

# A comparison of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approaches in secondary school bilingual programmes in Croatia

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**A comparison of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approaches in  
secondary school bilingual programmes in Croatia**

Master's thesis

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Zagreb, 2024

Sveučilište u Zagrebu

Filozofski fakultet

Odsjek za anglistiku

Katedra za metodiku

**Usporedba pristupa integriranog učenja sadržaja i jezika (*CLIL*) u dvojezičnim  
srednjoškolskim programima u Hrvatskoj**

Diplomski rad

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Zagreb, 2024.

## **Abstract**

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) involves teaching non-language subjects through the medium of an additional, target language with the goal of acquiring knowledge of both subject content and the target language. Originating in Europe, this bilingual educational approach has been widely studied in different European educational systems. However, there are no studies that have examined how CLIL with a foreign target language is implemented in the Croatian context. Therefore, the aim of the present thesis is to describe and compare the organisation of the Croatian secondary school CLIL programmes with English as the target language. The study was conducted by means of semi-structured interviews with three headteachers and five teachers in the CLIL programmes and an analysis of the CLIL schools' official school documents. The CLIL programmes were described and compared using the adapted model of the "continua of multilingual education" (Cenoz, 2009, pp. 31-39), that analyses programmes as more or less bilingual regarding four educational features: the continua of subject, language of instruction, teachers and school context. The results show that the CLIL programmes vary in the number of instruction hours in the subject the English language, placing them on distinct points on the continuum of subject. Furthermore, the CLIL programmes can also be positioned differently on the continuum of the language of instruction due to the variation in the number of the bilingually taught subjects in the programme. Nevertheless, the CLIL programmes can be considered as equal on the same continuum regarding the use of the target language in class as English dominates in the bilingually taught subjects in all programmes. All CLIL programmes can also be regarded as equivalent on the continuum of teachers when it comes to the CLIL teachers' proficiency in English, but they differ to some extent concerning the feature of teacher training in bilingual education, since not all schools offer professional development for CLIL teachers. Finally, the CLIL programmes can be considered as bilingual on the continuum of the school context when it comes to the availability of extracurricular activities aiming at advancing the students' linguistic and intercultural competences. However, the majority of the CLIL programmes cannot be regarded as bilingual in relation to the features of the language of communication and the linguistic landscape due to the higher use of Croatian for these purposes.

**Keywords:** Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), English, secondary education, Croatian educational system

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## 1 Introduction

The need to be able to speak additional languages besides one's first language is particularly emphasized today as a result of globalisation and contact with speakers of different languages. Therefore, a variety of approaches to teaching and learning languages have been implemented in order to enhance language acquisition and promote multilingualism. One of them is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), a type of instruction which is based on learning different content subjects through an additional language and which has grown into a prominent educational approach in Europe (Banegas & Zappa-Hollman, 2023).

The type of instruction that is now termed as *CLIL* originated in Europe prior to the 1970s in areas that were considered as linguistically specific due to the use of two languages, e.g. in border regions, and was available to a smaller number of students (Eurydice, 2006). The aim of these educational programmes was for the students to become bilingual in the languages spoken in the area on a native-like level. The development of such instruction in Europe increased during the 1970s and 1980s, and in 1994 the term CLIL, i.e. *Content and Language Integrated Learning*, was introduced to denote it (Eurydice, 2006; Mehisto et al., 2008). Since then, CLIL has been recognised by European institutions as an innovative method of teaching and learning languages, resulting in several resolutions and action plans to support and promote CLIL provision as means for achieving multilingualism in Europe (Eurydice, 2006). Today, CLIL is implemented in almost all European countries in primary and secondary education, although it is not equally widespread and available to students in each country (Eurydice, 2006; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023). Besides its implementation in Europe, CLIL instruction has also spread to educational systems around the world (Hemmi & Banegas, 2021).

While CLIL provision is a well-studied topic within the European context, research on the implementation of CLIL in the Croatian educational system is scarce and the structure of the CLIL programmes with a foreign target language in Croatian secondary schools has not been studied thus far. Therefore, this study aims to describe and compare the organisation of the existing Croatian secondary school CLIL programmes with English as the target language.

The structure of the thesis is the following. The thesis begins with a theoretical background in Chapter 2, containing the definition of CLIL and an overview of CLIL instruction in European countries. The same chapter also includes a description of the legal framework governing CLIL instruction in Croatian secondary schools and a brief account of previous research on CLIL in Croatia. Furthermore, a model for analysing multilingual education and its adaptation to the

Croatian context is described. Chapter 3 explains the aim of the study, its participants and the methodology used, which is followed by a presentation and discussion of the results in Chapter 4. Finally, the thesis ends with a conclusion in Chapter 5.

## **2 Theoretical background**

### **2.1 Definition of CLIL**

CLIL is defined by Coyle et al. (2010) as a type of instruction in which an additional language is used as the medium for learning and teaching both content and language. As the authors explain, CLIL is not focused on content or language separately, but “it is an innovative fusion of both” (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 1). Therefore, the aim of CLIL provision is that the students both develop proficiency in the target language and acquire knowledge of the non-language subject simultaneously since both elements are equally important, although more focus can be placed on one or the other at a particular time (Coyle et al., 2010; Eurydice, 2006).

CLIL is regarded as an educational approach belonging to the wider term of bilingual education and is often compared to other practices of bilingual education that combine language and content instruction, such as immersion programmes and content-based instruction (Banegas & Zappa-Hollman, 2023; Nikula, 2017). As Ramirez Verdugo (2011) explains, CLIL differs from the Canadian immersion approach since immersion includes teaching all subjects in the learners’ second language, i.e. French, without separate second language instruction. Furthermore, CLIL is distinct from content-based instruction provided in the USA when it comes to the aims of the two approaches. Namely, whereas content-based instruction intends for the immigrant students to acquire English and be able to access mainstream education, CLIL’s goal is to encourage multilingualism in Europe (Ramirez Verdugo, 2011).

A characteristic feature of CLIL is the inclusion of a variety of educational models since CLIL is implemented in different contexts and adapted to the learners (Cenoz & Gorter, 2019; Coyle et al., 2010; Dalton-Puffer et al., 2010). For instance, CLIL provision can vary with respect to the length of the programme, the amount of time that the learner receives CLIL instruction per week or the number of activities in which the target language is used under lessons (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2010). CLIL programmes are also characterised by having at least two languages of instruction in the different subjects (Eurydice, 2006). One of the languages of CLIL instruction is the language used in mainstream education, which is most commonly the official state language. The additional, target language of instruction is usually the learner’s foreign

language, but it can also be the learner's second language, a regional or minority language or another official state language (Coyle et al., 2010; Eurydice, 2006).

CLIL instruction with a foreign target language is generally offered as part of mainstream education and can be taught on any educational level, although it is usually implemented when learners have already developed literacy skills in their L1 (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2010). As the instruction is provided in the foreign language, which is not regularly used in the learner's society outside the classroom, Dalton-Puffer et al. (2010) state that CLIL teachers are usually not native speakers of the foreign language and are frequently experts on the content they are teaching rather than on the foreign language. This is due to the fact that CLIL is content-driven, which means that CLIL lessons are focused on following the curriculum of a certain content subject or scientific field (Coyle et al., 2010; Dalton-Puffer et al., 2010). However, besides receiving CLIL instruction in the target language as part of the content subject lessons, learners also study the target language as a separate subject taught by teachers who are language experts (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2010).

Despite CLIL's twofold aim, increasing proficiency in the target language is generally regarded as the most frequent reason for implementing CLIL and as a more important component than acquiring the non-language subject content, which is sometimes considered as a secondary goal of CLIL instruction (Eurydice, 2006; Marsh et al., 2001). For instance, the introduction of CLIL in several European countries is motivated by the underachieving results in the foreign language acquisition in formal education (Nikula, 2017). In addition to gaining knowledge in the target language and subject content, CLIL provision is often driven by socio-cultural aims, i.e. the development of tolerance and respect for other cultures (Eurydice, 2006). Other common goals of CLIL stated in different European countries' official policies include preparing students for living and working in a global society and employing an innovative method for teaching the non-language subject content (Eurydice, 2006).

