

## ***Content and language integrated learning in Austrian classrooms: applied linguistics takes a look***

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As the department which is the home of VIEWS is progressively recognising its position as the largest organisational unit in Austria which trains English teachers, more research and development efforts are being turned into that direction. This contribution outlines a new research project in this area in order to invite comment and interaction. The structure of this contribution is as follows: section one raises those general questions which represent the underlying rationale, sections 2 and 3 provide the most important aspects of theoretical and disciplinary background. This is followed in section 4 by a more detailed presentation of the research questions and of the research methods used (section 5). The conclusion describes the anticipated results.

### **1. Introduction: purpose and aims of the project**

Considering the fact that over the last ten years there has been a continuous growth in the use of English as a medium of instruction in Austrian (and indeed European) mainstream schools, there has been little accompanying research and next to none directed at the development of underlying theory. This has also been noted by several observers (Abuja 1999, Trentini 2000, Peter 1999, Hallett 1999, Lamsfuß-Schenk and Wolff 1999). As an initial illustration of this lack in explicit theorising which characterises English-medium instruction in Austria (and elsewhere), we can refer to the terminological difficulty that we meet once we try to place it within the context of an international debate on second and foreign language learning. Locally, the most current term used to refer to situations where English is used as a medium of instruction to teach history, geography, business studies etc. is *Englisch als Arbeitssprache (EaA;*<sup>1</sup> *English as a working language)*. Taken liter-

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<sup>1</sup> The abbreviation *EaA* is also repeatedly used in this article.

ally, this implies that the foreign language, which is considered to have been learned somewhere else (presumably during English lessons), is quite simply used to teach and learn subject content. Next to nothing is said about further language learning objectives.<sup>2</sup> Recently, *English across the Curriculum (EaC)* has also come into use, and I suspect it was introduced by individuals who believe that language objectives (in both L1 and L2) are indeed part of the entire curriculum, that is, also in the so-called content-subjects. (However, these efforts have made no impact at the curriculum-level.) Another term used in the international discussion to characterise such learning environments is *content-based foreign language learning* or *content and language integrated learning (CLIL)*, both of which put a strong focus on the language learning aspects of this undertaking.

For this and other reasons it seemed timely for applied linguistics to take on the challenge and try to forge a connection between the local conditions and the theoretical debate going on internationally. The project presented here understands itself as a contribution into this direction. However, there is very little information about what the “local conditions” actually look like that would go beyond the anecdotal. Two main areas of theoretical and empirical concern have, therefore, been identified. These are the characteristics of classroom discourse on the one hand, and the implicit language learning theories guiding the actions of teachers on the other. In somewhat more detail:

1. What are the main characteristics of classroom discourse in such English-medium classrooms and how do they relate to current theories of language acquisition and learning? What is the instructional relevance of the fact that some teachers are also trained language teachers while others are not?

Research emanating from Canadian immersion programmes has shown repeatedly that significant amounts of factual content can be learned through the medium of an L2 but the results regarding ultimate linguistic and communicative competence in the L2 have been more differentiated (e.g. Swain 1996). Especially a bilingual or immersion programme which operates in an otherwise monolingual environment carries a considerable linguistic-instructional burden (cf. Baetens Beardsmore 1996, Swain&Lapkin 1982, Cummins &Swain 1986) and this is the situation of English-medium instruction in Austria. The study therefore aims at examining classroom discourse

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<sup>2</sup> Let me be up-front: my contention is that language learning objectives are necessarily there even if they are not explicitly formulated. Or else what would be the point in having German-speaking teachers and German (L1 and L2)-speaking students talk together in English.

from the perspective of current theories on second language acquisition which underline the role of output and interaction alongside the generally recognised significance of comprehensible input. The aim in this exercise is to identify instructional arrangements which are particularly conducive to language learning, or indeed those which are not.

2. What are the (language) learning theories underlying English-medium instruction in Austrian mainstream schools? What are the beliefs, convictions, theories and personal knowledge regarding content-based EFL on part of the acting stakeholders and how do these beliefs translate into instructional and classroom behaviour ?

While the importance of teacher cognition is fairly well-established in educational research at large, (e.g. Elbaz 1983, Pajares 1992) an emergent interest in teacher cognition in applied linguistics has only recently translated into a number of empirical studies (e.g. Golombek 1998, Borg 1999). From among the various stakeholders, the present study will focus on teachers, as they are the central agents in the shaping of day-to-day classroom realities.

