CHAPTER 6

L2 English Language Attrition of Pre-service Primary School Teachers in Austria

A Pilot Investigation

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ABSTRACT

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) has recently implemented a new curriculum for primary schools, including the introduction of a foreign language (L2) in primary education for the first time as an obligatory school subject (BMBWF, 2023). This change has raised concerns about the adequacy of the L2 proficiency of teachers tasked with implementing the new curriculum. To ascertain if there are any grounds for such concerns, a pilot study was conducted at one Austrian university college of teacher education to measure the current English language proficiency levels of pre-service primary school teachers, as the specific L2 of interest. This was deemed necessary due to attrition hypothesized as having occurred. The study utilized the *Oxford Online Placement Test* (OOPT) to assess the trainees' proficiency against the reference levels of the CEFR. The findings reveal a significant gap between the trainees' actual proficiency and the B2 level ascertained for them upon their high school graduation by the standardized national exam (i.e., the *Matura* in English or the equivalent *Studienberechtigungsprüfung*). The paper explores the implications of these findings for both educating future primary school teachers and for them teaching L2 English in Austrian schools.

Keywords primary school, teacher education, language proficiency, attrition

1. Introduction

The new curriculum for Austrian primary schools (BMBWF, 2023) has brought a significant shift in primary education (involving pupils 6-10 years old). A foreign language (L2) has been introduced as of autumn 2023 as a non-graded 'obligatory practice' (*verbindliche Übung*) in classes 1 and 2 and of a 'regular' graded subject (as of winter 2025) in classes 3 and 4 (BMBWF, 2023). This initiative aims to better develop basic language competencies of pupils in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It references pre-A1 and A1 levels of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2020) as targets.

This generally positive development, however, raises concerns when it comes to the teaching of English, which is expected to be the most commonly selected L2. The key to delivering high-quality foreign language instruction lies principally in having well-qualified, competent teachers (Kolb & Legutke, 2019). Thus, primary school teachers, intended to be L2 role models, require a level of English language proficiency that would enable spontaneous, adaptable communication both within and beyond the classroom. The curriculum indirectly assumes that teachers have sufficient English language proficiency to meet these aims and demands, which is implied to be at least at B2 CEFR level. This inference is based on the fact that no additional proficiency level is required beyond what is measured by the one-time national assessment conducted upon high school graduation (i.e., the national *Matura* in English or the equivalent *Studienberechtigungsprüfung*, set at B2 for English).

Nevertheless, due to the long since recognized effects of language attrition (Gardner et al., 1987), it is likely that the pre-service students largely fall below this singular measurement in subsequent years. These hypothesized effects of attrition on proficiency can be compounded by washback effects from standardised tests and by likely inadequate input pre-service primary teachers receive at Austrian university colleges of teacher education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*) regarding English (with a range of only 4–8 obligatory ECTS, out of the total 240 ECTS credits, allocated to it).

A pilot investigation at one Austrian university college of teacher education aims to test this assumption and shed light on the current state of L2 English proficiency among one generation of its pre-service primary school teachers. Most of the participants in this study were in their fourth semester of teacher training, this typically placing them at two years after high school graduation. The study seeks to answer the following research question: Have the pre-service primary school teachers at the observed university college of teacher education fallen below the B2 level ascertained for them upon high school graduation (i.e., for most this being two years prior) and, consequently, what CEFR language levels do they actually possess midway through their teacher training?

The following section briefly reviews the significance of language competence and language proficiency required by teachers of an L2, including specific considerations related to the Austrian context. Further sections introduce the methodology used and the results gained in the pilot study on pre-service teachers' English language proficiency. Finally, the study closes with a discussion of the consequences of the findings (both for primary school teacher education and for teaching L2 English to young learners), the limitations of the study, and the possible directions for further research.

2. Language Competence and Language Proficiency

The term *competence* generally refers to the underlying knowledge and skills an individual needs in order to perform successfully in a specific context (Houston, 1972). In the field of L2 teaching, defining a comprehensive list of requisite skills for L2 teachers is challenging. Nonetheless, there is a broad consensus that language teachers need three fundamental types of competence (Huber & Reynolds, 2014): *language*, *pedagogical* (both general and L2-specific), and *intercultural*.

