**The Power of Beliefs: Lay Theories and their Influence on the Implementation of CLIL Programmes**

**Julia Hüttner[[1]](#footnote-1)[[2]](#footnote-2), Christiane Dalton-Puffer, Ute Smit[[3]](#footnote-3)**

*Abstract*

CLIL is one of the most dynamic pedagogic trends in language teaching in Europe and yet, the enthusiasm with which this innovation is implemented by stakeholders and “made a success” is not fully understood. In this paper we argue for an investigation of CLIL implementation as a form of extended language policy (Spolsky 2004), which relates language management, practice and beliefs, and so expands the notion of policy well beyond top-down legislation.

In this contribution, the suggested centrality of beliefs to CLIL policy analysis will be shown by a detailed investigation into the lay theories of teachers and learners involved in CLIL instruction in Austrian upper secondary colleges of technology, which traditionally attract students considered as relatively unsuccessful foreign language learners. The data consist of 48 in-depth interviews with teachers and students in this setting, covering a range of teacher specialisations and of student abilities. The discursive and content analysis of these interviews shows clear clusters of beliefs relating to language learning, the effects and benefits of CLIL and to the construction of success regarding CLIL. Findings suggest that the strength of beliefs and the relative absence of language management result in a construction of CLIL and of CLIL success that is partly at odds with those of experts or policy makers, but which is linked directly to local CLIL practices. Issues arising of these mismatches are discussed.

**Keywords**: Lay theories, Language Policy, vocational schooling, educational success, language management

1. **Introduction**

When we consider the fate of pedagogic innovations in mainstream teaching, a complex situation can be observed with some changes being accepted quickly and enthusiastically by the stakeholders involved, without the apparent need or desire for scientific evidence supporting the benefits claimed, while other changes meet with reluctance or even open opposition, possibly despite good research evidence in their favour. In the Austrian context, Content-and-Language-Integrated-Learning (CLIL) as well as many other forms of, especially early, bilingual education fall into the first category of easy acceptance, while, for instance, standardised exams or external student competence evaluations generally come into the latter category of reluctance and opposition. CLIL has, indeed, experienced a quite remarkable adoption rate and positive attitudes by stakeholders, even with student groups stereotypically perceived as less motivated language learners, even before any research evidence or systematic assessment of CLIL students’ language development was available to support such a view of CLIL.

This article sets out to argue that the beliefs held by stakeholders in education are able to shed more light onto this situation of diverse acceptance of pedagogic innovations, and especially onto the seemingly undiminished success of CLIL in Austria. Decisions on foreign language pedagogy at a national level, such as the adoption of CLIL in Austrian mainstream schooling, form a core aspect of language policy (LP) and there are a number of explicit language management statements on both national and EU levels on the use of CLIL. It would, however, be simplistic to view the perceived success of CLIL language practices in Austria as a direct result of these LP statements. As argued by Spolsky (2004), language policy documents stand in a complex relationship with both language practice and, importantly, with language beliefs. Over the last few decades, research into teachers’ beliefs has shown effects on classroom practices (cf., e.g., Borg 2003), on individuals' development as professionals (cf., e.g., Johnson 1994) and also on their adoption and acceptance of new teaching approaches (cf., e.g., Donaghue 2003). Despite a wealth of research conducted into learner beliefs and into teacher cognition, these have – to our knowledge – so far not been related explicitly to one specific educational approach in its trial phase. Here we shall discuss the construction of beliefs on CLIL by the stakeholders involved in relationship with relevant language practices and language management (cf. Spolsky 2004). We shall argue that especially the construction of this approach as 'successful', as well as the conceptualisation of learning by most stakeholders, rely heavily on beliefs and in the absence of CLIL management generally favour an unstructured adoption of CLIL. However, we shall also be pointing out contradictory trends as well as distinctions of opinion within the groups of stakeholders interviewed.

1. **Theoretical Background**
   1. ***The Policy Framework***

Given our interest in beliefs as a central force in creating the success of CLIL, our concern lies with its design, implementation and social construction, and in showing how these three aspects are interrelated and co-dependent. The resultantly complex conceptualisation is best encapsulated by the tripartite model of language policy, put forth by Spolsky (2004) and elaborated in Shohamy (2006) and Spolsky (2009) as “expanded view of LP" (Shohamy 2006, 32).

Spolsky's tripartite model is an extension of original discussions into language policy and planning (LP), which largely focussed on officially published policy documents and measures of policy implementation (cf., e.g., Ferguson 2006, 16-17). The model recognises that a community’s language policy, or “language choices made by individual speakers on the basis of rule-governed patterns recognized by the speech community (or communities) of which they are members” (Spolsky 2009, 1), is complex and integrates three socio-linguistically rather disparate components: *language practices, language management* and *language beliefs* (Spolsky 2004, 5-14). Language practices refer to which varieties are used by whom, for which purposes and under which circumstances; language management covers the various statements and documents that attempt to influence the actual language practices; and language beliefs capture how the social players involved think about and construct their language choices.