The ultimate aim of this project thus is to develop a conceptually sound model of the language side of English-medium instruction that can serve as the basis for principled pedagogical decisions.

## 2. Some theoretical considerations

Looking at the history of education, we find that the fact of pupils learning educational content through a language other than their L1 is not at all extraordinary. Latin, for instance, was the language of instruction at all levels through much of European history. Indeed, in many parts of the world children are today receiving their education through the medium of a language which is not their first. In short, the fact, that whole educational careers through to tertiary level can be conducted in the language learned in infancy is not nearly as 'normal' and 'unmarked' as much of educational theory would make us believe.

Interestingly, even a good deal of the theorising on language acquisition over the last decades seems to have taken place largely unaware of its own historical situatedness in this respect and has displayed a strong *monolingual habitus* (cf. Gogolin 1994) as regards formal educational contexts. It is only relatively recently that demographic developments such as large-scale migration have begun to alter this. Here I am referring especially to the work emanating from research on immersion education in Canada and to the ESL-research taking place, above all, in the United States both of which have pro-

duced significant contributions to the development of language acquisition theory (see below).

### Theories of second language acquisition and learning<sup>3</sup>

One way in which the theorising on second language acquisition can be usefully structured is by dividing the field into reception-based and production-based theories (e.g. Johnson 1995). An alternative organising principle would be to distinguish between input-output theories and interactive theories with interesting changes of categorisation especially regarding Swain's Output Hypothesis. As the former categorisation is less committed to defining interaction in a particular way, I will adopt it here. Additionally, it has to be mentioned that some neuro-biological, cognitive models of language acquisition offer overarching explanations which make the above categorisations pragmatic rather than substantial (e.g. Karpf 1990).

Probably the most widely known reception-based theory of language acquisition is Krashen's Monitor Model in which the concept of Comprehensible Input plays a central role (Krashen 1981, 1982, 1985). The basic idea of the model is that if the language learner is exposed to input which is comprehensible either because of the context in which it occurs or through intentional simplification (motherese, foreigner-talk), acquisition will occur, especially if the learning situation is characterised by positive emotions (Affective Filter). Comprehensible input will always be somewhat beyond the learner's current level of linguistic competence ("i"), thus providing a kind of added value ("+I") in the shape of linguistic forms and functions which are just beyond the learners proficiency level. Krashen stresses that optimal comprehensible input is not grammatically sequenced but first and foremost focused on meaning. Provided there is also sufficient quantity of this kind of input, enough "+I"-elements will naturally occur so that as long the input is also perceived as

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<sup>3</sup> In this article the terms *acquisition* and *learning* are used as quasi-synonyms. The classic distinction between them is roughly along the lines that *acquisition* is applied to non-instructed learning situations (i.e. first language or naturalistic second-language learning), whereas *learning* is thought to take place through instruction in formal educational contexts. Which of the two is to be applied to a situation in which a language (English) is to be learned in an instructional context but without (supposedly) explicit language instruction is a matter of theoretical, maybe even ideological convictions. There is extensive discussion and criticism of the distinction in the literature (cf. e.g. Widdowson 1990). As I am not convinced that a categorical distinction between the two can be drawn, I shall use them interchangeably.

meaningful and relevant by the learner, acquisition will automatically follow. Krashen does not deny the relevance of output, but sees it mainly as a means in which a language learner can secure more comprehensible input for herself.

Almost simultaneously, Long (1981, 1983, 1985) proposed a slightly different version of a reception-based theory. Long's Interaction Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of conversational adjustments which happen in two-way interaction for creating learner-adequate comprehensible input. It is claimed that such adjustments, resulting from the negotiation of meaning in personal interaction, maximize the opportunities for second language acquisition. Examples of such conversational adjustments would be models, recasts, expansions, or reformulations. An important difference to Krashen's conception of input and interaction seems to me to be the emphasis the Interaction Hypothesis framework puts on the problematic aspects of concrete interaction (i.e. the mistakes which cause misunderstanding or communication breakdown). The actual repair work done by way of conversational adjustments is seen as instrumental to the acquisition process (e.g. Gass, Mackey, Pica 1998: 301). This, however, requires that conversation-like interaction happen in the instructional context.

