

FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN CURRICULA: EUROPEAN MODELS AND CROATIAN AMBITIONS

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***Summary** – The introductory part of the article provides a concise historical overview of the position of foreign language teaching relating to curriculum and learning aims. The second part gives the results of analysis of 11 European curricula in relation to various aspects of involvement of foreign language in compulsory education. The analyses were carried out as part of the research project Competences for the Knowledge Society and Development of the National Curriculum in Croatia. After analyzing individual curricula, they are compared. The third part of the article expresses a number of recommendations for Croatia based on the findings in the analysis of European curricula.*

***Key words:** foreign language teaching; curriculum framework; compulsory education; language ability; communicative competence*

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, foreign language teaching was under the influence and relied on various key disciplines (Prebeg-Vilke, 1976). Initially, it was linguistics, and eventually approaches to teaching found ground in psychological theories of learning. Along with social development, knowledge from the area of sociology became important for foreign language teaching. The succeeding period was marked by the influence of new interdisciplinary studies such as psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. It is interesting that the influence of educational sciences was minimal throughout the entire period of development (Stern, 1983). In that way, the area of foreign languages differs much from other subject areas.

The basis for defining aims of foreign language learning, according to Richards and Rogers (1986), lie in the theoretical approach to language and the nature of language proficiency. According to those authors, there are three main approaches. The structural approach sees language as a system of structurally related units which code meaning. The result of such a view of language is the attitude that the aim of foreign language teaching is for a student to acquire language units (phonological, grammatical, lexical). Such aims were proclaimed throughout

history by the grammar-translation method, audio-lingual method, silent-approach method and others. According to the functional approach language is a means of expressing communicative functions, and that view of language is represented in the so called communicative approach where semantic and communicative dimensions of language are emphasized. Language for specific purposes also relies on the functional approach and starts with the functional analysis of student's needs. (Munby, 1978; Richards, 2001). According to the interactional approach language is a means by which interpersonal relations are established, and social transactions between individuals take place.

Each of the approaches mentioned result in a different description of learning outcomes as aims of foreign language teaching. Starting in the 1970s a few interesting curricular models were developed relating to foreign language teaching (e.g. Valette, 1971; Stern, 1980; Ullmann, 1982). Perhaps the best expression of the new tendencies is the curricular model given by Stern (1983: 503). It comprises four behavioral aims and four content categories. The first and primary aim of foreign language learning according to this model is language ability. The following aim is knowledge, which implies explicit knowledge of the foreign language and knowledge of the culture of the particular language. The third aim refers to attitudes and values related to the language learned and its culture. The fourth aim refers to transfer, i.e., acquiring language in a way that it results in knowledge about learning a language in general. Content categories refer to language, culture, communication and general language education.

Communicative competence is therefore the main aim of foreign language learning. However, there exist differing definitions of that key concept. For most European curricula, the most commonly accepted definition comes from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR2005). It is defined in the context of language knowledge and consists of three elements: language, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence. Each of these elements is defined through content and the ability to use that content. Although it is not considered a component of communicative competence, CEFR authors find the so called strategic competence (use of strategies – mostly communicative) for receiving and producing language, in interaction, mediation, etc. (Bagarić and Mihaljević Djigunović, 2007). The CEFR has significantly influenced the development and formulation of foreign language learning outcomes in curricula, as can be seen from the analysis of European curricula in the remainder of this article. It is also a basis for the Croatian curriculum.

ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CURRICULA

The reminder of this paper will show the results of the analysis of 11 European curricula for compulsory education. The descriptions of the results are grouped with respect to similarities in approach of particular countries.

Group A. Finland, Sweden, Norway

Finland¹

The subject is called *foreign language*.

Foreign language as a separate curricular area is defined at three levels: the level of the objectives, basic purpose of the subject, the level of aims and the level of core content. As with other subjects, foreign languages should also integrate cross-curricular themes such as: growth of a person, cultural identity and internationalism, active citizenship and entrepreneurship, responsibility for the environment, well-being, sustainable future, safety and traffic, technology and the individual. Foreign language teaching should enable students to communicate and prepare them for using language skills in situations which require a foreign language. The purpose of foreign language teaching is also to educate students in the direction of recognizing and accepting foreign cultures and traditions. Students should learn that language is a skill and means of communication and that a longer period and varied practice is necessary to acquire language. Foreign language teaching must rely on basic aims and central content. Language A is the central subject. It can start as an elective subject. The first foreign language (language A) is compulsory in third grade and it is possible to start learning it in first grade. The second foreign language (language B1) becomes compulsory in seventh grade. In grade eight or nine a third foreign language (language B2) can be an elective subject which is a general introduction to more detailed learning in high school. It is believed by learning language a basis for further language learning is established. The subject serves as the beginning for developing intercultural competence.

