Austrian CLIL teachers want to work with language teachers. What the data is not showing is how the CLIL teachers expect this cooperation to be. This cooperation would probably turn out to be beneficial for both the vocational CLIL teacher and the English language teacher. A team teaching of vocational teacher and ELT could be such a solution but having an additional teacher for each CLIL lesson is very expensive.
- Austrian vocational CLIL teachers seem to have a hard time to find material that is suitable for their lessons. Text books containing CLIL material may help.

**Considerations for Vocational CLIL.** In contrast to other educational sectors you can hardly find any subjects teachers who are also English language teachers. Also you can hardly find any subject teacher who is native speaker in the L2 CLIL language. The option of CLIL team teaching of a subject teacher and a language teacher is far too cost intensive. The language skills of a typical vocational CLIL teacher is often only a little better than their students’ average. The language skills of CLIL teachers may improve in future since the English language skills of young people may be better. The obvious fact

remains, the command of English language of an English language teacher is generally much higher than the ones of non-ELT. These considerations are relevant for what is realistically possible in vocational CLIL lesson.

To make it quite clearly, the author thinks that vocational CLIL in Austria is an extremely valuable method. The author also thinks, however, the acceptance of CLIL and the results of CLIL teaching could significantly be improved by a reevaluation of vocational CLIL. The author thinks that the method of CLIL has implicitly been targeted for language teachers who, on top of this quality, are also able to teach a subject. But in vocational CLIL we have subject teachers who are not language teachers, and who usually will never be.

**Vocational CLIL in the Classroom.** The CLIL-VET Framework [2] describes challenges and solutions for CLIL in the classroom in chapter 3, [10] describes some practical approaches. The CLIL-VET Framework mentions in subsection 4.5.1 translanguaging as the process of using more than one language for an integrated communication. The author recommends the following implementations of translanguaging. The methods are based on [7].

It is widely accepted that within a CLIL lesson L1 may be used by the teacher. Translanguaging in the context of this document refers to a systematic way of using L1 and L2 to allow focusing on content within a CLIL lesson. This way of using translanguaging has to ensure that core elements of CLIL are preserved, that teaching is individualized, learner centered and that the learners' language skills benefit from such a CLIL lesson.

One way to implement translanguaging in vocational teaching is to use L2 material. A scaffolding for the language helps the students to learn the new content. Task and discussions on that material is performed in L1 to allow students to concentrate on the content. Content and language are integrated because working on the content part can only be performed efficiently if language is understood.

Another way to implement translanguaging is to use L1 material. The tasks and discussions are however performed in L2. An advantage of this approach is that it is easier for weaker students to follow.

Last but not least it is of course possible to combine translanguaging with well-known teaching methods. As an example, in the jigsaw teaching technique students discuss and solve a task in L1 and create a presentation in L2. Every student then presents the group's presentation to members of other groups in L2, and thus every student gets to speak in L2 about a subject specific topic.

**Perspectives for the Future.** CLIL is implemented in the Austrian vocational educational system to stay. There are constantly more vocational schools implementing CLIL.

The following five paragraphs summarize the positive effects of vocational CLIL:

- The vocational field is extremely varied, and for some of these subject matters there are not even German textbooks available. But there are already German school books for mathematics and physics that contain CLIL parts.
- There is a tight organizational network for technical schools, and it seems the other types of vocational schools are in the process of building network structures to support their vocational CLIL teachers.
- University Colleges of Teacher Education perform research for new CLIL methods that are specifically useful for vocational teaching.
- The command of English, which is highly relevant for the quality of CLIL lessons is usually higher for teachers that are currently young. The CLIL lessons are compulsory for the highest grades that are usually taught by the most experienced teachers. Therefore, language skills of vocational CLIL teachers will have to increase with the next generation of teachers.
- Last but not least, CLIL gets more established in schools and seen as normal by students and teachers.

**Summary.** Austria has done a big step by declaring vocational CLIL to be compulsory some years ago. Vocational CLIL is a success in Austria, and signs are pointing in the direction that vocational CLIL will be a success in the future.

The University College of Teacher Education of Vienna trains vocational teachers on how to use CLIL. The feedback of the teachers and the contact to the schools are used to adapt CLIL methods.

The CLIL-VET project allowed a new perspective on Austrian vocational CLIL by having the chance to get a thorough insight how CLIL is implemented in the countries of the partner organizations.

Austrian vocational CLIL teachers are neither language teachers nor English native speakers, and this situation will not change in future. The author recommends implementations of translanguaging as basis for the CLIL lessons. The material of such lessons can either be in L1 or in L2. Both ways have their advantages.

### Acronyms

4C	Cognition, Culture, Content, Communication
B1	The fourth best of six levels of language proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level
B2	The third best of six levels of language proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level
C1	The second best of six levels of language proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CLIL-VET	Content and Language Integrated Learning in the field of Vocational Education and Training

ELT	English Language Teacher (English Language Teaching)
L1	L1 is a speaker's first language (in Austrian CLIL usually German)
L2	L2 is a speaker's second language (in Austrian CLIL usually English)
ÖSZ	Österreichisches-Sprachen-Kompetenz-Zentrum (Austria's Language Competence Center)
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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