Both Krashen's and Long's models have been criticised for being interpretive rather than empirically based, but certainly Krashen's Monitor Model has proved highly influential and is the model most frequently referred to by teachers practising English-medium instruction in Austria. There is no doubt that it captures important and intuitively accessible features of the language acquisition process. Another important element was added to the theoretical repertoire by Swain's recognition that learners also need opportunities to produce output if they are to become fluent speakers and writers (Swain 1985, 1995). Studying immersion classrooms in Canada she found that "comprehensible output is, unfortunately, generally missing in typical classroom settings" (Swain 1985: 252) and claims that learners need to be "pushed" from semantic into syntactic processing mode by requiring them to encode comprehensible messages in order to propel their language learning. Only language production in the context of social interaction enables learners to try out their linguistic knowledge by testing hypotheses about the language and creating entrenchment of what they already know. So-called action-oriented (*handlungsorientierte*) approaches to language learning also come into the picture here (e.g. Krumm 1996) as does task-based learning.

Further elaborations of the production-based type of hypothesis concern the kinds of discourse learners are involved in as well as the roles which they are allowed to take. The Discourse Hypothesis (Givon 1979) holds that lan-

guage learners will acquire only those types of language found in the discourse types in which they tend to participate. Thus if a learner participates only in informal and unplanned discourse events s/he will learn only that type of language. Similarly, if a learner participates only in formal classroom discourse, this is the kind of language s/he will learn. Tarone and Swain (1995), for instance, found that immersion students in Canada were using their L2 for communication with adults in the school-context but not among each other because “they don’t teach us how to speak [French] that way”(1995:172). I believe that this is an important point to consider in the formulation of curricular aims as well as in the discussion of authenticity issues in the context of English-medium instruction in Austria. Finally, Ellis (1984) and Long (1983), in the Topicalisation Hypothesis, point out that situations where the learner is allowed to choose and control the topic of conversation are particularly facilitative of language learning. Summing up, I refer to R. Ellis (1990, 1999) who warns that to date there is no hard empirical evidence which would adequately describe exactly how topic selection, comprehensible input, comprehensible output etc. contribute to second language learning (see also N. Ellis and Laporte 1997) Even so, the use of the various models and hypotheses reviewed lies in their making explicit intuitively plausible aspects of the language acquisition process – a complex event which is defiant of attempts at monocausal explanation.

## Classroom discourse

The analysis of educational talk was one of the first mainstays of the field of discourse analysis in linguistics. Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) identification of the Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) unit has had a lasting effect on the view of classroom discourse the research community has taken. Lörcher (1983) first applied the framework to foreign language classrooms. Subsequent studies on the quantitative distribution of talk have tended to show overwhelmingly that it is the teachers who do most of the talking, even in classrooms with a strong learner focus (Cazden 1988; Mehan 1985, 1997; Chaudron 1988). This distribution of talk naturally has direct consequences on who nominates topics and how these topics are developed. Taken together these research results have led to the conviction (at least the publicised one) of many people, that teacher talk is somehow “not good” and stops the students from real learning. The fact that classrooms the world over continue to function like this, can however, not be put down to the mere collective un-

willingness of teachers to shut up and let the students get on with it. In fact, recently there has been a reappraisal of the IRE-sequence in terms of cognitive-interactive learning theory. Combining discourse-analytic and Vygotskian concepts, Jarvis and Robinson (1997) link Initiation-Response-Evaluation to the cognitive pattern of Focus-Build-Summarise (see also Wells 1993) in a very intriguing way.

### 3. Models of L2 instruction similar to EaA

#### French immersion in Canada

With 30 years of experience and an ongoing cycle of evaluation, research and development Canadian immersion education is probably one of the best documented educational programmes ever. Major contributions to language learning theory have also emerged in the process.

Generally, the hundreds of evaluations of different programmes across Canada (e.g. Cummins and Swain 1986, Swain & Lapkin 1982, 1986, Day & Shapson 1996) have shown consistent results on the question of academic achievement of immersion students: indeed, a significant amount of subject matter knowledge can be acquired through the L2 with immersion students tending to achieve the same results as L1-instructed control groups. A short differential view of this can be found in Swain (1996) who also states that “The findings concerning the learning of French were somewhat puzzling, however” (p.91).