Additionally, each of these components is complex in itself in that it relates to various political levels – from supra-national to institutional. Such a tri-componential and multi-layered conceptualisation not only captures the complexity surrounding a community’s ‘language choices’, but it also allows for a critical assessment of the contested nature of the societal mechanisms behind “organizing, managing and manipulating language behaviours” (Shohamy 2006, 45). Given the diverse interests and language ideologies of various societal groups, language practices, managerial decisions and language beliefs usually do not fit neatly together, but often stand in covert or even overt contradiction, competing for more societal relevance and impact. Or, as Shohamy (2006, 54) puts it, there is a “battle between ideology and practice”, which is waged by societal mechanisms that research needs to identify, address and critically assess. In other words, when dealing with a specific language policy, researchers need to pay attention to all three components – what is done, what should be done, and what is believed to be done – as well as their complementary or conflicting inter-dependence.

When applied to CLIL, the “expanded view of LP” (Shohamy 2006, 32) clarifies that CLIL policies are made up of management statements, actual practices as well as stakeholders’ beliefs, and that all three components are relevant in their individual complexity and mutual, potentially contested interrelatedness. Interestingly, the extant CLIL research literature has paid much more attention to CLIL practices and CLIL management, but sidelined the component of beliefs (see section 1.3).

In an attempt to counter-balance the picture, our focus here is particularly on the last, i.e. stakeholder beliefs about language use and language learning in Austrian CLIL settings.

* 1. ***Language Learner and Teacher Beliefs***

Although the precise definitions of beliefs in the context of second language learning and teaching are a little elusive (cf. Pajares 1992), the quite inclusive view we shall be following in this paper is that beliefs are lay theories of teachers and learners and constitute the complex cluster of intuitive, subjective knowledge about the nature of language, language use and language learning, taking into account both cognitive and social dimensions, as well as cultural assumptions (cf. Barcelo 2003a, 8ff). Within the growing body of research into learner and teacher beliefs, we find sound empirical evidence suggesting that beliefs are important in understanding learner motivation (cf. Cziser and Lukacs 2010; Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009) and that beliefs affect how learners make sense of their experiences and organise their learning (Mercer and Ryan 2009; Wenden 1998). Also, they affect teachers’ classroom behaviour, although contradictions between beliefs and actions are also observed (e.g. Borg 2006; Farrell and Kun 2008; Li and Walsh 2011; Farrell and Ng 2003; Phipps and Borg 2009). Research evidence clearly shows the relevance of beliefs in teacher education (e.g. Borg 2003; Donaghue 2003; Johnson 1994; Mansour 2009), suggesting that without addressing teachers’ pre-existing beliefs, changes cannot successfully be implemented in teacher attitudes or behaviour.

In the *contextual* approach to studying lay theories (Barcelos 2003a, 19) the focus lies on specific contexts, which themselves are viewed as “socially constituted” and “interactively sustained” (cf. Goodwin and Duranti 1992, 5), and beliefs are viewed as inherently dynamic constructions of the learning and teaching endeavour. In line with this position, we view the beliefs held by our interviewees as social constructions of their reality and as changeable and possibly contradictory. Other characteristics we associate with beliefs are that they are dynamic rather than static mental representations (Amuzie and Winke,2009; Tanaka and Ellis 2003; Mercer 2011) and inherently complex (Mercer 2011; Mori 1999; Woods 2003). Thus, beliefs are to be investigated and understood in their own right, without an *a priori* agenda of which beliefs there might be, or, more extreme, of changing existing beliefs.

We adopt a view of discourse as a locus of (co-)construction of these beliefs and not merely as a way of making these beliefs visible (cf. Kalaja 2003; Kramsch 2003; Potter 1996). The means of investigating such beliefs is therefore the analysis of the discourse constructing these beliefs in a twofold way by focusing, firstly, on the content of the discourse and secondly, on the way in which this content is transmitted. Both such content and discourse analyses are in our case based on interviews, where participants could within a loose structure talk about and develop their own views on language, language learning and CLIL. As we consider the beliefs held by all stakeholders in education to be of value, we focus equally on CLIL learners and teachers (cf. Barcelos 2003b; Dufva 2003; Woods 2003; Brown 2009 on combined investigations of teacher and student beliefs).

In this way, studying beliefs will be of relevance as a springboard for stakeholders’ reflection on the nexus between their beliefs, policy documents and specific educational practices. This is in line with findings on teacher cognition that show the importance of addressing core beliefs of teachers in order to raise awareness and enable practitioners to make more informed choices in their practices. (cf. Borg 2003; Olson and Jimenez-Silva 2008)

The following section will discuss, albeit briefly, the current state of CLIL policy and practices in Europe.