The aims and basic content are set according to the students' age, that is, year of learning. If learning a language began in grade three, emphasis is given on understanding, revision and oral communication. In first and second grade students should become aware of language and its meaning and develop an interest for language learning, for other cultures and acquire basic skills for language learning. The need to encourage conversation, listening and understanding is emphasized. Teaching is integrated into content and topics directly related to students' experiences at a particular age, that is, those which had already been taught in other subjects. Emphasis is also on teaching in which students are adapted to communication in a foreign language in concrete, personal and spontaneous situations, at first orally and then gradually in writing. Student should become aware of cultural and language diversity and the value of diversity. Students should develop good learning habits. From the third grade onwards, the aims are expressed through the level of knowledge, cultural skills and learning strategies. In the period between 3rd and 6th grade, students should learn to express basic

¹ *Framework curriculum for the comprehensive school 1994*, National Board of Education, Helsinki 1994

information about themselves, their immediate environment and to communicate in a foreign language in everyday situations with the help of an interlocutor when necessary, to understand basic content relating to everyday life and routine actions with the help of situational context, and learn how to write short messages relating to predictable, everyday situations and experiences, learn about the culture of the foreign language studied and acquire basic insight into the differences between their own and foreign culture, learn to communicate with members of a foreign culture in a way that is appropriate for that culture. At the level of learning strategies, students should learn proactive and responsible behavior and behave accordingly in the teaching process, they should learn how to work in small groups or in one-on-one teaching, independently use the textbook, dictionary and other teaching materials, know how to use new words and structures in their personal expression, be able to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses as students and to evaluate their achievement. During the final period (grades 7 – 9) students should be able to understand clear, standard foreign language, that is, key ideas in a text, be able to manage in basic social situations and describe topics of interest, be able to manage in somewhat more challenging informal situations and know how to describe everyday situations in detail orally and in writing, know basic differences between varieties of the English language, know basic of the aimed culture and be able to compare it to their own, to know codes of behavior of a foreign culture for basic social situations, be aware of the value system of the foreign culture. In addition to that, students should learn how to use various approaches to learning language and also apply them in learning their mother tongue, use information technology, learn how to organize and carry out a smaller project in a group or independently, and know how to evaluate their own work. Evaluation of students' knowledge is carried out based of CEFR and covers the following elements: listening/understanding, speaking, text comprehension, writing, cultural skills and learning strategies. Evaluation is closely related to the set aims.

Specific foreign language learning aims in particular educational periods are expressed as expected pupil attainment at the end of an educational period:

LANGUAGE A	
Educational period	Grades 1-2
Expected pupil attainment	A pupil will become aware of language and its meaning. By listening and understanding they will be encouraged for oral production at the level of words and phrases. They will acquire basic skills for learning a language. They will develop an interest for learning a language and life in various cultures.
Educational period	Grades 3 – 6