Very briefly, these findings were that the receptive skills of early immersion students reach native-speaker level, and later-immersion students consistently surpass comparison groups who have received classic foreign language instruction (e.g. Lapkin et al. 1991). Productive skills, however, appear to be a different story. All immersion students fall short of their francophone peers with regard to writing skills. Their weaknesses mainly lie in grammatical and lexical competence rather than in the discourse aspects of writing. The weakest of the four skills areas is speaking, again with weaknesses concentrating on the grammatical and lexical rather than the discourse levels. It is this kind of research results which prompted Swain’s formulation of the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis (Swain 1985, 1995; Swain and Lapkin 1995).

Other observations of relevance to the study of CLIL classroom discourse concern language input, grammar and vocabulary instruction, feedback and error correction. Longitudinal studies of immersion programmes have shown that the initial theoretical position of the ‘language bath’ (cf. Krashen’s com-

prehensible input) had to be revised in the sense that input received in a classroom setting will necessarily be functionally restricted in many ways. This is particularly serious when the main source of input is the classroom. This has led to increasing demands for a more stringent formulation of the programme's dual goals together with the development of a language curriculum (e.g. Lyster 1990, Snow et al 1989). In the 1990s numerous experimental and qualitative studies have sought to ascertain whether explicit grammar and vocabulary instruction can be shown to have beneficial effects on the language development of immersion students (e.g. Day and Shapson 1991).

Among the several models of immersion education which have been developed, it is late immersion which *EaA* can make reference to most directly, though the share of *EaA* lessons tends to stay way below the 80-50% of late-immersion. The teachers in immersion programmes are either native speakers of French, English or both (58%:34%:3% in one survey, Day&Shapson 1996). The majority have received their academic training in French, as well as immersion-specific teacher training. This highlights divergences in teacher profiles as well as in the sociolinguistic aims of the two instructional models: in Canada the aim is native-like competence in order to enable immersion students to communicate with their francophone compatriots on equal terms. In Austria there is no such resident English-speaking target group. Accordingly, deliberations regarding models and norms waver between native models and the recognition that students are most likely to use English as a lingua franca with other non-native speakers in later life (cf. Seidlhofer 2000, Peter 1999).

## Content-and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Part of the Language across the Curriculum (LAC) movement, CLIL has developed in the United States as an answer to the pressures on all levels of the education system to integrate non-native speaking students into the mainstream curriculum in ways which economise on time and resources. The field is sufficiently consolidated to have produced numerous reports on and evaluations of individual programmes, research on linguistic, pedagogical and sociocultural aspects, contributions to language learning theory (especially the interaction-based approaches, see above), well-documented curriculum and materials development projects (e.g. Chamot and O'Malley 1986; Short 1993, 1994) and even textbooks (e.g. Brinton, Snow, Wesche 1989, 1995; Rosenthal 1996). Given this, it is very tempting to turn to the CLIL literature for immediate solutions to perceived *EaA*-questions, also because the underlying phi-

losophy of the two educational models seems to be very much in line: both aim at offering “learners necessary conditions for second language learning by exposing them to meaningful language in use” (Brinton, Snow, Wesche 1989, viii). However, a number of factors speak against looking for quick solutions in these quarters. All of them ultimately lie in the different socio-linguistic context not all of whose ramifications can be pursued in this project outline: most importantly, CLIL in the U.S. takes place in a *second* and not a *foreign* language environment, that is the language to be learned is also present in the environment outside school or university so that the overall input learners receive, and the output which they produce is not limited to what is done in the classroom. Because CLIL-learners are being prepared to join the mainstream of the education system, it is easier to define the language and communication requirements which CLIL instruction needs to prepare them for. The form and sequence of language presentation is dictated by content material but there is also a language curriculum (Brinton, Snow, Wesche 1989, vii). In the *EaA* context, the students are already part of the educational mainstream, in effect it is one of the declared aims of *EaA* to prepare them for using the school-subject “English” outside, in the “real world” for “real communication” (e.g. Burda 2000). However, the ‘real world’ (of which, I would claim, school is definitely part) consists of a myriad different communication needs and events so that it is extremely difficult to define concrete linguistic and communicative aims for *EaA*. This may be somewhat better in directly vocationally oriented school subjects but the difference is only in degree not in kind. It is hoped that the results of the present study will help systematic reflection in this respect on the way.