* 1. ***Policy and Practices in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)***

The implementation of CLIL in Europe has been fuelled from two ends: high-level policy-making and grass-roots actions. What we see above all is individuals reacting to what they rightly perceive as major shifts in society and economic life, so that many parents believe that CLIL promises their children an edge in the competition for employment (Li 2002); on the same account, teachers often take the initiative to teach through the medium of English. On the other end of the spectrum, high-level political agents at EU-level have also started to steer language management activities in the direction of CLIL, notably through the publication of policy papers. In a declaration by the European Commission, CLIL was invested with “a major contribution to make to the Union’s language learning goals” (European Commission Communication 2003, 8). These language learning goals consist not only in “the ability to understand and communicate in more than one language (…) [as] a desirable life-skill”(European Commission 2008, chapter 14), but also “the EU’s language policy promotes multilingualism and aims for a situation in which every EU citizen can speak at least two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue.“ (European Commission 2009) It is thus evident that language learning goals are the defining feature of CLIL in EU policy papers.

Despite this ostentatious importance of CLIL, few of the 27 national education systems in the European Union have actually responded with substantial management investments into CLIL implementation, teacher education and research, so that explicit goals and precise curricular objectives are largely missing and CLIL continues to be carried forward in most cases by grass-roots stakeholders’ practices (cf. Eurydice 2006). [[4]](#footnote-4) Austria, the local context of this study, is no exception in this respect; in fact, it can serve as a typical European case: numerous schools in all sectors of the education system run CLIL-modules or whole CLIL-streams, developing them in response to local needs and resources. While the last official statistics were published in 2005 (Nezbeda 2005), the education authorities are favourably inclined towards CLIL initiatives and have sanctioned CLIL provision globally and rather unspecifically in the shape of a brief and very general article about medium of instruction in the national school law (cf. Nezbeda 2005); however, ministerial directive also rules that students must always have the possibility to take exams in the constitutional majority language German.[[5]](#footnote-5) Apart from that, there are no CLIL-specific curricular guidelines or learning goals neither are there any binding requirements in terms of quantity or quality of provision, including teacher qualification.[[6]](#footnote-6) CLIL thus continues to be a fully grass-roots endeavour even after twenty years, which effectively means that schools of all types and levels (general, academic and vocational, primary and secondary) can and do offer the kind and extent of CLIL programme that suits the school’s resources and the students’ or parents’ needs.

In contrast to the managerial void at national levels, a series of transnational European expert groups has translated the high-level policy claims mentioned above into conceptualizations, curricular guidelines and model materials which are accessible through international workshops and on-line (e.g. [www.clilcompendium.com](http://www.clilcompendium.com/), [www.ccn-clil.eu](http://www.ccn-clil.eu/), [www.clilconsortium.jyu.fi](http://www.clilconsortium.jyu.fi/), www.ecml.at/activities/intro.asp).[[7]](#footnote-7) The extent to which these activities and the suggestions resulting from them impact upon national and local practices is hard to fathom. With regard to the Austrian national CLIL scene in focus in this study, it can be said that these offerings have been received only by a small number of individuals, and have therefore had a very limited impact. The practice of CLIL is thus exclusively guided by experiential criteria and beliefs of the individuals involved.[[8]](#footnote-8) Alongside the work just mentioned on conceptual development, empirical research on CLIL has seen a lively development since about 2005. However, this research has so far dealt with the participants’ perspective only to a very limited extent (cf. Viebrock 2007; Moate 2011). In contrast, the outcomes of CLIL programmes have been studied in a number of larger scale projects (e.g., Admiraal, Westhoff and deBot 2006; Hüttner and Rieder-Bünemann 2010; Jexenflicker and Dalton-Puffer 2010; Lasagabaster 2008; LLinares and Whittaker 2010; Lorenzo, Casal and Moore 2005; Mewald 2007; Ruiz de Zarobe 2008; Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe 2010; Zydatiß 2007).[[9]](#footnote-9) In general, the findings in different studies concur in that CLIL students have more highly developed language skills than mainstream comparison groups on a range of dimensions, but not on all (e.g. CLIL has not been shown to confer clear advantages for pronunciation or textual competence). With regard to content learning some studies report cognitive advantages (van de Craen et al 2007) while others found reduced complexity of subject-specific concepts (Airey 2009; Walker 2010) and yet others adopt an intermediate position (Jäppinen 2005; Badertscher and Bieri 2009). Also, doubts are now being formulated regarding the implied causality between CLIL and the good learning results found by outcomes studies (cf. Bruton 2011): a fundamental problem affecting comparisons between CLIL- and mainstream learners being that participants in CLIL programmes (a) tend to come from socio-economically strong backgrounds, (b) tend to have a special interest in languages, and (c) continue to receive the same EFL teaching as the mainstreamers on top of their CLIL.