Language competence integrates Hymes' (1967) notion of *communicative competence* and Bachman's (1990) concept of *communicative language ability*. It is a blend of skills, abilities, and knowledge essential for successful communication. There is general agreement (Bachman & Palmer, 1996) that it includes knowledge of linguistic structures, such as concrete linguistic resources, grammar, and textual comprehension, and the skilful application of these structures in communication, including the appropriate use of formality levels to meet communicative goals. The CEFR distils this concept into three core components: *linguistic competence*, *sociolinguistic competence*, and *pragmatic competence*.

Language competence plays a critical role in ensuring adequate L2 exposure for learners in the classroom. L2 exposure primarily comes from three sources: the language used by the teacher, the language in teaching materials, and the language produced by other learners (Kimura et al., 2017). The latter two are typically modified or 'filtered' by the teacher. For example, a teacher might adapt textbook content to better suit specific learners or provide feedback during learner interactions, serving as additional L2 input (Andrews, 2007). Only with sufficient L2 competence can teachers convey their knowledge so that it can be adequately understood and acquired by the specific learners (McNamara, 1991). In other words, L2 teachers with better L2 knowledge can present concepts in diverse ways, fostering an immersive learning environment (Tsui, 2003).

Language *proficiency*, which is distinct from *competence*, refers to the mastery of skills and knowledge necessary for effective communication. For non-native L2 educators, the level of proficiency directly impacts professional confidence and teaching effectiveness (Murdoch, 1994). Insufficient proficiency not only fosters feelings of inadequacy but also impairs the teacher's ability to perform essential tasks (Richards et al., 2013). In Austria, most primary teachers teach L2 English without adequate language teaching qualifications, a situation similar to Germany (Legutke et al., 2017). Often, they struggle to sufficiently challenge students, partly due to a lack of pedagogical expertise or the inability to model the language correctly. Thus, a lack of proficient command of the L2 shows itself to be a major obstacle for adequately guiding learners toward effective communicative

use (BIG-Kreis, 2007). The already mentioned CEFR is the predominant framework for categorizing language proficiency, at least in Europe.

2.1 Language Competence and Teaching L2 English in Primary School

Teaching L2 English to young learners requires specialist knowledge and education. In the first years of primary education learners are in a sensitive stage. They may either embrace the L2 or get the feeling that they are unsuccessful and become demotivated. Negative feelings taking root so early are difficult to alter in their further education and can prevail throughout their whole lives, in fact (Dagarin-Fojkar et al., 2021). Consequently, competent L2 teachers must possess a profound understanding of children's cognitive development, employ effective early language teaching methodologies, and exhibit a high level of proficiency in the language they teach (Garton et al., 2011; Nikolov & Mihaljević-Djigunović, 2011). Therefore, suitably preparing teachers for young learner L2 acquisition is frequently emphasized as paramount (Bland, 2019; Ebru & Esim, 2014).

However, a common misconception among non-experts persists, assuming that primary school L2 English teachers require only basic linguistic and didactic skills (Cameron, 2003). This misconception leads to teachers being well-prepared for general primary education contexts but lacking sufficient training for teaching L2 English effectively. In reality, early-stage L2 teaching requires highly specialized education and significant L2 proficiency (Kimura et al., 2017).

2.2 Language Proficiency and Teaching L2 English in Primary School

The latest curriculum expects primary school teachers' L2 English proficiency to be at such a level as to assure varied language use to motivate the pupils to use the L2 as often as possible, in situations and contexts that are meaningful to them. Successful communication is to take precedence over error-free language usage. Importantly, the teacher is to act as a language role model, primarily communicating in the target language (BMBWF, 2023). There is an underlying assumption that all pre-service teachers possess at least a B2 level of English proficiency, implied as the minimum standard to effectively foster the pre-A1/A1 mastery levels in pupils. This assumption is anchored in the fact that prospective teachers aiming for entry into teacher education programs typically need only pass the national Matura exam upon high school graduation or take the equivalent Studienberechtigungsprüfung. The more commonly taken Matura exam is the singular standardized assessment of English proficiency for them, benchmarking L2 English at the CEFR level of B2.