### Foreign-language CLIL<sup>4</sup>

There is only a handful of studies which deal with content and language integrated learning in a properly foreign-language context. Musumeci (1996) investigates geography-through-Italian classes in a post-secondary setting, trying to identify which features of classroom discourse make the input comprehensible, meaningful and rich, and focusing particularly on the issue of meaning negotiation. Her results show that the classrooms she investigates are not characterised by an overly great amount of meaning negotiation, even though the programme has a clearly defined, properly dual content and lan-

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<sup>4</sup> An overview of the relevant research scene in Germany has been excluded from this contribution but can be requested from the author.

guage objective (1996: 289). With regard to *EaA*, on the other hand, a clear formulation of its objective(s) is still a desideratum (though, I feel, an increasingly urgent one).

Duff (1995, 1996, 1997) reports on an ethnographic study of English-Hungarian classrooms in Hungary, this being the educational context in the literature which most closely resembles the situation of *EaA* in Austria. Duff's study focuses very strongly on the fact that different discourse and even educational cultures may be transported via the language which is used as the medium of instruction, thus pointing out the intercultural dimension of such instructional settings. While this intercultural migration of values may have been particularly pointed in the Hungary of the early nineties, this is also an aspect of *EaA* which should not be neglected. It has been pointed out repeatedly by *EaA* practitioners with reference to the use of British or American teaching materials (e.g. Trentini 2000, Sitte 1998, and others by personal communication).

The greatest number of publications making direct reference to English-medium instruction in Austria has so far emerged from the "Projektgruppe Englisch als Arbeitssprache" based at the ministry of education-led *Zentrum für Schulentwicklung III* in the shape of reports on the situation of *EaA* in Austrian schools as well as guidelines regarding organisational and didactic decisions (extent of *EaA*-use; curriculum analysis, materials development, role of native speakers, teacher development needs in Abuja 1993, Abuja and Heindler 1996, Abuja 1998, 1999 and *EaA*-Servicehefte). This is complemented by quantitative surveys on attitudes towards *EaA* among school administrators (Östreicher and Grogger 1997) and secondary-school students (Wallner 1999), and the situation in one Austrian province (Zeller 2000). Several perceptive action research reports covering a variety of content subjects have emerged from a course run by *Interuniversitäres Institut für Interdisziplinäre Forschung und Fortbildung (Klagenfurt)*, (e.g. Staudner 1999ab). Several M.A. and Ph.D. theses have dealt with the teaching of geography through the medium of English (Felberbauer 1996, Peter 1999, Trentini 2000), most probably caused by the fact that geography is by far the most widely taught *EaA* subject. The authors are more strongly concerned with what English can contribute to the curricular and didactic aims of the subject geography rather than how a geography learning environment can contribute to the learning of English. To varying extents all the publications referred to in this section express the tension between the professed view of *EaA* as a "fixen Bestandteil des modernen Fremdsprachenunterrichts" (Heindler 1998:

8 in Abuja ed. 1998), that is a way to improve foreign language competence, and a perceived threat to the content-subject.

On the whole, however, research into the use of English as a medium of instruction in Austria has been based on educational models for which I will use the shorthand “bilingual schools” (by which I mean that the extent of English use is such that they cannot be regarded part of the Austrian educational mainstream). Research on the bilingual schools has been predominantly outcome-oriented, i.e. oriented towards determining results of language learning and acquisition on part of the pupils. Griessler (1998) compared the morpho-syntactic and lexical competence of LISA (Linz) and non-LISA pupils through the analysis of a story-telling task. Eder (1998) made a similar comparison of the bilingual and non-bilingual groups at the relevant Gymnasium in Klagenfurt, using a battery of reception and production tests. Expectations that pupils from the bilingual streams would know more English than their mainstream peers were of course fulfilled. As a next step in this line of research it would probably be necessary to measure the achievement of the bilingual-stream students against some outside standard.

A large-scale longitudinal research project led by A. Peltzer-Karpf (e.g. Peltzer-Karpf & Zangl 1997, Zangl & Peltzer-Karpf 1998) was conducted at the Vienna VBS primary school. The project is based on a neuro-biologically founded model of language acquisition (as formulated in Karpf 1990). The central assumption of this kind of cognitive model is that language acquisition no matter whether first, second or third proceeds via neuronal self-organisation. Differences across acquisition contexts can be observed in speed and intensity by which the process advances, but the preference for certain kinds of input-data remains constant. The model thus accommodates both a psycholinguistic-individual and a sociolinguistic-pragmatic dimension since language acquisition happens through the individual’s interaction with the environment as provider of the input which triggers neuronal self-organisation. The research project accordingly included the observation of classroom interaction as well as psycholinguistic tests. However, in the published reports the emphasis is on the psycholinguistic aspects, reporting on the lexical, morphological and syntactic development of the children’s English competence over the years. Framed in a more strongly sociolinguistic context, Hüttner (1997) examined code-switching behaviour at the same school.