Alongside outcome-studies a growing research literature on the practices observable in CLIL classrooms offers interesting perspectives on issues relevant to this study. Several researchers report that active student participation is lower than in parallel groups instructed in L1 (e.g. Lim Falk 2008; Kiraz et al. 2010). The declaration that CLIL lessons are pedagogically more innovative and student-oriented or at least different from L1 lessons was not confirmed by Badertscher and Bieri’s (2009) comparative observation of Swiss CLIL and non-CLIL content lessons: they found no differences in the overall pedagogical design of the two modes, an observation that can also be made on the basis of Dalton-Puffer’s Austrian data (2007). What does seem to happen, though, is a subtle readjustment of roles in the sense that the L2 puts teachers and learners more on an equal footing (e.g. Smit 2010b; Nikula 2010), a phenomenon on which our data add an interesting twist. In addition to the meaning orientation of L2 use in CLIL, such interpersonal effects may play a decisive role in explaining reduced L2 speaking anxiety of CLIL learners (e.g. Maillat 2010; Nikula 2007).

In this brief synopsis we have noted two gaps in current research into CLIL: the perspective of students and teachers and the question of what CLIL does for people who are not specially inclined towards or interested in foreign language learning. Both of these are addressed in the present paper.

1. **Context and Design of the Study**
   1. ***Institutional Context***

As has become noticeable from our discussion in section 1.3, Austrian educational culture is characterized by a relatively high degree of teacher autonomy with regard to curricular and methodological matters, including a certain amount of classroom time that can be devoted to subject-related project work. While this autonomy does not hold for administrative and organisational matters in general, assessment is one aspect typically performed by the class teacher, including for school-leaving exams. Only recently the introduction of a national diagnostic test at grade levels 4 and 8, as well as a partly standardized school-leaving exam at grade level 12 have started a possible cultural change in this respect. Another characteristic of the country’s educational culture is the high degree of orality in the teaching and assessment of non-language subjects. Thus, setting writing tasks in content subjects such as History, Geography or Economics would constitute an unusual pedagogic decision in Austria, and written tests in these subjects are balanced by oral exams.

The teacher and student voices we draw on in this article come from Austrian colleges of technology and crafts, known by the abbreviation of *HTL*, which stands for *Höhere technische Lehranstalt*, a label that enjoys considerable prestige, so that in many cases a HTL will have the pick of the best technically interested students from lower secondary schools. This type of upper secondary schools is rather specific to the Austrian education system, as in many other countries the specialisations they offer are available only at tertiary level, ranging from mechanical engineering, construction, mining and textile product engineering to materials engineering, software development and many more. The HTL curricula also include general knowledge subjects as well as two obligatory *English as a foreign language* lessons per week. The HTL encompasses grades 9 to 13 and provides its students with full university entrance qualifications.

In 2008 CLIL was used in 65% of the Austrian HTLs and approximately half of these schools were planning to further increase their CLIL provision.[[10]](#footnote-10) In every single case the first “L” in CLIL stood for English. As for the schools without CLIL, 80% of them reported they were interested in introducing it, though the majority had no concrete plan to do so. In the HTLs with CLIL, the most frequently taught theoretical specialist subjects which involve CLIL are computer science, foundations of data processing, electronics and programming. The general knowledge subjects most frequently taught through CLIL are geography, history and chemistry. Practical technical subjects, however, are rarely taught in English (at only 21% of all CLIL sites), even though participants view their potential as high. The majority of CLIL teachers are content subject specialists without formal qualifications in the target language and/or language pedagogy, although there are some teachers who have combined degrees in English language teaching and a general knowledge subject.

* 1. ***Research Design and Methodology***

The findings presented here were investigated in the context of a larger study conducted in 2007/2008 (Dalton-Puffer et al. 2008), addressing all stakeholders in CLIL education at HTLs through a variety of research methods. As well as a document analysis, web-based questionnaires were presented to school managers and alumni. The central agents, i.e.students and teachers, were interviewed on the basis of a multiple case study at 6 focus schools. The schools were selected on the basis of the responses in the principals’ questionnaire (N=106) in order to ensure variance along parameters such as specialisation, size, rural/urban, transparency of CLIL programme. The focus schools thus cover both urban and rural settings and a range of specialisations, and implement CLIL to different degrees. A double case study comparing English language proficiency of CLIL and non-CLIL students was also carried out at two schools (Jexenflicker and Dalton-Puffer 2010). The latter was the first research study on language attainment in this context.

For the present article we draw on the student and teacher interviews. The 20 students were in year one to year five (grade 9 to grade 13), their ages ranging from 15 to 20 years. At each school, however, the interviewees were attending the same grade level. In conversation with form teachers care was taken that students of different academic capability levels were interviewed at each site. Except for one student, the interviewees were all male, reflecting the gender distribution in these schools. Compared to the populations examined in other CLIL studies situated in general education programmes it is safe to say that the HTL students do not represent a ‘positive selection’ with regard to affinity for modern languages, on the contrary. In some settings, students had little choice but to accept being in a CLIL strand, as their strand of specialisation was only offered as a CLIL strand. Findings have thus to be interpreted also with this additional dimension in mind.