However, challenging such assumptions, made both by the Austrian policymakers and in many other European contexts, Ramos-García and Fernández-Viciana (2019), for example, observe inconsistencies between pre-service primary

teachers' actual language proficiency and their own perceptions of requirements necessary for teaching English at the primary level. While most students covered by their study fell between the B1 and B2 levels, the majority believed that a language teacher should master the language at C1 or at least B2. Then, Karas and Faez (2020) showed that minimum proficiency requirements vary depending on the learners' proficiency, age, and context, with the lowest acceptable level being A2 to B1 for beginners in an EFL setting. Finally, Bentley (2020) noted that the European Commission recommends the C1 proficiency level for teachers in CLIL contexts, suggesting that at the C1 level, a speaker can "express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions" and that they can "use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 24).

Furthermore, the *Cambridge English Teaching Framework* (Cambridge English, 2018) aims to guide and enhance the professional development of language teachers. It describes five aspects of teacher knowledge and skill, with language ability being one of them. It lists teacher competencies across four stages ('Foundation', 'Developing', 'Proficient', and 'Expert'), offering a profiling grid rather than a performance assessment tool. It acknowledges that a certain level of language ability is required in order to teach language effectively, whereby any minimum language level required of the teacher is likely to vary depending on the teaching context and language levels of the group of learners being taught. Teachers at the 'Foundation' stage, for example, are expected to use basic classroom language with mostly accurate expressions and to respond appropriately to learners in planned situations. They should be able to recognize basic errors made by learners, interact with peers in simple and routine contexts, and have a language ability of at least the CEFR level of A2. This level allows them to provide accurate examples of language points taught at levels A1 and A2. The stages of 'Developing' and 'Proficient' require language proficiency levels at B1 and B2, respectively. At the 'Expert' stage, teachers are expected to consistently use a wide range of classroom language effectively in all situations. They should recognize all errors (Dobrić, 2024), interact in all professional contexts, and have a language ability of at least level C1. This level equips them to provide accurate examples of language points across all levels from (pre-)A1 to C2.

The Cambridge English Teaching Framework aligns with the concept of "English-for-Teaching" (Freeman et al., 2015), which suggests that it may be more beneficial for teachers to consider their language abilities in relation to specific teaching tasks required of them rather than focusing on generalized proficiency measures based on native speaker norms (Freeman, 2017). This perspective, though relatively new, suggests that when teachers tailor their language capabil-

ities to specific teaching needs, their teaching confidence significantly improves (Thi Hong Nhung, 2018).

While the question of what level of L2 English proficiency is adequate to foster acquisition by young learners is important, a more immediate issue for the practice of teaching English in primary school, tackled in this study, is whether pre-service teachers retain the B2 level of proficiency implied by policy and previously assessed upon high school graduation. Namely, any formal measurement of English language proficiency of Austrian primary school teachers only occurs for the vast majority, as mentioned, at the conclusion of high school education and is never mandated afterwards. Consequently, there is a lack of empirical evidence on whether pre-service primary school teachers preserve this assumed B2 level of proficiency at the start of their teacher training or whether they experience a decline in their English language proficiency in the intermittent period. The pilot study described in the next sections tries to shed light on that question.

3. Methodology

In this section, the methodology deployed in conducting the pilot investigation is described. The use of the *Oxford Online Placement Test* (OOPT) as the primary assessment tool is discussed, detailing the rationale behind its selection and application in this context. Additionally, the section provides insights into the sample size and the basic characteristics of the participants engaged in the study.

3.1 The Research Instrument

The OOPT, which was chosen to determine the English language proficiency of pre-service primary school teachers at the medial point in their teacher education, is reputed for its efficiency in assessing communicative competence across various language skills and its ability to generate reliable CEFR levels and test scores (Pollitt, n.d; Purpura, n.d.). This online test was deemed ideal for its convenience, flexibility and the immediate feedback for both participants and researchers. Furthermore, the test is adaptive, meaning that the difficulty of questions is adjusted based on the test-taker's responses. This ensures that every test-taker should get about half of the questions right and half wrong, so there will be little or no impact on their motivation or confidence during the test, thus removing one source of unreliability of the scores.

The OOPT assesses reading comprehension through passages with questions (*Use of English*) and the understanding of spoken English via audio clips followed by questions (*Listening*). These two sections test the knowledge of grammatical structures and the breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge. The test is timed,

encouraging efficient answering within a specified time-span. Results are available immediately and are reported as an overall CEFR band (pre-A1 to C2, divided into 'plus' levels) and as a standardized score (0-120) on a continuous numerical scale. Additionally, results are broken down by section, including the time taken to complete them. For each part, information about what a learner can typically do at the achieved CEFR level is given (based on the 'Can-do' descriptors from the latest CEFR *Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020).