## 4. Research questions and hypotheses

The main empirical and theoretical concerns of the project were mentioned in the introduction. In this section I will give a more detailed account of the actual research questions pursued, as well as some of the working hypotheses connected with them. The research questions are grouped around three focal areas:

### Patterns in classroom interaction

One of the main arguments brought forward in favour of English-medium instruction is that using English for the learning of history, geography etc. rather than for learning English itself prepares pupils for using the language in the world outside school. This, however, is not an actually established fact, but an assumption. In fact, pre-vocational contexts are notoriously problematic with regard to determining future language needs of students (which is not to say that this ought not to be attempted). It might therefore be a workable alternative to first examine what happens in the classroom, that is to say, patterns of participation and the language functions and forms needed and used within them. This might also be useful for developing teaching goals for *EaA* teaching (cf. Cazden 1995).

- What are the participation patterns in *EaA* classroom discourse? What are the global characteristics of the linguistic exchanges in the classroom: who speaks, how much, when, about what?
- To what extent are pupils required to produce “comprehensible output”? Can “comprehensible output” be defined independently of the situational context? For instance: do one-word responses to display questions count as comprehensible output? They are certainly comprehensible within the universe of classroom discourse.
- To what extent do teachers and pupils negotiate meaning in secondary *EaA* instructional situations? What does that negotiation look like?
- How is failure to comprehend signalled (is it?) and how are messages modified? Who signals, who modifies (cf. Musumeci 1996)
- What do teachers (and pupils) perceive as “authentic communication”?

### Language teaching strategies

It is a persistent myth about first language acquisition that it proceeds entirely without instruction and correction. This is wrong on two grounds: caregivers also act as language teachers, and first-language literacy is predominantly the product of instruction and plenty of correction. That is to say that even in pre-

school, oral language acquisition things are not quite as undirected as it may appear, although it is probably possible to acquire basic oral skills in a first language without instructional intervention on part of the interlocutors. However, first language acquisition research has shown that children of parents who use plenty of language teaching strategies are consistently more advanced than children of parents who do not (Döpke 1993, Clark 1977, Moerk 1985). Thus, *EaA*-classroom discourse needs to be examined along the following lines:

- Is there evidence of language teaching strategies in oral teacher language? What is the incidence and function of e.g. expansions, paraphrases, echoes, models, recasts, expansions, reformulations or responses?
- How does this relate to corrective behaviour?
- If referential questions (as opposed to display questions) facilitate language learning through ‘real communication’, in how far does this relativise the supposed disadvantage of language lessons vis a vis content lessons? With the teacher firmly in the role of the subject expert, especially transmission-based designs of content-pedagogy are certainly not conducive to two-way communication.

### Implicit theories (Alltagstheorien)

Internal conceptualisations about how languages are learned are certainly of importance in English-medium instruction as they inform how instructional events are designed and/or perceived by the participants.

- My working hypothesis in this respect assumes that because there is a delay and a kind of sedimentation in the spread of scientific innovation into textbooks, the knowledge base of practitioners and hence their actions informed by it, will often refer to older theoretical models. Additionally I assume personal experience to be an even stronger shaping force on implicit theories than knowledge of scientific theories. Being the key agents in the instructional event, teachers are at the centre of interest in this respect.
- I assume that the implicit theories which guide teacher’s actions are based on certain conceptualisations and beliefs about language learning as well as communication. The following are taken to be beliefs which play a significant role in shaping teachers’ actions:
  - input is the key to successful and effortless language learning (L1-analogy)
  - there is no instruction and correction in first language acquisition
  - classroom discourse is not “real” discourse
  - communication is transmission of information
  - in content classrooms there is more real communication than in language classrooms