The 28 teachers who were interviewed teach either English and a general education subject (N=7) or else a variety of technology, engineering and business subjects (N=21). Several of them had previous work-experience outside education, which they later complemented with a brief teacher preparation course. At the time of the interviews they had all spent at least 5 years teaching at their respective schools. Most of the teachers had teaching experience of 10 years and over. 16 teachers were male and 12 female.

The interviews followed the model of the semi-structured guideline interview (cf., e.g., Kvale 1996), and two different guidelines were designed for students and teachers. The topics covered in the interviews included motivation, goals, design and conduct of lessons, and effects of CLIL on both groups, as well as difficulties/critique and future perspectives. The combined dataset analysed for the present article consists of 48 interviews which were fully transcribed (amounting to around 200.000 words in total).

The present analysis was conducted by the first two authors of this article independently of the content analysis (e.g. Mayring 2007) of the main study (Dalton-Puffer et al. 2008) in an iterative process that combined deductive and inductive elements (Miles and Huberman 1994). On the basis of repeated cross-codings of three teacher and three student interviews a common coding manual for both datasets was developed. It consisted of six main categories (29 codes):

1. What is language?
2. How is language learned?
3. Individual factors in language learning (affect, talent)
4. CLIL-aims and difficulties
5. Statements about student competences
6. Statements about teacher competences

Each dataset was then coded separately, while repeated conversational back-checks among the two researchers took place in order to validate the coding.

1. **Findings: Beliefs on Language and Language Learning**

As explained above, we assume that the beliefs of the participants involved in CLIL instruction in Austrian HTLs are “social constructions of the world” (cf. Kalaja 1995, 196) and as such will not be linked normatively to research-based theories. Furthermore, in line with the understanding of LP expounded on in the introduction, we see the beliefs we report on in the following section as co-determining in very significant ways how CLIL is constructed and “what CLIL is” in the context we describe.

* 1. ***What beliefs about language learning, CLIL effects and aims can we find among CLIL teachers and learners?***

In an innovative language teaching programme, such as CLIL, arguably the main belief to investigate in stakeholders relates to their views of how language learning takes place in general and, more specifically, how learning happens in CLIL settings. Importantly, teachers have beliefs about both student language learning and their own language learning, which at times differ quite noticeably.

The strongest belief to be found in all groups is that student language learning is ‘doing’. More precisely, learning is characterised as repeated practice, i.e. using the language as much as possible, and being exposed to it as much as possible. This is also often linked to notions of language use becoming more routine and automatized, shown for instance in these teacher quotes:

*so that you don’t have to think about what to say when you just want to make yourself understood […] but that this […] becomes automatic[[11]](#footnote-11)*

*as you use the language more often [...] to my mind this is how the pupil learns English*

The notion that language learning in CLIL is practice is echoed by the students, for instance in statements like “*you only learn English if you speak it yourself*” or “*it’s easier for me to learn a language if I use it myself*”.

This conceptualisation of learning as practice-related is at times explicitly linked to the perceived and sometimes experienced ‘natural’ way of language learning, i.e. on the job, using English. This is voiced by content teachers, who usually have previous work experience outside education and compare CLIL teaching environments quite explicitly with learning on the job.

*We provide [the students] with a practice [opportunity], just like they will find later in “the wild”, in business, where you usually – thank God – don’t meet only English teachers.*

Again, this view is echoed by students who view CLIL as closer to the reality of their future professions. Their statements refer to learning “*what one will really need in real life”.*

Apart from the frequent experience of content teachers of having themselves learnt English ‘by doing it’, a proportion of them (5 of 28) explicitly state that through teaching CLIL they continue to learn English, e.g. “*you learn something new every day*” or “*in this way you bring your own English up to scratch*”. This parallel view of teacher and student learning expressed by content teachers is linked also to a generally collaborative view of the language learning aspect in CLIL classes. Students noticed that the atmosphere in CLIL classes is “*more relaxed*”.

One content teacher’s comment summarises a frequently expressed view:

*It is a more equal basis. The student corrects the teacher’s English. The teacher accepts this gratefully. What the teacher is still better at, are the content and theoretical issues and in this way it is complementary. And this is beautiful to observe [... ] it is a mutual completion.*

This contrasts in interesting ways with established views of the roles of teachers and learners in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), where the ESP teacher is seen as the language expert and the students as content experts. In this setting, teachers view themselves as content experts and the students as at least co-experts in the foreign language. Thus, language learning as well as the language of classroom interaction is co-constructed (cf. also Smit 2010) while the technical content expertise remains with the teacher.