Expected pupil attainment at the end of grade 6	Language (English)	<u>Listening</u> Level A2.1 Initial phase of basic language proficiency	<u>Speech</u> A1.3 Functional elementary language proficiency	<u>Text comprehension</u> A2.1 Initial phase of basic language proficiency	<u>Writing</u> A1.3 Functional elementary language competency
	Language (other foreign languages)	<u>Listening</u> A1.3 Functional elementary language proficiency	<u>Speech</u> A1.2 Developing basic language proficiency	<u>Text comprehension</u> A1.3 Functional elementary language proficiency	<u>Writing</u> A1.2 Developing basic language proficiency
	Cultural	The pupil will know basic content and key similarities and differences between his own culture and the culture of the foreign language learned and be able to interact with foreign language speakers in everyday situations.			
	Learning strategies	A pupil will use approaches for learning a language in a natural way, e.g. discussion, using textbooks or dictionaries, understand the importance of persistent practice of the language and self-evaluation.			
Educational period	Grades 7-9				
Expected pupil attainment at the end of a stage	Language (English)	<u>Listening</u> B1.1 Functional basic language proficiency	<u>Speech</u> A2.2 Developing basic language proficiency	<u>Text comprehension</u> B1.1 Functional basic language proficiency	<u>Writing</u> A2.2 Developing basic language proficiency
	Language (other foreign languages)	<u>Listening</u> A2.2 Developing basic language proficiency	<u>Speech</u> A2.1 Initial phase of basic language proficiency	<u>Text comprehension</u> A2.2 Developing basic language proficiency	<u>Writing</u> A2.1 Initial phase of basic language proficiency
	Cultural skills	The pupils will know about the way of life in, and history of, the target language's language region			
	Learning strategies	The pupil will, in a natural way, use approaches appropriate for learning a language, e.g. discussion, using textbooks or dictionaries, understand the importance of persistent practice of the language and self-evaluation.			
LANGUAGE B 1					

Educational period	Grades 7-9				
Expected outcomes at the end of grade 9	Language	<u>Listening</u> A2.1 Initial phase of basic language proficiency	<u>Speech</u> A1.3 Functional elementary language proficiency	<u>Text comprehension</u> A2.1 Initial phase of basic language proficiency	<u>Writing</u> A1.3 Functional elementary language proficiency
	Cultural skills	The pupils will know the relationship, differences and similarities, between their own culture and the culture of the target language.			
	Learning strategies	The pupil will, in a natural way, use approaches appropriate for learning a language, e.g. discussion, using textbooks or dictionaries, understand the importance of persistent practice of the language and self-evaluation.			
LANGUAGE B 2					
Educational period	Grades 8-9				
Expected achievements	Language	<u>Listening</u> A1.2 – A1.3	<u>Speech</u> A1.1 – A1.2	<u>Text comprehension</u> A1.2 – A1.3	<u>Writing</u> A1.1 – A1.2
	Cultural	The pupils will know the relationship, differences and similarities, between their own culture and the culture of the target language.			
	Learning strategies	The pupil will readily use the language skills, and knowledge, skills and strategies which were acquired through other languages and be able to evaluate various aspects of his/her language ability in relation to the learning aims.			

N.B.: Language achievement levels A and B represent the Finish adaptation of appropriate CEFR levels (Common European Framework of Reference for language learning, teaching and assessment).

For those who start learning a language between grades 1 and 6, the minimum number of hours weekly per school year is 16, and the school autonomously decides on the weekly distribution of hours. Those commencing with language in grades 7 – 9 have a minimum of 6 hours per week and the school decides on the distribution of those hours.

Requirements for teaching are provided in the curriculum only as general guidelines and are rather broad. They refer to the obligations of the school to provide students with a library and as many teaching aids and materials as possible. Emphasis is given to the use of computers and IT: The environment must be physically, psychologically and socially safe and should take into consideration children’s well-being. Pupils should be encouraged to get involved into developing and creating the school environment. The school environment must be such that it fosters communication between the pupil and the teacher and pupils among themselves.

Sweden²

Subject name: *foreign language*.

Within the framework of the national curriculum, *foreign language*, as part of the separate language curriculum area, presents a bridge for the integration of various school subjects through common themes and can be used for learning other subjects. Depending on when foreign language was introduced there are: A1 – foreign language (compulsory) which begins in lower grades, A2 – elective foreign language which begins in lower grades, B1 – „national“ compulsory foreign language which begins in upper grades, B2 – elective foreign language which begins in upper grades. English is the first compulsory foreign language (A1). The local community decides when learning the English language will begin; usually it is in the third or fourth grade, and approximately one third of the children begins learning a foreign language in grade one. However, up to grade five (11-12 years of age) all pupils must reach the same level. Schools make the decision about learning a second foreign language. The tendency is to introduce that language in grade six. The most common choice is German, French or Spanish. Some schools offer Finnish, Sami, Italian, Chinese, Portuguese and Russian. Schools must offer at least two languages from the group: German, French, Spanish. Some pupils are recommended to attend additional classes of English or Swedish. Immigrant children can, instead of a second foreign language, learn their mother tongue. Pupils can learn sign language. The third foreign language is offered as an elective. The Swedish curriculum for foreign language emphasizes the fact that the need for cooperation among countries is growing and that it is necessary that all pupils are competent for communication. The aim is to develop a sense of tolerance of cultural and language differences which have an effect on strengthening a pupil's own identity. Foreign languages in school promote international relationships among pupils and schools.