The evaluation of CLIL programmes conducted in several European countries has shown positive results (Eurydice, 2006) and various benefits of CLIL for both language and subject learning have been listed. When it comes to language acquisition, the advantage of CLIL instruction is that it enables the use of the target language in authentic contexts since it is learned together with a non-language subject content, which is different from the traditional language classrooms (Coyle et al., 2010). CLIL also contributes to a greater target language exposure in the curriculum and an increase in the CLIL students' metalinguistic awareness (Mehisto et al., 2008; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2023). Moreover, CLIL offers cognitive benefits, i.e. the development



of the capacity to think in multiple languages, which promote the acquisition of the content knowledge (Coyle et al., 2010). Furthermore, learning a subject through an additional language can also foster the learners' motivation for the curriculum content (Coyle et al., 2010).

However, CLIL has also received criticism due to its drawbacks. For instance, Hélot and Cavalli (2017, p. 479) claim that CLIL "is conceptualized as an innovative FL teaching approach rather than as a new holistic education model". As Hélot and Cavalli (2017, p. 473) explain, CLIL in most European countries includes teaching only one or two subjects through the foreign language, which makes it "less ambitious than full bilingual education". Another issue related to CLIL provision concerns the lack of training in CLIL methodology and support for CLIL programmes, which can cause a shortage of teachers that are prepared for teaching through an additional language (Mehisto et al., 2008).

## **2.2 Provision of CLIL in European countries**

Eurydice (2006) is the first report on CLIL provision in thirty European countries, members of the European Union and Council of Europe, containing detailed and comparative information on the organisation of CLIL instruction, the target languages and subjects taught through CLIL, teacher qualification and evaluations of the CLIL programmes in the countries included in the report.

According to Eurydice (2006), CLIL is offered at the primary and secondary levels in the majority of the countries. CLIL is predominantly included in the mainstream education, but in several countries it is only provided as an experimental project. When it comes to the target languages of CLIL instruction, Eurydice (2006) explains that the researched countries provide a large variety of language combinations with foreign, regional/minority and other official state languages as the target languages. The majority of the countries report that most students are enrolled in CLIL instruction in regional or minority target languages. Furthermore, Eurydice (2006) notes that English stands out as the most frequent foreign target language since it is offered in all countries except in the United Kingdom. Other common foreign target languages are also French, German, Spanish and Italian (Eurydice, 2006).

Regarding the subjects taught through CLIL, Eurydice (2006) shows that all subjects can be provided through CLIL in the surveyed countries. The most common subjects taught through CLIL in secondary schools are reported to be the subjects from the fields of natural and social sciences, but the number and type of subjects usually differs at each school or in each region in the majority of countries (Eurydice, 2006).

The official teaching time in the target language also varies in European countries since schools have autonomy in deciding on the intensity of instruction. For instance, several countries, such as Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic, recommend that only a couple of lessons or hours per week are devoted to teaching through the target language. In some countries, like Malta and the Netherlands, instruction in the target language accounts for one half of the teaching time, whereas Luxembourg stands out with around 80% of the weekly teaching time conducted in the target language in secondary schools (Eurydice, 2006).

In order to be able to teach in a CLIL programme, teachers are generally required to be qualified for teaching one or several non-language subjects or one language and one non-language subject (Eurydice, 2006). In some countries, teachers are also obliged to have certified evidence of the target language proficiency. However, CLIL teachers are not required to possess education in the CLIL methodology in any of the countries surveyed in Eurydice (2006).

The most recent report on language teaching at schools in European countries (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023), with the school year 2021/2022 as the reference year, also contains a brief account of CLIL education in Europe focusing on the classification of the target languages in CLIL provision and on the necessary qualifications for CLIL teachers. According to the report, CLIL is now available in almost all of the surveyed countries. The most common type of CLIL provision is the one with foreign languages as the target language of instruction and the most popular foreign target languages across the European educational systems are English, French and German. A smaller number of countries deliver CLIL with regional and minority languages as the target language and the fewest CLIL programmes have another state language as the target language (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023).

Furthermore, according to the above-stated report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023), more countries require teachers to possess additional qualifications for teaching in CLIL with a foreign target language in comparison to the earlier Eurydice survey (2006). In the majority of the European countries, CLIL teachers who do not have a university degree in the target language are obliged to possess a certificate that proves their language proficiency at the level B2 or C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Moreover, education authorities in a smaller number of countries, for instance Spain and Italy, also require that teachers have received education or training in CLIL methodology (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023).

The same report also includes data on CLIL in Croatia. It is stated that CLIL in the Croatian educational system is only offered with regional or minority languages, i.e., Hungarian, Serbian and Czech, as target languages (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023). However, CLIL instruction with foreign target languages in Croatia is not mentioned in the report.

## 2.3 CLIL in Croatia

### 2.3.1 The legal framework

The Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (NN 87/08 (NN 156/23)) states that primary and secondary education in Croatia is provided in the Croatian language. However, schools can teach a part of subjects determined by the educational plan and programme or the curriculum in a foreign language in addition to Croatian with the permission of the Ministry of Science and Education. This type of instruction in secondary schools is provided in accordance with the Regulation on teaching a part of subjects and subject content determined by the educational plan and programme in one of the world languages in secondary schools (NN 116/2016, hereafter ‘the Regulation’).

It should be noted that the term *CLIL* is not used in legislation, but that this kind of instruction is referred to as “teaching a part of subjects and subject content determined by the educational plan and programme in one of the world languages”<sup>1</sup> or “instruction in a foreign language”<sup>2</sup> (the Regulation NN 116/2016). As explained in Eurydice (2006, p. 55), the term *CLIL* is generally only used in research, whereas the terms used nationally to denote CLIL instruction are usually different, such as “bilingual education” or “teaching of a subject in a target language”.

According to the Regulation (NN 116/2016), the instruction in a foreign language has several aims. Namely, it intends to ensure the prerequisites for a systematic implementation of CLIL in the school’s curriculum, to acquire knowledge of the subject content taught through the foreign language, to improve the linguistic and intercultural competence, to develop a positive attitude towards multilingualism and to develop the students’ self-confidence. The Regulation (NN 116/2016) also states that instruction in a foreign language is not meant to replace the foreign language classes taught as a separate school subject.

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<sup>1</sup> In Croatian: “izvođenje nastave dijela nastavnih predmeta i sadržaja utvrđenih nastavnim planom i programom na nekom od svjetskih jezika” (the Regulation, NN 116/2016)

<sup>2</sup> In Croatian: “nastava na stranome jeziku” (the Regulation, NN 116/2016)

The schools are given a certain autonomy in deciding on the number of subjects and lessons that are instructed through the target foreign language. According to the Regulation (NN 116/2016), in order to obtain permission for the implementation of the CLIL programme, the schools have to offer CLIL instruction in at least two subjects that are taught at all grade levels<sup>3</sup>, but the highest number of subjects that can be taught through the foreign language is not determined by the Regulation. Furthermore, it is prescribed that a minimum of half lesson units in a selected subject have to be taught through the foreign language, but the teachers can independently decide on the extent of using the foreign language in a certain lesson unit based on the students' foreign language proficiency (the Regulation NN 116/2016). Thus, the selected subjects that are taught through CLIL<sup>4</sup> have two languages of instruction, Croatian and the target foreign language, and the degree to which they are employed in lessons is determined by each CLIL teacher.

According to the Regulation (NN 116/2016), assessment in the subjects taught through CLIL primarily concerns the subject content and not the target foreign language knowledge although assessment can be carried out in the foreign language. The linguistic performance in the target foreign language can, but does not need to, be separately assessed. However, if there is a doubt as to whether the subject content outcomes have been attained, the students' knowledge also has to be assessed in the Croatian language (the Regulation NN 116/2016).