3.2 Participants and Data Collection

The pilot study was conducted at one Austrian university college of teacher education, with students studying to become primary school teachers. In Austria, L2 English at the primary level is typically taught by generalist teachers. At the sampled college, the language teaching component of the trainee teachers' BA program encompasses a modest 6 mandatory ECTS points (out of a total of 240 ECTS), covering both language proficiency and subject-specific didactic training. Additionally, trainees might attend some courses taught in English that cover different topics, providing extra opportunities to improve their L2 English teaching skills. However, these courses are not specifically designed for teaching L2 English and are not compulsory for those who plan to teach L2 English in the future.

Participants in this pilot study comprised 70 students in their fourth semester of the BA. Notably, the majority had already had exposure to L2 English teaching content in two compulsory courses prior to administration of the OOPT. The data collection occurred within an English language course in April 2023, organized strategically across five groups by three lecturers, ensuring maximum participation while maintaining voluntary involvement.

The information provided to participants before the test emphasized the research nature of the pilot and assured confidentiality of results, highlighting that only the test-taker and the test administrator would have access to individual scores. Additionally, it was clarified that test outcomes would not affect their course grades and that any subsequent reports on the pilot would present anonymized or aggregated data. The time limit was set at 60 minutes to complete the test, according to the default settings recommended by the test designers.

4. Results and Analysis

The measurement of English language proficiency levels of the sampled pre-service primary education teachers provides an insight into their overall language capabilities. The tables below outline the distribution of the test-takers' *Overall* English language proficiency as well as their proficiency in the *Use of English* and

Listening sections of the test, given across different CEFR levels (from A2 to C2, including the 'plus' levels). Each table encompasses standardized score ranges, absolute test-taker numbers, and the rounded percentages of individuals at each proficiency level.

The Overall language proficiency levels (Table 1) showcase that slightly over half of the tested pre-service primary education teachers demonstrated an overall English language proficiency at or above the expected B2 level (58 %). Specifically, a rounded 45 % attained the B2 level and about 13 % the higher proficiency levels of C1 (12 %) or even of C2 (1 %). Notably, however, 42 % of the cohort failed to attain the B2 proficiency level, confirming the attrition assumptions and raising concerns about meeting the implicit policy expectations of English language proficiency of teachers necessary for teaching L2 English to primary school pupils in Austria.

Tab. 1 *Results for the Overall Proficiency Section of OOPT*

CEFR (plus)	Standardized score	Absolute number	Rounded percentages
C2.2	111-120	0	0 %
C2.1	101-110	1	1 %
C1.2	91-100	1	1 %
C1.1	81-90	8	11 %
B2.2	71-80	13	19 %
B2.1	61-70	18	26 %
B1.2	51-60	18	26 %
B1.1	41-50	9	13 %
A2.2	31-40	2	3 %
A2.1	21-30	0	0 %
Totals		**70**	**100 %**
Above B2		**10**	**13 %**
At B2		**31**	**45 %**
Below B2		**29**	**42 %**

Note. It is important to underline that due to rounding percentages to the nearest whole number for clarity, the total percentages may not add up precisely to 100 % in the tables presented.

A split result was observed in the Use of English section of the test (Table 2). Approximately half of the test-takers exhibited proficiency at or above the B2 benchmark, with the higher proficiency levels (C1 and C2) constituting a smaller proportion (12 %). Worryingly, around 50 % of the test-takers did not meet the

minimum proficiency level of B2. In fact, 46 % exhibited proficiency at the B1 levels, while 4 % reached only the 'basic language user' level of A2.

Tab. 2 *Results for the Use of English Section of OOPT*

CEFR (plus)	Standardized score	Absolute number	Rounded percentages
C2.2	111-120	1	1 %
C2.1	101-110	0	0 %
C1.2	91-100	1	1 %
C1.1	81-90	7	10 %
B2.2	71-80	9	13 %
B2.1	61-70	17	24 %
B1.2	51-60	21	30 %
B1.1	41-50	11	16 %
A2.2	31-40	2	3 %
A2.1	21-30	1	1 %
Totals		**70**	**100 %**
Above B2		**9**	**13 %**
At B2		**26**	**37 %**
Below B2		**35**	**50 %**

Note. It is important to underline that due to rounding percentages to the nearest whole number for clarity, the total percentages may not add up precisely to 100 % in the tables presented.