This dynamic and collaborative view is, however, in clear contrast to the qualified English teachers, who see their own language competence as more static, and their own language learning as more or less complete and only extendable by native English input. The potential of the students’ English is viewed as much more limited, with one English teacher stating, when asked about the effects of CLIL on herself, that her students’ less proficient English did not cause her to lose her English.

Underlying the teachers’ views on their own learning appear to be two different conceptualisations of English: English teachers refer to a construct of the target language as native, while the CLIL teachers of content subjects clearly view English as English for Specific Purposes and/or English as a Lingua Franca, i.e. as a means of communication where no other shared L1 is available. The latter do grant expertise to the English teachers and native speakers, but their actual ideal target and idealised co-teachers are engineers and the potential of English specialists and native English speakers is viewed more critically. Thus, one content teacher stated that “*it would not be sensible to work on these terms (for writing chemical reports) in the English class, as – I fear – the English teacher would be out of his depth*”. There is, however, one interesting exception with a content teacher who while constructing CLIL as a clear success in her statements went on to say “*but I also think that you can still learn this [a foreign language] best in the country [where it is spoken] and extremely fast [...] basically, everything else is a struggle*”. This ideal position seems to be in contrast with the actual situations of foreign language learners, but might be seen as an indication that naturalistic language learning is considered the best and a pedagogic innovation that is constructed to resemble this more closely than current teaching is thus viewed positively.

Alongside this overwhelming view of language learning as an incidental effect of using the target language in the study of content, explicit and focused learning does seem to take an important position as well. It is, however, mentioned almost exclusively in connection with content-specific vocabulary, and the overwhelming view of ESP in these contexts is terminological. Thus, teachers of all categories and students view such vocabulary as items to be learnt explicitly. In addition, glossaries, vocabulary lists, conventional and online dictionaries, as well as vocabulary quizzes are seen as requirements for students to become competent in their respective ESP. It does remain a little unclear, however, where teachers draw the distinction between vocabulary learning and learning new concepts, as the students involved are novices in their specialisations. As the teachers repeatedly highlight the need for students to also learn the German technical terms of their chosen specialisations, the need to learn English vocabulary does not seem to be a feature of it being a foreign language, but rather, competence in both English and German technical terminology is constructed as being a part of professional development. On the whole, teachers appear to view vocabulary learning clearly as explicit and taught learning, but do not comment on the contradiction with their overarching view of student language learning in CLIL as incidental.

Students on the other hand seem to conceptualise learning less clearly as either incidental or explicit, thus expressing not only a more complex view of their experience but also one that is more commensurate with the complexity of expert positions on language learning. For instance, students do mention explicit vocabulary study (dictionaries, lists etc.; see above) but also view terminology learning as part of learning by doing, viz. a student talking about the analytic chemical lab work and stating that “*it’s almost impossible not to learn the [content specific] terms*” and another who felt that “*if I need [vocab] and use it, then I remember it*”. One student even formulates a participatory stance towards language learning: “*That you participate. That you take part. You learn a lot from that, I believe*” and another appears to be an advocate of comprehensible output (cf. Swain 1995):

*you often have discussions in lessons and when you have to think about what you want to say and which words you can or should use for that, then they are imprinted on your mind and you can use them much more quickly next time*

As some of the beliefs exemplified earlier show, CLIL is constructed by both teachers and students as complementary to EFL lessons, which remain the traditional language learning domain with focus on correctness. Students and teachers construct the difference between CLIL and EFL as one of professional vs. general language use, e.g.:

*[CLIL is] English as used for the job in technology, with EFL that’s a bit difficult.*

CLIL as a domain of more direct professional relevance is also emphasised by the need of engineers to access work-related literature, which is frequently available first in English, in order to remain up-to-date professionally. The overall view of EFL classes is, however, not negative and most students actually accord a crucial role to English lessons for their linguistic development:“*you don’t actually learn a language in CLIL but in your English lessons*”. This view is shared by all teachers interviewed, who construct CLIL clearly as additional to EFL instruction and not as a replacement.

* 1. ***How is success constructed with regard to CLIL?***

Success in CLIL is linked strongly to learners becoming confident in using English and this notion of success equalling ‘daring to do’ is extended also to content teachers’ language learning, by all groups interviewed. Recurring expressions in this connection are *security, feel (more) secure, more relaxed, more familiar, no inhibitions, more agreeable, no more fear* and these occur in the statements of all stakeholders. This conceptualisation of success as first and foremost a change in affective factors regarding English, and especially speaking English, can be related to the way CLIL itself is constructed as a success story. Strikingly, as all seem to be confident in using their English, there seems to be little impetus to evaluate their English systematically.