Regarding the CLIL teachers' qualifications, the Regulation (NN 116/2016) stipulates that the teachers have to fulfil one of the following requirements: hold a university degree in the target language, be a native speaker of the target language or prove that their knowledge of the target language corresponds to level C1 of CEFR. An exception is made for the teachers teaching natural science subjects, whose required proficiency in the target language can correspond to level B2 of CEFR. However, the Regulation (NN 116/2016) does not mention any mandatory requirements of special training in CLIL methodology for CLIL teachers in Croatia. The requirements for Croatian CLIL teachers are thus comparable with the necessary qualifications for CLIL teachers in the majority of European countries (cf. Eurydice, 2006; European

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<sup>3</sup> The total number of compulsory and elective subjects taught in the secondary school programmes investigated in this study varies between 12 and 17 based on the type of programme and grade level, as determined by the Resolution on the adoption of the educational plan for grammar school programmes (NN 66/2019).

<sup>4</sup> The terms "subjects taught through CLIL" and "bilingually taught subjects" are used interchangeably in the thesis to refer to the subjects that are taught through both Croatian and English in a secondary school CLIL programme as opposed to the remaining subjects that are taught entirely in Croatian in the same programme.

Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023) since the teachers need to prove their proficiency in the target language, but are not required to have special qualifications in CLIL methodology.

### **2.3.2 Previous research on CLIL in Croatian secondary schools**

Research on CLIL with a foreign target language in the Croatian secondary education is limited to few studies that have investigated the teachers' and students' perspective on CLIL and the benefits and drawbacks of CLIL provision. Regarding the teachers' view on CLIL, Vodopija-Krstanović and Badurina (2020) show that CLIL teachers have a positive attitude towards CLIL instruction as it offers them the possibility of professional development and it increases the students' knowledge of the target language. Still, the teachers name various challenges with CLIL they have encountered in practice, for instance their insufficient level of foreign language proficiency, difficulties in creating lesson materials and the lack of support for providing CLIL instruction (Vodopija-Krstanović & Badurina, 2020; Grbić, 2022). According to Grbić (2022) and Peulić (2023), the Croatian CLIL students are also satisfied with the CLIL provision especially because they acquire knowledge of the subject terminology in the target language, which can be beneficial for their future education. Although the improvement of the target language proficiency is reported as an advantage of the CLIL instruction, the CLIL students also point out is that both they and their teachers sometimes experience difficulties in communication in the foreign language and that some of their teachers need more training in CLIL provision (Peulić, 2023). Despite their insights into the students' and teachers' opinion on CLIL, all of the aforementioned studies have been conducted at the same secondary school providing CLIL instruction and they do not include any comparative data on the different CLIL programmes offered in Croatia.

### **2.4 Describing and comparing bilingual and multilingual education**

In order to provide a means for describing and comparing various kinds of multilingual education, Cenoz (2009, pp. 31-39) has developed a model called the "continua of multilingual education". Cenoz (2009) emphasises that her model differs from earlier typologies of bilingual and multilingual education, which she considers as dichotomic and static since they use close categories to describe educational programmes. Instead, the "continua of multilingual education" places programmes on continua, which "are open and can be more dynamic" (Cenoz & Gorter, 2019, p. 119). Furthermore, Cenoz and Gorter (2019) explain that the model based on continua enables educational programmes to change and become more or less multilingual.

However, they also point out a drawback of the model, namely that it is difficult to place an educational programme on the continua in a precise manner (Cenoz & Gorter, 2019).

Concerning the types of instruction that can be compared using her model, Cenoz (2009, p. 33) states that “multilingual education implies teaching more than two languages provided that schools aim at multilingualism and multiliteracy”. Cenoz (2009) explains that her definition of multilingual educational programmes encompasses both teaching different languages as school subjects and using languages as the media of instruction. Since bilingual education can be considered as a part of multilingual education and the two terms are often used synonymously (Cenoz, 2009; Cenoz & Gorter, 2019), this model can also be applied in analysing bilingual educational programmes that are investigated in the present thesis.

Cenoz’s (2009) model characterises types of multilingual education based on three types of variables, namely educational, sociolinguistic and linguistic. The educational variables include four continua according to which educational programmes can be considered as more or less multilingual: subject, language of instruction, teachers and school context.

As Cenoz (2009, p. 34) explains, the continuum of subject refers to three features, i.e., “(1) the use of more languages as school subjects (language arts); (2) the integration of the different language subjects in syllabus design and lesson planning and (3) the intensity of instruction and age of introduction”. The programmes which include teaching more languages as separate subjects in an integrated curriculum and with higher exposure are placed towards the more multilingual end of the continuum (Cenoz, 2009; Cenoz & Gorter, 2019). Still, it is not entirely clear what Cenoz considers as an integrated curriculum since an explanation of the term is not provided. However, an integrated language curriculum is described by Elorza and Muñoa (2008) as a curriculum in which the same general competences are acquired in the different language subjects. The use of an integrated language curriculum contributes to a parallel development of proficiency in all languages that the students learn (Elorza & Muñoa, 2008).

Furthermore, according to Cenoz (2009, p. 36), the language of instruction continuum comprises of “(1) the use of different languages as languages of instruction (one, two, three languages as languages of instruction) and (2) their integration in syllabus design and language planning (coordination between teachers and syllabuses of different languages)”. Cenoz (2009) adds that programmes with more languages of instruction that are integrated in the syllabus are regarded as more multilingual.

The continuum of teachers is defined by Cenoz (2009, p. 36) as encompassing two aspects of teacher education, namely “(1) language proficiency in different languages and (2) specific training for multilingual education”. The specific training includes both linguistic training and training in the methodology of multilingual education (Cenoz & Gorter, 2019). A more multilingual programme on this continuum, according to Cenoz (2009), is the one in which teachers are multilingual and have been trained for teaching subject content in a second or foreign language.

Finally, the school context continuum refers to the languages used for communication between the school staff, parents and students, as well as to the linguistic landscape<sup>5</sup> in the classrooms and the school (Cenoz, 2009). In order to be considered as more multilingual on this continuum, an educational programme should use more than two languages for these purposes (Cenoz, 2009).

The linguistic variable in Cenoz’s model (2009) refers to the linguistic distance between the languages that are taught at a school. This variable looks at whether the languages belong to the same or different language families and whether they have influenced each other through language contact. Cenoz (2009) clarifies that this variable can affect multilingual education through the teachers’ level of multilingualism and the number of hours that are dedicated to teaching certain languages as subjects or languages of instruction.

When it comes to the sociolinguistic variables, Cenoz (2009) divides them into two levels, macro and micro. The macro level includes the vitality and status of a language in a certain society and its use in the media and the linguistic landscape, while the micro level refers to the language(s) spoken by the students with their families and peers and in the community. Cenoz (2009) explains that if more languages are used in the macro and micro contexts, the sociolinguistic variables are considered as more multilingual. The sociolinguistic variables can also influence formal instruction through the number of hours devoted to certain languages in the curriculum (Cenoz, 2009). The linguistic and sociolinguistic variables are, however, not in the focus of the present study and, therefore, they will not be further discussed.

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<sup>5</sup> The term *linguistic landscape* is defined by Cenoz (2009, p. 4) as “written information available on language signs in public spaces”.

## **2.5 Adapting the model of the “continua of multilingual education” to the Croatian secondary education context**

Since Cenoz (2009) designed a model that encompasses a wide variety of multilingual education models, it is necessary to adapt it to suit the analysis of the CLIL approaches in the Croatian secondary school context. The adjustments are primarily based on the legislation governing the Croatian educational system and CLIL instruction, i.e., the Regulation (NN 116/2016), the Croatian National Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 2011) and the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (NN 87/08 (NN 156/23)). Some of Cenoz’s (2009) variables are also expanded based on the description of CLIL in European countries reported in Eurydice (2006). Moreover, certain adaptations are necessary since the CLIL instruction in the Croatian context is bilingual rather than multilingual.

In general, a CLIL programme will be regarded as more bilingual in this study if the use of English is higher than the use of Croatian in the bilingually taught subjects, i.e., not if both languages are employed to an equal extent, since a certain number of subjects in the curriculum of the CLIL programmes are taught only in Croatian. Therefore, a greater use of English in the bilingually taught subjects would contribute overall to a more bilingual secondary school CLIL programme.