Regarding the Listening section (Table 3 below), over half of the of students (57 %) attained proficiency at or above the B2 level. Specifically, around 24 % achieved proficiency at B2 level, and 33 % scored at C1 level. A significant portion of participants, approximately 43 %, demonstrated language proficiency below the B2 level. A substantial 37 % of participants showcased listening skills at the B1 level, and 6 % at the even lower proficiency level A2.

An additional aspect of the results worth mentioning is the relationship between speededness and test performance. An initial analysis, using Spearman's Rho, revealed varying correlations between test scores and the time participants spent on different sections of the test. Notably, there was no significant link observed between test scores and the time taken for the Overall performance or when considering the specific Use of English section. Conversely, within the Listening section, a weak positive connection emerged ($r(70)=.30$; $p<0.05$), suggesting that spending more time on this part was linked to higher test scores. This may be because some test-takers followed the instruction to listen to the audio input twice, while others may have listened only once.

Tab. 3 *Results for the Listening Section of OOPT*

CEFR (plus)	Standardized score	Absolute number	Rounded percentages
C2.2	111-120	0	0 %
C2.1	101-110	0	0 %
C1.2	91-100	6	9 %
C1.1	81-90	17	24 %
B2.2	71-80	9	13 %
B2.1	61-70	8	11 %
B1.2	51-60	11	16 %
B1.1	41-50	15	21 %
A2.2	31-40	4	6 %
A2.1	21-30	0	0 %
Totals		**70**	**100 %**
Above B2		**23**	**33 %**
At B2		**17**	**24 %**
Below B2		**30**	**43 %**

Note. It is important to underline that due to rounding percentages to the nearest whole number for clarity, the total percentages may not add up precisely to 100 % in the tables presented.

5. Outlook

The results of the pilot study underscore the critical importance of language proficiency for teaching L2 English in Austrian primary schools. The current Austrian curriculum (BMBWF, 2023) expects teachers to be effective role models in English, capable of spontaneous, flexible communication, and even adept at employing CLIL approaches. However, the study findings highlight a significant gap between these curriculum expectations (and the expected B2 level implied as adequate to realise them) and the reality of pre-service teachers' English language proficiency levels, as indicated by the confirmed hypothesis of significant attrition effects.

Namely, it has been shown how a substantial number of pre-service teachers do not retain the previously measured B2 level of English language proficiency. This is despite B2 being implied as the baseline for entering primary teacher education and despite them being ascertained as having B2 two years prior to this study, on average. Looking back at the policy demands, implied and directly pronounced, the lack of B2 proficiency in English among the sampled pre-service teachers may compromise their ability to fulfil these essential roles effectively. This proficiency gap is reflective of a broader trend identified in previous research,

where many primary teachers have been found to struggle with using English effectively in classroom settings (Edelenbos et al., 2006; Roos, 2007). The struggles have been identified as stemming from a variety of factors.

For example, the pilot study points out the issues behind assessing English proficiency at high school level (i.e., upon graduation). Given the variations in the types of schools and specific curricula followed as well as the differences in subsequent use of English outside of the classroom, the B2 proficiency level, as certified by the final high school exam in English, can hardly be universally assumed for all students entering primary teacher education. This variability complicates the process of ensuring that all pre-service teachers possess the necessary language skills for effective L2 English instruction, even that of the rather arbitrarily assumed one, by the policymakers in Austria, of B2. This, alongside the demonstrated attrition, further underscores the need for adequate language training within teacher education programs as well as for more pertinent continuous professional development and more regular measuring of language skills of in-service teachers.

To overcome such challenges, firstly a re-evaluation of the B2 proficiency benchmark for entry into primary teacher education is advisable. Implementing an initial, low-impact proficiency test, such as the OOPT, could identify candidates who may require remedial English language courses (i.e., those below the B2 level). Additionally, increasing the mandatory ECTS credits for L2 English-related content and didactic education, combined with regular immersive language teaching methods, could substantially improve proficiency levels. Ultimately, aiming for higher proficiency, particularly for the C1 level (on par with L2 English teachers at lower- and upper-secondary school levels), would enrich the language learning experience for students (e.g., Legutke et al., 2017; BIG-Kreis, 2007).