Success is constructed as relative by all participants, i.e. as ‘better than’ students without CLIL instruction, the same students before the onset of CLIL, or teachers’ own experience of language learning. Thus, students view their English as better than other students‘, and as having become easier; one content teacher stated that students’ English “*improves from month to month […] due to practice*” and an English teacher noted “*that they learn some more English, it has to be, perforce*“. Especially the choice of *perforce* indicates that teachers seem convinced of the success of CLIL with regard to English, without either clear aims and goals as far as language competence is concerned (viz. content teachers’ typical statement that “*I don’t have language aims*”) or objective assessments of students’ proficiency levels. Arguably, success in CLIL is not defined as being proven to be better at English, but to **feel** better about speaking English.

Importantly, this aim of gaining confidence is linked, like the difference constructed between CLIL and EFL, to the international aspect of engineers’ working lives, where the dominant role of English is taken for granted. One content teacher’s statement can be seen as summarising this view of CLIL: “*a vocational school trains for the job and with all this globalisation it is actually unthinkable to manage without English*”. In this context, English is also usually viewed as English as a Lingua Franca, and its importance as a means of communication internationally with speakers of diverse L1s highlighted. The importance of English is seen as self-evident, or as one content teacher put it: “*even the stupidest person understands that he needs languages or that languages are important and so nobody asks 'why do we need this [CLIL]?'”.* Interestingly, this need for international expertise and language proficiency is implicitly linked only to CLIL and not seen as the domain of the subject English. To some extent this might be explained by the construction of CLIL as closer to “real life” than English, or as one student put it “*the technical stuff is one thing, where you do technology in English, and the other thing is the English lessons where you talk about your hobbies*”. This ‘division of labour’ between CLIL and EFL classes has interesting parallels with an observation made above, namely the different construction of English as ‘native language (ENL)’ on the part of the English teachers versus its construction as international lingua franca (ELF) on the part of the technology teachers.

As regards concrete aims for improved language competence, these are rarely specified for the students, with the exception of some mentions of knowledge of content specific terminology. Interestingly, content teachers mention their own improved language competence more frequently as an aim than that of their students, whose improvement is taken as fairly self-evident or as one content teacher stated: “*If you expect that they [the students] develop a little, then this development happens”.* Of all our interview partners, only one commented explicitly on the lack of evidence for the improved language competence of the students which is, however, implicitly the main agenda of the education authorities, as evidenced in published policy papers (cf. section 1.3). Thus, one content teacher stated “*let’s say that is a gut feeling [...] that they have a better communicative competence, more fluency. We have never tested that and said, is this really true?*”.

1. **Discussion**

In this paper, through investigating stakeholders’ beliefs of language learning as an integral part of extended language policy (LP), we have endeavoured to find explanations for the ease of acceptance of a specific pedagogic innovation, i.e. CLIL, by analysing discursive constructions of both learning in teacher and student interviews and in policy statements on CLIL. Relating our findings back to Spolsky’s (2004) conceptualisation of LP, we find that language management is remarkably weak in the Austrian CLIL context. None of our participants make reference to official CLIL policy, either with regard to the one national policy document on CLIL in Austria or to the host of European Commission papers outlining CLIL in Europe. Arguably, this relative absence of official language management in Austrian CLIL policy leads to the other two factors in extended LP, i.e. language beliefs and language practice, to become the de-facto CLIL policy.

We suggest that the beliefs of CLIL stakeholders on language learning and the construction of success in this particular language pedagogic innovation resonate with the (reported) classroom practices and we would argue that without overt language management, an alignment between these two aspects takes place in stakeholders’ conceptualisations. This alignment allows for a wide range of practices to be given the label CLIL, such as actual use of the L2 from 10% to 100% of class-time, since as long as stakeholders are happy to view a certain practice as CLIL there is no controlling language management to question or critique this view. The lack of language management enables teachers to decide largely autonomously on their ability to teach CLIL and the materials and methods they wish to use, and thus places high levels of responsibility on the individual teacher.

We would suggest that it is also this absence of language management which allows for the construction of success that we found as essentially a learner-intrinsic change in affect towards English and increased self-confidence as a foreign language user. Clearly, this change is hard to measure in an educational context, where tests usually only measure performance and not emotion, and letting emotions of stakeholders take centre stage in evaluation is in contrast to the current educational trends of measuring language proficiency through standardised tests. Yet, one might argue that stakeholders can make CLIL into a success more easily by changing their or their learners’ feelings as English speakers, than by changing the language proficiency of a large and mixed cohort of learners. Thus, success truly is ‘believing’ as it is constructed as essentially non-testable.

With regard to the CLIL literature, there is one core tenet held by researchers and policy makers and clearly not shared by our stakeholders and that is the dual focus in CLIL on language and content, and the presumed balance in curricular aims between English and the subject taught through English. None of our respondents felt that any curricular aims in English were part of their CLIL classes, and indeed seemed quite astonished at the question. Clearly, CLIL is not constructed as an alternative to EFL classes or, indeed, as a response to dissatisfaction with EFL provision[[12]](#footnote-12). CLIL is seen as an extra provision of English practice, made more enjoyable precisely by the absence of clear curricular aims and thus also forms of assessment for the language component of the class. An insistence by school authorities on an enactment of this official CLIL tenet would, we argue, have detrimental effects on the perception of CLIL as a success, as the relaxed atmosphere and positive affect would not realistically be maintained.