Regarding the continuum of subject, almost all features that Cenoz (2009) includes in this continuum are the same in all CLIL secondary school programmes in Croatia. Namely, both Croatian and English, which are the languages of instruction in the studied CLIL programmes, are taught as separate subjects in all schools offering CLIL. Furthermore, the Croatian language curriculum (NN 10/2019) and the English language curriculum (NN 7/2019) can be considered as integrated to a certain extent since several competences that should be achieved in the two language subjects are the same. For instance, the students are expected to acquire the communicative competence, the intercultural competence, the critical thinking skills etc. in both language subjects. Since the same subject curricula are followed in all secondary grammar schools, the CLIL programmes do not differ from each other regarding this feature. The age of introduction of the language subjects is also identical for all students, i.e., Croatian and English are studied as subjects from the first grade.

However, it is possible that the schools differ based on Cenoz’s (2009) variable of the intensity of instruction. Therefore, only this feature is considered as relevant for the study of CLIL in the Croatian context. Regarding the intensity of instruction, the schools will be compared with



respect to how many hours of obligatory Croatian and English classes per week the students have. Furthermore, since the schools can offer elective, optional, advanced and/or remedial classes according to the National Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 2011), the CLIL programmes will be compared based on whether they offer these non-obligatory classes in the subject the English language and how many instruction hours per week such classes are taught. CLIL programmes that include elective, optional, advanced and/or remedial English classes will be considered as more bilingual.

Moreover, the number of teaching hours in the subject the English language will be compared with the number of teaching hours in other foreign languages, if such are offered to the CLIL students. However, the programmes will not be analysed on Cenoz's (2009, pp. 31-39) "continua of multilingual education" regarding the teaching time in other foreign languages since these languages, unlike English, are not used as the languages of instruction in other, non-language subjects.

When it comes to Cenoz's (2009) features on the continuum of the language of instruction, all of the studied schools have the same two languages as languages of instruction, namely Croatian and English, and both languages are integrated into the curriculum of each subject that is taught through CLIL. The schools will, however, be placed on the continuum based on how many subjects are taught through CLIL and whether the number of such subjects is the same at all grade levels. Schools with more subjects taught through CLIL at all grade levels will be considered as more bilingual. Moreover, the integration of the two languages of instruction will be analysed based on how many lesson units in a subject are taught in Croatian and English, respectively, and to what extent the students use English in class. Programmes in which English is employed more frequently in the selected subjects will be placed on the more bilingual part of the continuum. Finally, the schools will also be compared regarding the language in which the students are assessed. Programmes in which CLIL teachers assess the subject content in English will also be analysed as more bilingual.

Both of Cenoz's (2009) features on the continuum of teachers will be analysed in the study. The CLIL programmes will thus be compared with respect to the teachers' level of proficiency in English and regarding whether any of the teachers are native speakers of English, since Eurydice (2006, p. 46) states that native speakers are "an additional factor in ensuring that the language 'environment' will be suited to CLIL type provision". Schools that have teachers with a higher proficiency in English and teachers who are native speakers will therefore be considered as more bilingual. Additionally, the CLIL programmes will be compared regarding

whether the teachers had specific training in CLIL provision before they started teaching in the CLIL programme and whether the school organises in-service training in CLIL methodology. Schools at which the teachers had initial training in CLIL pedagogy and which offer professional development for their CLIL teachers will be placed on the more bilingual end of the continuum.

In addition to Cenoz's (2009) features of the language of communication and the linguistic landscape on the continuum of the school context, the schools will also be compared based on whether they offer the students the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities, projects, workshops etc. that promote bilingualism and interculturalism, which are the aims of CLIL according to the Regulation (NN 116/2016). The schools in which both Croatian and English are used as languages of communication and are present in the school's linguistic landscape will be regarded as more bilingual on the continuum. Finally, the schools that offer additional activities with the aim of encouraging students to become bilingual and gain knowledge about other cultures will also be positioned as more bilingual on the continuum.

### **3 The study**

#### **3.1 Aim**

As stated previously, the aim of the present study is to describe and compare the organisation of the existing Croatian secondary school CLIL programmes with English as the target language with regard to the features included in the "continua of multilingual education" developed by Cenoz (2009, pp. 31-39). Thus, the following research question is addressed in the study:

RQ. How are the Croatian secondary school CLIL programmes with English as the target language compared to each other regarding the categories of subject, language of instruction, teachers and school context?

#### **3.2 Participants**

In order to find out which Croatian secondary schools offer CLIL instruction with English as the target language, the online database *Školski e-Rudnik*<sup>6</sup> was used. The database, provided by the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, includes a directory of schools in Croatia and information on the number and types of educational programmes they offer. With the help of the database's search engine containing all secondary school programmes offered in Croatian

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<sup>6</sup> *Školski e-Rudnik* is available on the website of the Ministry of Science and Education: <https://mzo.gov.hr/ser-skolski-e-rudnik-3419/3419> (accessed February 21, 2024)

schools, a search was conducted to extract the secondary schools providing CLIL instruction in the school year 2023/2024, which served as the reference year in the present study.<sup>7</sup> The secondary school programmes regarded as CLIL instruction were the following: the bilingual foreign language-focused programme in English, the general programme with several subjects instructed in a foreign language, the natural sciences-focused programme with several subjects instructed in a foreign language and the natural sciences and mathematics-focused programme with several subjects instructed in a foreign language.<sup>8</sup> This search found seven secondary schools in total offering the above named programmes, with six of them being public schools and one private school. Alongside CLIL instruction, the schools also offer the equivalent non-CLIL programme taught entirely in Croatian.

Since the data found in *Školski e-Rudnik* did not in all instances specify the target language of instruction in the CLIL programmes, an additional search was made on the schools' websites to obtain this information. It was found that the programmes at all of the schools had English as the target foreign language. It was also discovered that the private school found through the search in the database is an international school and the programme it offered was entirely provided in the English language. Since this programme did not include teaching subjects in two different languages, it is not considered as CLIL instruction due to the fact that CLIL is defined as a bilingual approach (see 2.1). The international school is thus excluded from this study. The remaining six secondary schools offer programmes with subjects taught in both Croatian and English and are included in the present study.

Three of the schools offer CLIL instruction within the general programme, two within the foreign language-focused programme, one within the natural sciences and mathematics-focused programme and one within the natural sciences-focused programme. Five of the schools included in the study offer one of the above-mentioned CLIL programme, whereas one school has two CLIL programmes.

The headteachers of the six secondary schools were contacted via e-mail with a request for participating in the present study through an interview about the CLIL programme with English as the target language offered at their school. The headteachers were also asked to forward the request for participation in the study to one or two teachers who taught a content subject through

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<sup>7</sup> The study does not include secondary school programmes that offer complete instruction in a foreign language, such as international schools and the International Baccalaureate programme.

<sup>8</sup> The names of the programmes in Croatian are: "dvojezični program jezične gimnazije na engleskom jeziku", "opća gimnazija uz skupinu predmeta na stranom jeziku", "prirodoslovna gimnazija uz skupinu predmeta na stranom jeziku", "prirodoslovno-matematička gimnazija uz skupinu predmeta na stranom jeziku".

CLIL at their school. Four out of six headteachers responded to the request and agreed to participate in the study. Content teachers at three schools also agreed to participate. In total, three headteachers and five teachers partook in the study, as can be seen in Table 1 below. The participants were informed that their participation in the study was anonymous and voluntary and they gave written or oral consent to participation.

Table 1. *Overview of the participants at each secondary school with the CLIL programme.*

School	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5	School 6
Participants in the study	Headteacher	Headteacher, two CLIL teachers	Headteacher, one CLIL teacher	Two CLIL teachers	None	None

### 3.3 Methodology

The data in the study were collected by two means, through a semi-structured interview with the headteachers and teachers at schools offering CLIL education and an analysis of the official school documents.