## 5. Methodological considerations

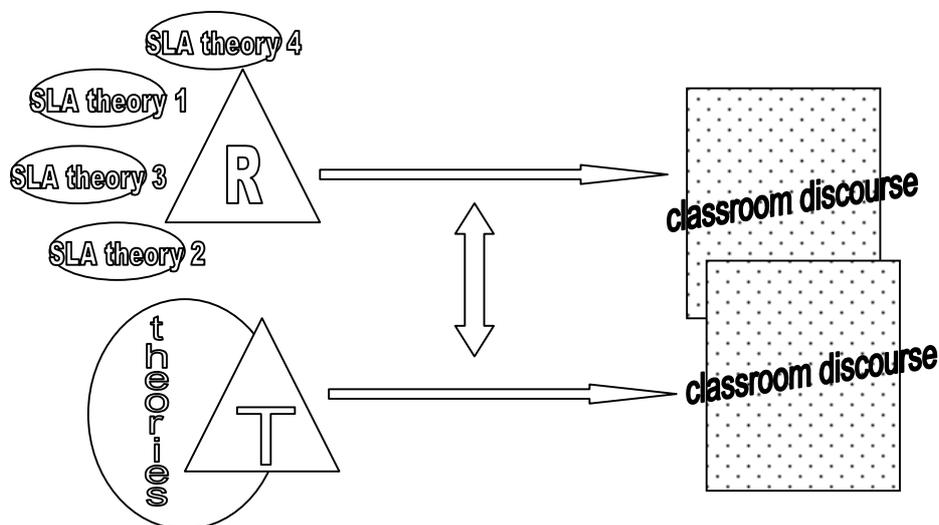
With the usual transdisciplinary delay, language acquisition studies began to discover qualitative research for its purposes just over ten years ago (Watson-Gegeo 1988). Surveys about research methods in SLA started to include chapters on “qualitative” or “ethnographic” approaches (Johnson 1992, Nunan 1992) and since the *TESOL Quarterly* 29-3 (1995) special issue, qualitative research on the acquisition of second and foreign languages has certainly come of age. This is shown by the share such studies now occupy in the pages of some leading journals of the field (*TESOL Quarterly*, *Applied Linguistics*). The reason for the attractiveness of qualitative research methods is easy to see. As the relationship between exposure/instruction and acquisition/learning is extremely complex and not linear, this means that experimental approaches by their very nature can only ever provide enlightenment on single pieces of a complex jigsaw. Additionally, transfer from experimental set-ups to classroom situations brings into play a considerable number of additional factors.

I think there is a growing realisation that a strict juxtaposition of experimental and quantitative vs. classroom-based and qualitative research is ultimately sterile. But there still seems to me to exist a tendency to equate classroom-based research with qualitative research somewhat too hastily. An equation which is unjustified if it is based on a confusion of typical research methods (e.g. ethnography, participant observation etc.) with underlying theoretical positions (ethnomethodology, constructivism, etc.).<sup>5</sup> The project presented here does have an overall qualitative design in that it examines more than one perspective on the object. The following diagram seeks to illustrate this.

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<sup>5</sup> This in itself would make an interesting topic in the history and sociology of science. On related issues see Flick (1995: 16-21).

Diagram 1. Illustration of dual perspective in the research design  
(T = teacher; R = researcher)



The object (English-medium classroom discourse) is viewed by the researcher (R) from a vantage point outside the field itself, a vantage point characterised by an array of scientific theories concerning L2-acquisition and learning. The same object is also viewed by the teacher (T) who is at the same time a participant of the field requiring ongoing decisions and actions from her or him. These actions are themselves informed by implicit and explicit theories on part of the teacher. Of course, the field is also viewed by several other stakeholders (students, administrators, school authorities, parents) but these are being excluded for the time being. The ultimate aim of this research should be to forge a connection and an exchange between these separate perspectives.

In pursuing the research questions laid out in section 4 and in order to maintain a dual, if not multiple perspective, the following research methods are being applied and the following kinds of data are being collected and analysed.

## Classroom data

In examining the global event “English” in the *EaA* classroom we need to distinguish between the written and the spoken medium. Written language usually serves as input (textbook, teacher-generated materials) and is relatively easy to access. However, it is in the nature of instruction that it is an

interactive event where learners interact with the material, with each other and with the teacher(s). The spoken language thus plays a significant role.

