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Keynote: From innovation to normality: moving CLIL into the mainstream

The first CLIL programmes of the 1990s were hailed as innovations to both language and content teaching, driven partly by national desires to improve language teaching provision, but in many instances by parental and other stakeholder perceptions of the utilitarian value of English for future school leavers. While CLIL has from the beginning sparked considerable research interest, early findings have been criticized, assuming that positive effects found are contingent on the voluntary nature of CLIL programmes and thus the (self-)selection of students.

In the Austrian context, an important change in contextual factors occurred in 2013 when CLIL provision became compulsory for technical colleges (HTL) and so the issue of self-selection has become obsolete. By drawing on data from two studies conducted at Austrian technical colleges before and after the introduction of obligatory CLIL, we investigate the conceptualizations of this programme in the belief systems of HTL teachers and learners. These point towards both similarities and differences due to the contextual change, but not necessarily in the areas most criticized. The findings highlight that CLIL has become an unquestioned part of mainstream education and importantly show that adaptations make CLIL accessible to all learners.