The interviews consisted of a different set of questions for the headteachers and teachers, respectively (see Appendices). The interview questions were based on the adapted version of Cenoz's (2009, pp. 31-39) "continua of multilingual education" and organised in accordance with the four educational continua (see Chapter 2.5). The headteachers described the general organisation of the CLIL programme at their school. Namely, they were asked to provide information on the number of instruction hours in the language subjects, i.e., the Croatian language, the English language and other foreign languages that are offered in the CLIL programme. Thereafter, the headteachers were requested to state the subjects that the CLIL students studied bilingually, i.e., in both English and Croatian, and whether the number of the subjects taught bilingually was the same at all grade levels. The headteachers were also asked how the school decided on the number of the subjects taught bilingually and on what the choice of the subjects depended. Moreover, the headteachers answered questions about the CLIL teachers' level of proficiency in the English language and training in the CLIL methodology. Furthermore, they provided information about the ways in which the school promoted a positive attitude towards bilingualism and the students' development of linguistic and intercultural competences outside of classroom instruction. Finally, the headteachers were asked about the linguistic environment at the school and their use of English in communication with the teachers, parents and students outside class hours.

The interviews with the CLIL teachers consisted of questions regarding the subject(s) they taught in the CLIL programme. The teachers were asked about the number of lesson units in their subject that they taught in English and in Croatian, respectively, in each CLIL class. They also explained to what extent English is used by their students in class. Furthermore, the teachers were asked in which language they carried out assessment and, if the assessment was done in English, whether they graded the students' knowledge of English.

All interviews took place in March 2024 and were conducted in person at the school or remotely, by means of videoconferencing or a telephone call. The interviews were carried out in the Croatian language and recorded after obtaining permission from the participants. The interviews were afterwards transcribed and translated into English.

In addition to the interviews, the data about CLIL instruction at the schools that did not respond to the request for participation in the study were collected from the publicly available official school documents, namely the school curriculum and the annual activities plan and programme, as well as the schools' websites. The school curriculum and the annual activities plan and programme are the documents according to which Croatian schools operate, as stated in the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (NN 87/08 (NN 156/23)). The school curriculum includes, among other information, the educational plan for elective and optional subjects, extracurricular activities and a description of educational activities, programmes and projects that are not determined by the national curriculum but decided by each school. The annual activities plan and programme contains information on the work organisation at a school, the number of instruction hours per week and year in each educational programme and grade level, the headteacher's and teachers' work plans, plans for professional development etc. According to the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (NN 87/08 (NN 156/23)), each school is obliged to publish the school curriculum and the annual activities plan and programme on the school's website. The school curriculum, the annual activities plan and programme and the schools' websites were examined in order to obtain the information about CLIL instruction relevant to the four educational continua.

The data collected in the interviews with the participants or from the school curriculum and the annual activities plan and programme were analysed and compared according to the features of "the continua of multilingual education" (Cenoz, 2009, pp. 31-39), that were adapted to suit the Croatian educational context, as explained in Chapter 2.5.

## 4 Results and discussion

The following chapter presents and discusses the data obtained through the semi-structured interviews and the analysis of the official school documents. The findings are organised according to the four continua that have been investigated, namely the continuum of subject (in 4.1), the continuum of the language of instruction (4.2), the continuum of teachers (4.3) and the continuum of the school context (4.4).

### 4.1 The continuum of subject

When it comes to the number of instruction hours in the Croatian and English language as compulsory school subjects, CLIL students at each school have the same number of class periods in Croatian, as shown in Table 2. However, the CLIL programmes differ from each other regarding the compulsory instruction hours in the English language since this depends on the orientation of the secondary school programme (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Number of instruction hours in the language subjects, i.e., the Croatian language, the English language and other foreign languages, at the schools with CLIL programmes.*

Schools/Subjects	Compulsory Croatian classes	Compulsory English classes	Elective, optional, advanced, remedial English classes	Other foreign language classes
School 1	4 hours per week	3 hours per week	Optional (2 hours per week), advanced (2 hours per week)	Compulsory (2 hours per week), optional (2 hours per week)
School 2	4 hours per week	3 hours per week	Elective (1 hour per week)	Compulsory (2 hours per week), optional (2 hours per week)
School 3	4 hours per week	3 hours per week	Optional (1 hour per week)	Compulsory (2 hours per week)
School 4	4 hours per week	4 + 1 hours per week	Advanced (min. 12 hours per year)	Compulsory (3-4 hours per week), optional (2 hours per week)

School 5	4 hours per week	4 hours per week	Advanced (1 hour per week)	Compulsory (3-4 hours per week), optional (2 hours per week)
School 6	4 hours per week	3 hours per week	Advanced (1-3 hours per week)	Elective (2 hours per week)

In CLIL instruction within the general education programme, offered at School 1, School 2 and School 3, students have English classes three hours per week. The same number of instruction hours in the subject the English language is also studied in the natural sciences-focused CLIL programme at School 6 and the natural sciences and mathematics-focused CLIL programme, that is also offered at School 3. School 4 and School 5, whose CLIL students attend the foreign language-focused programme, have the highest number of instruction hours in English, i.e., four hours weekly. Moreover, CLIL students at School 4 also have one additional English class with a teacher who is a native speaker of English in the first, second and third grade. However, it is not clearly stated in the school's official documents whether the additional English class is obligatory or optional for the CLIL students.

Concerning the elective, optional, advanced and remedial classes in the English language, all of the schools included in the study offer their CLIL students some of the above-mentioned non-obligatory English classes (see Table 2), which have several different aims. Namely, four CLIL schools offer optional and advanced English classes with the goal of preparing students for the state graduation exams and/or competitions in the English language knowledge at the school, county and state level. Moreover, the CLIL students at one of the schools can take an elective class in Business English. One of the schools also provides the CLIL students with the opportunity to attend an optional English class that focuses on preparing them for taking Cambridge International Examinations.

The CLIL students also study other foreign languages since a second foreign language is a compulsory subject at all of the schools apart from School 6. As can be seen in Table 2, the students have fewer instruction hours in the other compulsory foreign languages compared with the English language classes. The only exception are School 4 and School 5, whose students study the other foreign language the same number of hours per week as English in the first grade. However, the number of instruction hours in the other foreign language decreases in

higher grades, therefore, English is the foreign language with the highest instruction time in all CLIL programmes' curriculum.

Due to the variation in the number of instruction hours in the subject the English language, the CLIL schools can be placed differently on the continuum of subject, ranging from three instruction hours in English in the least bilingual CLIL programme to five instruction hours in the most bilingual of the studied CLIL programmes with respect to this feature. Since all of the schools offer at least one type of non-compulsory English classes to their CLIL students, all CLIL programmes can be considered as equally bilingual regarding this characteristic, despite the differences in the number of teaching hours. However, it should be noted that the availability of elective, optional and advanced English classes does not necessarily imply that the CLIL students attend these classes since they are not a part of the obligatory curriculum.

## 4.2 The continuum of the language of instruction

### 4.2.1 Subjects taught through CLIL

According to the information obtained from the interviews and the official school documents, most of the CLIL programmes have certain bilingually taught subjects in common. Nevertheless, the combinations of these subjects differ at each school, which is not unexpected considering that schools can autonomously select the bilingually taught subjects, according to the Regulation (116/2016). The complete list of the subjects instructed in both Croatian and English in at least one grade at each school can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. *A list of the subjects taught bilingually in at least one grade at the surveyed schools.*

School	Subjects taught bilingually in the CLIL programme
School 1	Physics, Chemistry, Biology, History, Geography, Fine Arts, Ethics, Computer Science
School 2	Chemistry, Biology, History, Geography, Latin, Logic, Philosophy
School 3	Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, Fine Arts, Music, Ethics, Sociology, Philosophy, an elective subject
School 4	Physics, Mathematics, History, Geography, Fine Arts, Sociology, Politics and Economy
School 5	Physics, Mathematics, History, Geography, Psychology, Sociology, Logic, Philosophy, Politics and Economy
School 6	Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry with Laboratory Exercises, Biology

As can be observed from Table 3, both natural and social science subjects are taught through CLIL at the large majority of the schools. The exception is School 6, in which only the



instruction of natural science subjects is conducted in both Croatian and English. School 1, School 2 and School 4 have also included bilingual instruction in artistic subjects, i.e., Fine Arts and Music.