Yet, this mismatch as well as the non-testable nature of CLIL success seems to be fully accepted by Austrian school authorities, who in their own construction of ‘success’ focus on participating school numbers and – albeit anecdotal – accounts of feelings of success by the stakeholders. All this finds support in CLIL being a grass-roots initiative (at least in Austria): stakeholders have the possibility of creating an untested and untestable learning environment where measurable differences in proficiency are viewed as being of little account, especially when considering that CLIL is constructed as a “free space” of extra L2 provision in a more egalitarian atmosphere. This seems to also be a reason why there is remarkable little call for research evidence in this area: the beliefs on what CLIL should do and does are unperturbed by verification, and so – with one exception (see final quote in section 3.2) – the question about what is actually achieved is irrelevant. We would argue that this position leads to viewing research into CLIL very differently from the way researchers construct it, namely as providing formal proof of something already known, possibly for advertising reasons, versus searching for the pedagogical practice that achieves the most competent learners.

Another issue that emerges quite clearly is that CLIL for our stakeholders is about increased **English** provision, and not a general measure of increasing European multilingualism as proposed by EC policies. The position of English as **the** major global language for professional success in engineering and technology, as well as a means of communication in a multilingual work environment, is accepted without any challenge.

We have argued that understanding the driving forces behind the spread of CLIL across the globe, the pace of which “has surprised even its most ardent advocates” (Maljers, Marsh and Wolff 2007, 7) is best understood through the lay theories constructing it. So far in most contexts, CLIL is very much language policy from below (cf. Spolsky 2004; Shohamy 2006); it emerges from the individual decisions and joint actions of stakeholders which are informed by their respective beliefs. Such a view of CLIL implementation as a kind of self-organising system also indicates potential areas of conflict. Policy statements on CLIL view it quite clearly as a means attaining improved language competence, even to the extreme of cutting foreign language instruction as CLIL takes over the role of EFL instruction, as is happening in numerous programmes in the tertiary sector. Once the political agents assert such goals explicitly the contradiction will become visible and the new ‘policy from above’ might not find support with practising teachers and students involved, despite the administrative appeal of ‘two subjects for the price of one.’ Additionally, the lack of language management allows for avoidance of some difficult overarching language policy questions, such as the role of standard German in a professional context where English is seen as the major language “of the job”. That there is a direct comparison being created between English (for specific purposes) and Standard German was evident in one student comment (on being asked whether he felt shy about using English in CLIL classes) that he would speak “*rather English than Standard German*”.

This paper has addressed the role of beliefs in one specific CLIL context only and so it would be important for future research in other contexts to establish whether similar belief structures are in place. Information on contexts where language management regarding CLIL is more clearly present, such as the Netherlands or some Spanish regions, would add valuable information on how the triangular relationship of management, policy and practice in extended LP (Spolsky 2004) plays out when language management takes on a more powerful position.

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1. University of Southampton [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Corresponding author: Email: J.Huettner@soton.ac.uk [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. University of Vienna [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Spain and The Netherlands must be mentioned as exceptions: in Spain there are numerous ongoing CLIL related research and development projects (cf. Eurydice 2006; Fernández Fontecha 2009; Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe 2010; Lorenzo et al. 2005). In The Netherlands a national accreditation system for CLIL schools has established explicit quality parameters and a supply of teacher and school development measures ([www.europeesplatform.nl/sf.mcgi?2681](http://www.europeesplatform.nl/sf.mcgi?2681)). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In the 1990s the Austrian ministry of education commissioned its schools development division (ÖSZ Graz) with producing a series of supportive publications (downloadable from http://www.oesz.at/links/publi.php?pop=0). This support has, however, not been sustained. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Only the Vienna board of Education has issued criteria for schools which want to bear the label of its somewhat unhappily named ‘Dual Language Programme’. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Book publications by members of these groups include: Meehisto, Frigols and Marsh 2008; Coyle, Hood and Marsh 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Only recently has the national agency for innovation in foreign language education (ÖSZ) commissioned a publication which transposes/translates Coyle’s Four C’s conceptual lisation (e.g. Coyle 2007) for the Austrian CLIL scene (Gierlinger et al. 2010). The potential for a more organized and systematic dissemination of a principled CLIL approach has thus been created but it remains to be seen if it is taken further. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. For a survey of outcome studies see Dalton-Puffer 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. All statistical facts about CLIL provision at this school type are taken from Dalton-Puffer, Hüttner, Jexenflicker, Schindelegger and Smit 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Interviews were conducted in German and translated by the authors. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. This is in contradiction to what is suggested in some European policy papers and also seems to be different from the position in, e.g., Andalucia. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)