Globally, classroom talk falls into three categories: a) organisational, procedural talk which often creates social demands requiring physical action; b) instructional, informative talk, which is usually perceived as the ‘content’ part of the lesson and c) personal, expressive talk (cf. Ernst 1994). Each of these types of talk has its own structural characteristics in every classroom and across classrooms. Linguistic lesson analysis (e.g. Wilkinson and Silliman 1990) will therefore proceed on the levels of topic development, social demands, quality and quantity of talk (source and communicative function). Particular attention will be paid to the negotiation of meaning and language teaching strategies.

It is hoped that a corpus-based analysis of *EaA* classroom interaction will yield a better picture of the foreign language demands which *EaA* puts on both teachers and students. Classroom interaction data are collected by way of non-participant observation (fieldnotes) as well as by the taping and subsequent transcription of representative lessons. The data-collection is currently in progress and aims at putting on record four lessons by 10 teachers representing different schools and content subjects.

## Interviews

Narrative interviews are conducted with the teachers who agree to take part in the study, ideally before the onset of classroom observation. These interviews aim at finding out about the personal language learning history of the respective teachers, their beliefs and convictions about how languages are learned, and about the motivations and attitudes which informed their decision to use English as medium of instruction. It is assumed that personal experience strongly co-determines the way in which the knowledge-base acquired in the course of professional training is shaped and used in professional practice. Analytical methods for interview data are well documented in the literature (Schmidt, Rosenthal, Mayring, Böhm all in Flick/Kardoff/Steinke 2000, Goetz&LeCompte 1984, Spradley 1979)

## Written documents

There are several classes of written data which are also highly relevant in the pursuit of the research questions formulated above. The classroom-related written materials are teaching materials (as mentioned above) and writings produced by the students - if applicable. It will be one of the purposes of the

study to gain a clearer impression of how much written language production is part of *EaA* teaching. An entirely different class of written data are formed by official and semi-official publications related to the *EaA* model: legal texts, ministerial decrees, other documents issued by the education authorities, curricula for training courses, publications on the part of the *EaA* project group, lesson plans. These are interesting primarily with regard to the question of how the aims of English-medium instruction are formulated and on what theoretical grounding these appear to stand. It is not expected that underlying theoretical assumptions will necessarily be stated explicitly. Interpretive methods like thematic coding will therefore be applied. There is ample documentation of these methods in the literature within the qualitative paradigm (e.g. Flick/Kardoff/Steinke 2000, Strauss & Corbin 1990, Mayring 1997)

## 6. Conclusion: some anticipated results

The anticipated results of the present project are relevant to at least four areas of the discipline. Firstly, the project will provide a *broad empirical basis* regarding language and interaction in English medium classrooms in a non-English-speaking European country. It will produce insights in the kinds of discourse which are typical of such classrooms and the kinds of linguistic forms and functions which characterise them. In conversation with current theories of language acquisition it is hoped that this will produce a realistic picture on the kind of language learning which is likely to happen in typical *EaA* classrooms. It may well turn out that in the *EaA* classroom students learn classroom communication in English on a particular school subject, but not so much 'general' communicative competence (cf. e.g. Widdowson 1998 on authenticity). Second, the study will make a contribution to the *development of theory*. The formulation of an explicit theoretical model of *EaA* instruction will draw significantly on language acquisition theory, an area much under-represented in *EaA* research up to the present. Thirdly, the study is *methodologically innovative* in its qualitative design through the triangulation of different kinds of data on the one hand, and the combination of the insider-perspective of stakeholders on the one hand and the researcher's outside perspective on the other. Finally, the results of the study have considerable *practical relevance*. The following table summarises the anticipated outcomes:

Table 1. Anticipated outcomes

<i>scholarly</i>	<i>practical</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ link SLA theory to local conditions – focus on the classroom</li> <li>▪ gain insight into discourse forms and strategies typical of EaC</li> <li>▪ insight into teacher cognition and conceptualisation re. language learning and classroom behaviour</li> <li>▪ progress towards an understanding of classroom discourse which also takes account of its constructive and genre constitutive aspects (not as “deficient conversation”)</li> <li>▪ formulation of a theoretically explicit model of EaC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ identify strategies that might serve as “best practice” models</li> <li>▪ consolidate the knowledge base regarding EaC in Austria</li> <li>▪ basis for the development of teacher education curricula regarding EaC</li> <li>▪ a clearer conceptualisation of the objectives and implications of EaC should help practitioners in their day-to-day decisions</li> <li>▪ improve communication between researchers and practitioners</li> </ul>

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