Regarding the choice of the subjects, the interviewed headteachers explain that the reason for choosing the subjects that are taught bilingually at their schools has been staff availability. Namely, the decision is based on whether the teachers teaching these subjects have the required level of proficiency in English and whether they are willing to teach in the CLIL programme. Furthermore, two headteachers also point out that they have intended for both natural and social science subjects to be equally represented amongst the bilingually taught subjects. As one of the headteachers clarifies, a balance between the two subject areas is important since the CLIL students might possibly be interested in continuing their education abroad in different fields of study. The other headteacher adds that an equal proportion of natural and social science subjects in CLIL is also necessary so that the teachers of different subjects have the same teaching load in the CLIL programme.

Furthermore, one headteacher mentions a reason for not choosing to teach a subject through CLIL. Namely, she explains that Mathematics was previously taught through CLIL at her school, but the school later decided against it since the Mathematics exam is a compulsory part of the state graduation exams, which are taken in Croatian. Therefore, the school “did not want to teach such an important subject in English and for the bilingual instruction to be a factor in a possibly low exam result”, according to the headteacher.

In addition to the differences in the choice of the subjects taught through CLIL, the CLIL programmes at the surveyed schools also vary based on the number of such subjects at each grade level. In two CLIL programmes the number of the bilingually taught subjects remains the same at all grade levels, with some of the subjects changing each year. However, in the majority of the CLIL programmes, the number of the bilingually taught subjects differs at some or all grade levels, ranging from three to eight subjects taught in both Croatian and English. Therefore, the placement of the CLIL programmes on the continuum of the language of instruction regarding the number of bilingually taught subjects varies from between four and eleven subjects in total and between three and eight subjects at a particular grade level.

#### 4.2.2 The use of Croatian and English in lessons

The vast majority of the interviewed CLIL teachers state that they teach all or almost all lesson units in their subjects in English. Only one teacher explains that he teaches all lessons in both

Croatian and English and adds that one of the languages of instruction usually prevails in each lesson, but that it can generally be said that both languages are used to an equal extent in his subject.

Although English dominates for teaching content in the bilingually taught subjects based on the teachers' responses, Croatian is also employed in lessons for various purposes. The most common reason for using Croatian in the bilingually taught subjects provided by the interviewed teachers is to teach subject content that they consider as more complex. For instance, one of the teachers points out that he mostly employs Croatian when teaching new content that contains a considerable number of terms that are unfamiliar to the students. Croatian is also used in class when further clarification of the curriculum content is necessary, according to a couple of the interviewed teachers. Another CLIL teacher explains that she always teaches revision lessons in Croatian so that it can be easier for her students to understand the subject matter. However, she adds that it rarely occurs that she teaches an entire lesson only in Croatian. As she states, "in some lessons it is easier to draw a parallel with Croatian and in the other ones with English", which is why she believes that "the combination of English and Croatian is great" for her subject. In addition to using Croatian for explaining difficult content, two of the interviewed teachers state that the lesson units with subject content related to Croatia are taught entirely in Croatian.

Several participants emphasise that it is necessary that both English and Croatian are used in class so that the CLIL students can be familiar with the subject terminology in both languages. As one teacher clarifies, it is important for his students to know the specific terminology used in his subjects in both languages since there are certain differences between Croatian and English terms mostly because the English terms, unlike the Croatian ones, are derived from Latin. Moreover, a couple of CLIL teachers point out that it is necessary for the students to be able to use the Croatian terminology since they take the state graduation exams in Croatian.

Regarding the students' use of Croatian and English in the subjects taught through CLIL, the interviewed teachers mostly state that the CLIL students speak almost exclusively English during the lessons. As several teachers point out, the students particularly use English to a high degree amongst themselves while doing pair or group work. Furthermore, one of the teachers comments that the students are more likely to use English when he asks them a question in English. As he remarks, "they are probably programmed to reply in English when I ask a question in English". Some teachers mention that even if they ask their students a question in Croatian, the students will generally reply in English, which also shows the students' tendency

to speak English in the subjects taught through CLIL. Moreover, all of the interviewed teachers commend their students for being very fluent in English and wanting to demonstrate their language proficiency.

Only one of the teachers claims that both languages are used to an equal extent by her students, specifying that the students more often ask her questions in Croatian, but adding that they always opt to give their presentations in English when given the choice between Croatian and English. Another reason why the students use Croatian in CLIL lessons mentioned by one of the teachers is for discussing some recent events that have been reported in Croatian newspapers since it is easier for the students to summarize such events in Croatian.

Another feature within the category of the language of instruction concerns the language in which the CLIL students are assessed. Based on the information on examination obtained from the CLIL teachers, there is slight variation in the different CLIL programmes. Namely, most of the interviewed teachers combine both Croatian and English in exams. Several explanations are provided by the teachers who choose to set exams in both languages of instruction. For instance, one teacher comments that he sets exams in English, but requires his students to answer some exam questions regarding the subject terminology in Croatian so that the students learn the Croatian terms they need to use in the state graduation exams. Similarly, one of the teachers states that both languages are included in her written exams because she would like her students to understand the subject matter in both languages of instruction. Finally, one teacher explains that she sets the exams in English with the exception of the questions about the subject content related to Croatia, which the students answer in Croatian.

However, one of the teachers sets exams entirely in Croatian and expresses that this is due to the fact that their school is a Croatian school. Moreover, he adds that the students have to know the subject content in Croatian because of the state graduation exams. This teacher does nevertheless allow the students to do the test in English if they wish so and rewards them in some way in order to motivate them to answer the questions in English.

Unlike the previously stated teacher, one of the CLIL teachers sets exams entirely in English since her students always choose to do written exams in English. Despite the language in which exams are set, the majority of the interviewed teachers emphasise that the students are allowed to answer the exam questions in whichever language they choose. As one of the teachers explains, he believes that the language barrier should not be the cause for losing points on a test, for instance, if the students cannot recall a certain word in English.

Although the CLIL students mainly take exams in English, none of the interviewed CLIL teachers assesses the students' knowledge of English but only of the subject content. All of the teachers explain that they are not English teachers and, therefore, they do not want to grade the students' language proficiency. Several teachers mention that they provide feedback on spelling and grammar errors to the students, but the language errors do not have an impact on the grade.

Based on the CLIL teachers' answers regarding the use of Croatian and English in CLIL classes, there are only minor differences between the CLIL programmes since English mostly prevails as the language of instruction in the bilingually taught subjects. Namely, most of the CLIL teachers report that they teach more lessons in English than in Croatian. However, all interviewed teachers consider that it is important for the students to know the subject terminology in Croatian, which is why Croatian is also employed in the CLIL lessons alongside English. English is also the prevalent language when it comes to the CLIL students' use of the languages of instruction in class, as accounted for by the vast majority of the interviewed teachers. Finally, the CLIL students mostly take their exams in either English or in both languages of instruction.

Taking all of the above-stated factors into consideration, it can be said that all of the CLIL programmes are positioned as equally bilingual on the continuum of the language of instruction. Furthermore, due to the higher use of English in the subjects taught through CLIL, all CLIL programmes are in line with the definition of CLIL as an approach that aims at developing the students' proficiency in the target language (see Chapter 2.1).

The CLIL programmes offered at the two schools whose headteachers and teachers did not participate in the study cannot be compared with the other schools since no information in relation to this educational variable can be found in their school curriculum and annual activities plan and programme. It can only be assumed that at least half of the lesson units in the bilingually taught subjects at their CLIL programmes are taught in English, as stipulated by the legislation on CLIL instruction in Croatia (see Chapter 2.3.1).

It should also be noted that only one or two CLIL teachers from the participating schools were interviewed and that the information they provided concerned only their subjects. Therefore, it is possible that the CLIL programmes would have been placed differently on the continuum of the language of instruction if the data on the use of the languages of instruction had been obtained from all teachers working in the CLIL programmes at the surveyed schools.

