



PARADISE LOST AND FOUND: A CASE STUDY OF CONTENT BASED FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN LOWER AUSTRIA

Claudia Mewald

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The present case study investigated a pilot implementing 'English across the Curriculum' (EAC) as a form of content based instruction (CBI) at general secondary schools in Lower Austria.

Researching the phenomenon of EAC, a qualitative-quantitative approach was chosen to survey the whole sample of 62 piloting schools in order to retrieve a demographic data source implementing questionnaires, while a qualitative cross-case study of four purposefully selected case study schools engaged in observation, interviews, and language tests. Relying on qualitative data the case study provides a definition of EAC, a summary of its aims, and the participants' motives for engaging in EAC. An in-depth analysis of classroom practice analyses the implementation of English as a foreign language (FL) alongside the pupils' mother tongue in content lessons thus scrutinising the definition and the proclaimed aims. It describes the change EAC brought about through a shift in FL tuition from a focus on form to a focus on meaning thus supporting a low affective filter and a positive attitude towards FL learning. Moreover, it discusses the encouraging impact of pleasant and effective strategies on motivation and self-esteem of pupils and teachers, on the FL attainments of EAC learners, and on the schools' prestige. In the evaluation of attainments language tests focussed on the oral FL competence and the lexical development of learners after four years in the programme. The results suggest an apparent advantage of EAC learners over their mainstream peers. Short-term attainments, however, should not overlook possible long-term achievements of bilingual education which already surface in metacognitive and social abilities of EAC learners, although these cannot be attributed to CBI per se as suggested in the present study. The analysis of input and output describes the limitations of EAC and suggests a future focus curriculum development. The study was submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Education and Professional Development at the University of East Anglia.

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