Next, efforts should also be made to improve L2 English proficiency and teaching skills in ongoing in-service teacher education and lifelong learning programs. Professional development initiatives can help boost practicing teachers' language skills and keep attrition lower, which in turn can enhance their teaching methods and successfulness. These initiatives often include immersive language teaching techniques and opportunities for teachers to reflect on their teaching experiences, leading to better teaching practices (Braunsteiner et al., 2014).

In the end, it must also be underscored that experience shows how some pre- and in-service primary teachers simply do not wish to teach English (or any other L2, for that matter). Therefore, reconsidering the role of generalist teachers in Austrian primary schools may be necessary. Introducing a specialization track related to L2 English, for example, potentially during the final semesters of the BA could provide an alternative pathway. Students choosing this track would receive specialized training as language teachers, aiming to reach C1 level by the end of

the program, which could be made the required exit level for those intending to teach L2 English in primary education. Nevertheless, transitioning from a generalist to a specialized teaching model would require a policy decision, a challenging endeavour given the current teacher shortage in Austria.

In summary, the present pilot study has revealed a substantial gap in language proficiency among primary school teacher trainees. Addressing this issue is crucial due to its direct impact on the effectiveness of language instruction in primary schools. Teachers play a vital role not just in teaching language skills, but also in shaping students' attitudes and motivation towards language learning. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure that teachers have both the necessary language proficiency and didactic skills to create a productive and engaging learning environment for young students. The findings also indicate a potentially inadequate allocation of ECTS credits to language-related skills within teacher education curricula, leading to a possible inability of teachers to fulfil the language learning objectives specified in the curriculum. This shortfall presents significant challenges in equipping teachers with the skills required to teach English effectively in primary schools.

6. Limitation and Further Research

The pilot study by default comes with several limitations. The first one is the restricted sample size, despite its representativeness in terms of characteristics of typical pre-service teachers in Austria. Therefore, the insights gained offer only a preliminary understanding of English language proficiency among pre-service primary teachers in Austria, paving the way for more comprehensive research in this area. To address the limitations, firstly, a longitudinal study is essential for comprehensively understanding language proficiency changes and attrition effects prior, during, and after teacher education BA programs. Such research, encompassing a wider and more representative sample of Austrian primary school teacher trainees, would yield critical insights into the dynamics of language proficiency development over time. In this context, the OOPT has been demonstrated as a resource-friendly and reliable tool to gain an overview of a test-taker's language proficiency level in terms of CEFR. Its primary limitation lies in its focus on receptive skills, excluding both writing and speaking. Therefore, a test of L2 English proficiency which would extend to assessing productive languages skills (i.e., speaking and writing) directly would help represent the trainees' mastery levels in a more valid manner. It may be assumed, for instance, that the proficiency levels of English as measured by the OOPT presented above would have been even lower were productive skills of the participants also assessed.

Secondly, it is generally acknowledged that teachers have significant influence on their students' language learning experiences. The way teachers act in the classroom is not only affected by their professional knowledge but also by their personal beliefs (Kunter et al., 2011; Legutke et al., 2017). Longitudinal and correlation studies exploring the relationship between teacher beliefs, language proficiency, and didactic expertise are essential. Such research could inform and improve teacher education programs, enhancing overall L2 instruction in primary education.

Thirdly, the current Austrian national curriculum for primary English teaching (for pupils aged 6–10) defines its goals and expectations using locally worded descriptors. However, there is a gap in aligning these objectives with CEFR descriptors. Thus, a study linking the national language learning goals for primary schools with CEFR descriptors would be necessary. This could be done by means of a comparative content analysis of the collated CEFR descriptors of language competences developed for young learners (Szabo & Goodier, 2018), the pre-A1 descriptors in the CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020), the national curriculum (BMBWF, 2023), and the tasks in government-approved L2 English materials (such as officially approved textbooks or the *Kompetenzraster*, published as supplementary material to the new curriculum).

Finally, but most urgently and perhaps most arduously, there is a need for an empirically established model of competences for teaching L2 English at the primary school level in Austria. This should include empirical benchmarks for linguistic competence levels necessary for teaching English to children aged 6 to 10, as well as a model and benchmarks for subject-matter didactic competences, including intercultural competence. Such a model could yield reliable results, potentially leading to curricular and policy recommendations for training primary school teacher trainees and in-service teachers.

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