### **4.3 The continuum of teachers**

The CLIL teachers' proficiency in English is, according to the answers given by the interviewed headteachers, equivalent at School 1, School 2 and School 3 and in compliance with the Regulation (NN 116/2016). Namely, the CLIL teachers' knowledge of English corresponds at least to level B2 of CEFR when it comes to the natural sciences teachers, while the minimal level of proficiency of other CLIL teachers is C1 according to CEFR. Additionally, all headteachers stated that none of the CLIL teachers at their schools were native speakers of English.

When it comes to School 4, School 5 and School 6, no information on the CLIL teachers' proficiency in English is provided in the school curriculum and the annual activities plan and programme. It can nevertheless be assumed that their command of English corresponds to level B2 or C1 of CEFR based on the subject field they teach, in accordance with the legislation on CLIL provision in Croatia. However, according to the official school documents, one of the teachers at School 4 and School 5, respectively, is a native speaker of English and teaches English classes in the CLIL programme.

Regarding specific training in the CLIL methodology, the CLIL teachers had no initial training in bilingual education prior to the introduction of CLIL at the schools, according to the interviewed headteachers. Two of the headteachers said the same in relation to this question. Namely, they believe that the CLIL methodology is similar to the methodology used in the non-CLIL programme taught completely in Croatian and that specific initial training in CLIL is not required. As one of the headteachers recounts:

I do not think that any special teaching methods are necessary. We knew what was expected of us. We knew that lessons should be taught partially in English and partially in Croatian. Therefore, we usually started with a slightly smaller percentage of teaching time in English in grade one due to adaptation, but this percentage increased later. However, lessons should not be taught either entirely in English or entirely in Croatian.

The surveyed schools differ however with respect to the organisation of professional development for the CLIL teachers. Namely, two headteachers state that the schools offer a course in English for the CLIL teachers. The courses are taught by the schools' English language teachers and aim to improve the CLIL teachers' language proficiency. One of the headteachers explains that, besides practicing conversation in English, the CLIL teachers also discuss CLIL pedagogy during the course. She also adds that the CLIL teachers sometimes

attend courses in CLIL methodology organised abroad. However, she explains that only few courses in CLIL exist and it is often difficult for the school to get the funding to send the teachers to such courses.

One of the schools differs from the previously mentioned ones since training in the CLIL methodology is not available at the school. As the school's headteacher explains, the CLIL teachers attend professional development in the subject they teach, but the training is not specifically aimed at teaching subjects through CLIL.

The lack of professional development and support for the CLIL teachers is also identified as an issue by one of the interviewed teachers:

The bilingual programme has somehow been neglected in terms of support from the Ministry of Education during these thirty years. British Council, for example, also offered seminars in the beginning. We do not really have any training in the methods anymore, we prepare all the teaching materials independently.

These accounts on the insufficient support for CLIL teachers are thus in line with the previous findings on CLIL in Croatia and other European countries (Mehisto et al., 2008; Vodopija-Krstanović & Badurina, 2020; Grbić, 2022).

Regarding the placement of the CLIL programmes on the continuum of the teachers, all of the schools can be considered as equal on Cenoz's (2009, pp. 31-39) "continua of multilingual education" concerning the teachers' level of proficiency in English. Only the two schools that have a teacher who is a native speaker of English can potentially be positioned as more bilingual in relation to the other schools. However, when it comes to the availability of professional development, only two CLIL schools can be regarded as more bilingual than the remaining schools as they offer specific training for the CLIL teachers.

#### **4.4 The continuum of the school context**

All of the schools with CLIL programmes offer their students activities or projects aimed at encouraging bilingualism and learning about different cultures outside the classroom. These mostly include extracurricular and volunteering activities and school events with the purpose of gaining knowledge about the traditions of the anglophone cultures and increasing the students' communicative skills in English. Furthermore, according to two of the interviewed headteachers, their schools organise various Erasmus mobility projects with the aim of promoting bilingualism and interculturalism in which both teachers and students participate. As

one headteacher points out, she believes that student mobility “is very valuable and such activities should be encouraged and implemented to the greatest possible extent”. Such activities are however intended for all students and not specifically for the CLIL students.

When it comes to the feature of the language of communication, the answers provided from the interviewed headteachers are mostly analogous. Namely, Croatian is the main language of communication at the CLIL schools, while English is seldom used outside the classroom, i.e., only for specific purposes, which mainly include participation in Erasmus mobility programmes or visits from foreign nationals interested in continuing their education in Croatia. As one headteacher clarifies:

There is no need for communication in English. I only use English to communicate, for instance, when our school hosts a mobility programme, when we communicate with some partner schools, but not otherwise with other teachers. We do not use English when we talk to each other, except when we attend the English course for the CLIL teachers, in which case we only communicate in English.

Information regarding the language of communication at the schools whose headteachers did not participate in the study could not be obtained, but it can be assumed that Croatian is also the main language of communication at these schools.

Another feature within the variable of the school context is the linguistic landscape, according to which the schools differ to some extent. The linguistic landscape at only one school is bilingual since the students often display their work connected to various holidays or events in both languages in the school’s hallways, according to the headteacher. However, the headteacher states that she does not want English to be overrepresented in the school’s linguistic landscape:

We try to commemorate various historical events by displaying student work written in both languages, but I do not want the English language to be exaggerated. Our school is primarily a Croatian school. Personally, I think that English is present enough in the public space and speech, in the media, and that students are exposed to English to a large extent.

The main language used in the linguistic landscape at the remaining schools is Croatian, whereas English is only present to a lower degree in some of the displayed student posters or in the information on a couple of schools’ websites, which is occasionally posted in English.

Due to the fact that the CLIL students at all schools can partake in various extracurricular activities, projects and student mobility programmes that aim at promoting bilingualism and interculturalism, all CLIL programmes can be positioned on the bilingual end of the continuum of the school context when it comes to this variable. However, when it comes to the dimensions of the language of communication and the linguistic landscape, none of the schools with CLIL programmes can be considered as bilingual because Croatian is predominantly used for these purposes. Only one CLIL school stands out as more bilingual than the remaining ones when it comes to the linguistic landscape since both Croatian and English are present to an equal degree on language signs at the school.

The domination of Croatian as the language of communication and in the linguistic landscape can be explained by the educational circumstances in which CLIL provision is offered. Namely, the CLIL programme is intended for Croatian students and is taught in both Croatian and English. Additionally, all of the schools also teach other mainstream programmes in which instruction is provided entirely in Croatian. It is therefore not surprising that Croatian prevails in the said educational context, while English is less frequently used outside the CLIL lessons.

## **5 Conclusion**

This study aimed to describe and compare the Croatian secondary school CLIL programmes with English as the target language, using the adapted version of the educational features included in the “continua of multilingual education” (Cenoz, 2009, pp. 31-39). The results show that CLIL with English as the target language takes somewhat different forms in Croatian secondary schools since the CLIL programmes vary according to the investigated educational variables. The findings are therefore in accordance with the description of CLIL as an umbrella term incorporating diverse educational models (Cenoz & Gorter, 2019; Coyle et al., 2010; Dalton-Puffer et al., 2010).

Regarding the researched educational features of the CLIL programmes, there are minor differences in the number of compulsory English classes in CLIL, which hinge on the orientation of the secondary school programme within which CLIL is provided. Still, all of the surveyed schools also offer the CLIL students additional, non-obligatory English classes. The CLIL programmes also vary in the number and type of the bilingually taught subjects, but they can be considered as similar regarding the use of the target language in class. Namely, English is the more dominant language of instruction in the bilingually taught subjects in all CLIL programmes. The CLIL students are however only assessed on content and not on their



proficiency in the English language. Furthermore, the CLIL programmes are comparable when it comes to the CLIL teachers' proficiency in English. However, the programmes differ regarding the availability of professional development for CLIL teachers, as only some schools offer it. Moreover, all CLIL schools also promote bilingualism and interculturalism through extracurricular activities and projects, but the more prevalent language found in the schools' linguistic landscape and used in communication outside CLIL lessons is Croatian.

A limitation of this study is however that only a couple of teachers at the participating schools have been interviewed. Therefore, a study involving more CLIL teachers is required in order to better understand how CLIL with English as the target language is provided in the Croatian educational system. Future studies could potentially also look into how CLIL teachers prepare and organise CLIL lessons in a more detailed manner, for instance, by investigating for which purposes and in which activities each of the two languages of instruction is used in class. Additionally, further research could focus on studying CLIL instruction with other target foreign languages in order to provide a more thorough description of CLIL in Croatian secondary schools. Apart from gaining insight into the organisation of CLIL provision, future research on CLIL in the Croatian context is also needed for raising awareness about the specificities of CLIL methodology and informing the educational authorities about the necessity of providing support to CLIL teachers through professional development.

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## Sažetak

### Usporedba pristupa integriranog učenja sadržaja i jezika (*CLIL*) u dvojezičnim srednjoškolskim programima u Hrvatskoj

Integrirano učenje sadržaja i jezika (engl. *Content and Language Integrated Learning, CLIL*) odnosi se na poučavanje nejezičnih predmeta kroz dodatni, ciljni jezik s namjerom stjecanja znanja iz predmetnog gradiva i ciljnog jezika. Ovaj obrazovni pristup europskih korijena detaljno je istraživao u različitim europskim odgojno-obrazovnim sustavima. Međutim, ne postoje istraživanja o provedbi *CLIL*-a sa stranim ciljnim jezikom u hrvatskom kontekstu. Stoga je cilj ovog diplomskog rada opisati i usporediti organizaciju *CLIL* programa s engleskim kao ciljnim jezikom u hrvatskim gimnazijama. Istraživanje je provedeno putem polustrukturiranih intervjua s tri ravnateljice i petero nastavnika u *CLIL* programima te analize službenih školskih dokumenata škola s *CLIL* programom. *CLIL* programi opisani su i uspoređeni pomoću prilagođenog modela „kontinuumu višejezičnog obrazovanja“ (Cenoz, 2009, str. 31-39) koji analizira obrazovne programe kao više ili manje dvojezične na temelju četiriju obilježja: kontinuumu školskih predmeta, jezika nastave, nastavnika i školskog okruženja. Rezultati pokazuju da se *CLIL* programi razlikuju u broju nastavnih sati iz predmeta Engleski jezik, što ih smješta na razne dijelove kontinuumu školskih predmeta. Nadalje, *CLIL* programi također se mogu različito smjestiti na kontinuumu jezika nastave zbog nejednaka broja predmeta koji se poučavaju dvojezično. Unatoč tome, svi se *CLIL* programi mogu smatrati jednakima na istom kontinuumu što se tiče upotrebe ciljnog jezika jer engleski dominira u nastavi dvojezičnih predmeta u svim programima. Svi *CLIL* programi također se mogu smatrati jednakima na kontinuumu nastavnika kada je riječ o njihovoj razini znanja engleskog jezika, ali se u određenoj mjeri razlikuju u pogledu organizacije stručnog usavršavanja nastavnika za poučavanje u dvojezičnoj nastavi, koje se provodi samo u nekim školama. Nadalje, *CLIL* programi mogu se analizirati kao dvojezični na kontinuumu školskog okruženja kada je riječ o dostupnosti izvannastavnih aktivnosti s ciljem unaprjeđenja jezičnih i međukulturnih kompetencija učenika. No, većina *CLIL* programa nije dvojezična u pogledu značajki jezika komunikacije i jezičnog krajolika zbog veće upotrebe hrvatskog jezika u te svrhe.

**Ključne riječi:** *CLIL*, engleski jezik, srednjoškolsko obrazovanje, hrvatski odgojno-obrazovni sustav

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A – Interview questions for headteachers and teachers in CLIL programmes**

#### **Interview questions for the CLIL headteachers**

##### The continuum of subject

1. How many instruction hours per week do the CLIL students have in the subjects the English language and the Croatian language?
2. Do the CLIL students have the possibility to attend elective, optional, advanced and/or remedial classes in the subject the English language? If so, how many instruction hours per week?
3. Do the students in the CLIL programme study another foreign language? If so, how many instruction hours per week do they have in the foreign language?

##### The continuum of the language of instruction

4. Which subjects are taught bilingually, in both English and Croatian?
5. Is the number of the subjects taught bilingually the same at all grade levels?
6. How does the school decide on the number of the subjects taught bilingually and on what does the choice of the subjects depend?

##### The continuum of teachers

7. What is the CLIL teachers' level of proficiency in English?
8. Are any of the CLIL teachers native speakers of English?
9. What kind of training in the CLIL methodology did the CLIL teachers attend before they started teaching in the CLIL programme?
10. Does the school organise in-service training in the CLIL methodology for the CLIL teachers?

### The continuum of the school context

11. Does the school promote a positive attitude towards bilingualism and the students' development of linguistic and intercultural competences outside of classroom instruction and in what way (e.g. through extracurricular activities)?
12. Do you use English in communication with other teachers, school staff, parents and students outside class hours? In what situations?
13. Is the environment at the school bilingual? For example, in which language do you publish information on the bulletin board or the school's website? In which language are student work, posters etc. displayed in classrooms and other rooms in the school written?

### **Interview questions for the CLIL teachers**

#### The continuum of the language of instruction

1. How many lesson units in your subject do you teach in English and in Croatian, respectively, in each CLIL class?
2. To what extent do your students use English in class? In which language do students communicate with each other when they do pair work or group work?
3. In which language do you carry out assessment?
4. Do you also grade the students' knowledge of English?

## **Appendix B** – Pitanja za polustrukturirani intervju s ravnateljima i nastavnicima u *CLIL* programima

### **Pitanja za ravnatelje**

#### Kontinuum školskih predmeta

1. Koliko sati obvezne nastave tjedno učenici u dvojezičnom programu imaju iz predmeta engleski jezik i hrvatski jezik?
2. Postoji li mogućnost pohađanja izborne, fakultativne, dodatne i/ili dopunske nastave iz engleskog jezika? Koliko se sati tjedno održava takva nastava?
3. Pohađaju li učenici u dvojezičnom programu nastavu iz nekog drugog stranog jezika i koliko sati tjedno?

#### Kontinuum jezika nastave

4. Koji se predmeti predaju dvojezično, na hrvatskom i engleskom jeziku?
5. Je li broj predmeta koji se predaju dvojezično jednak u svim razredima?
6. Kako se na razini škole određuje koliko će se predmeta predavati dvojezično i o čemu ovisi odabir predmeta koji će se predavati dvojezično?

#### Kontinuum nastavnika

7. Koju razinu znanja engleskog jezika imaju nastavnici koji predaju u dvojezičnom programu?
8. Je li netko od nastavnika koji predaju u dvojezičnom programu izvorni govornik engleskog jezika?
9. Kakvu su izobrazbu o metodici dvojezične nastave pohađali nastavnici koji predaju u dvojezičnom programu prije uvođenja programa?
10. Organizira li škola usavršavanje nastavnika u području metodike dvojezične nastave?



## Kontinuum školskog okruženja

11. Promiče li škola pozitivan stav prema dvojezičnosti i razvoj jezičnih i međukulturnih kompetencija kod učenika izvan same nastave u razredu i na koji način (npr. kroz izvannastavne aktivnosti)?

12. Koristite li se engleskim jezikom kad komunicirate s ostalim nastavnicima, djelatnicima škole, roditeljima i učenicima izvan nastave? U kojim situacijama?

13. Je li okruženje u Vašoj školi dvojezično? Primjerice, na kojem jeziku objavljujete obavijesti na oglasnoj ploči ili internetskoj stranici škole? Na kojem su jeziku napisani učenički radovi, plakati i sl. izloženi u učionicama i ostalim prostorijama u školi?

## Pitanja za nastavnike

### Kontinuum jezika nastave

1. Koliko nastavnih jedinica iz svojeg predmeta predajete na engleskom jeziku, a koliko na hrvatskom u pojedinom razredu?

2. U kojoj se mjeri učenici koriste engleskim jezikom na nastavi? Na kojem jeziku učenici komuniciraju međusobno kad zajednički obavljaju određeni nastavni zadatak?

3. Na kojem jeziku provodite provjere znanja učenika?

4. Ocjenjujete li i znanje engleskog jezika?