Aims of foreign language learning are expressed through general aims and expected pupil attainment:

General competences	Expected specific attainment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – manage in a foreign language (managing in communication characteristic for the foreign language and culture, find information about countries, people and cultures related to that language and develop openness and tolerance towards different cultures). – development of learning strategies, a sense for teamwork and personal responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – equally high communicative competence for languages A1 and A2, and significantly lower for B1 – attainments are described in the form of CANDO descriptors based on CEFR

² *Curriculum For The Compulsory School, The Pre-School Class And The Leisure-Time Centre (Lpo 94)*, Ministry of Education and Science in Sweden and National Agency for Education, 2001 *Compulsory school Syllabuses*, National Agency For Education, 2001

Weekly teaching hours for foreign language is defined in the following way: A1 – 8 hours, A2 – 4 hours, B1 – 6 hours, B2 – 4 hours. A total of 480 hours are allocated to learning English language throughout compulsory education, and 320 hours for elective foreign languages. An additional 382 hours can be allocated to foreign language (if elected) for the general category of a pupil's elective course.

Foreign language teaching takes into consideration individual differences in learning. There is a lot of individual work, pair work and group work so as to practice language skills. Pupils are guided to use various strategies depending on personal differences. Work is focused on improving the skills of deducing at several levels. Pupils are included into the process of selecting content, work materials and manner of work as much as possible. In addition to traditional methods, the importance of using IT, electronic media and various presentation skills by teachers and pupils is emphasized as important when presenting results of independent of group work. Pupils are encouraged and motivated to do independent work and take responsibility for what has been done.

*Norway*³

The Norwegian system includes curricular areas of language education, and programs of all languages are considered related with the aim of improving the pupils' general language competence. Within the framework of the language areas the following is offered: English, Finnish/Sami as a second foreign language, the second foreign language as a compulsory supplementary subject (from three possibilities of learning a foreign language there is the possibility of supplementary learning of a language which they already know/learn, and practical project work). For a small community such as Norway, knowledge of foreign language presents a necessity due to the interaction with Europe and the entire world. The need for cooperation among countries is growing and it is considered relevant that all pupils be competent for facing language and cultural challenges. As in Sweden, English is placed highest since it is considered necessary for communication in education, private life, better organization in the media and the information world. Learning English should commence during primary education. Language enables pupils to use information regardless of others, that they approach information critically and to use it in a constructive way. Furthermore, it is believed that knowledge of language and culture develops tolerance and respect towards other nationalities, contributes to a new view of the world and deepens understanding of one's own background leading to an awareness of personal identity. Although foreign language is a separate subject, considering that learning a language includes personal experiences, there is emphasis on the role of creative work where music and drama hold an important place. Foreign language is a compulsory subject throughout the entire compulsory education. Learning language can commence in

³ *The curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school in Norway*, The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, 1999, http://skolenettet3.ls.no/L97_eng/Curriculum/

the first grade. Grades 1-4 represent to so called initial phase, grades 5 -7 are the second phase while grades 8-10 are the third phase.

Among the general aims of particular educational periods, the language competence is stressed as well as awareness of differences among cultures and languages. By learning English at an early age pupils create a foundation for learning other foreign languages at a later time.

The aims are developed according to educational periods in the following way:

Grades 1-4	Grades 5-7	Grades 8-10
Pupils should discover and experience the English language and develop their ability to understand it and express themselves in it. They should learn about life in English-speaking countries and begin to understand how they themselves can learn English.	At the level of <i>language use</i> , pupils should develop their ability to understand English and express themselves in English, to discover meanings in English texts, and to communicate in English.	At the level of <i>language use</i> , pupils should further develop their ability to communicate in spoken and written English in various situations.
	At the level of <i>knowledge of the English language and culture</i> and of one's own learning, pupils should develop some insight into the language as interaction and as an expression of culture. They should learn about ways of life, traditions and customs in English-speaking countries. They should gradually develop insight into how they can work with the process of learning English.	At the level of <i>knowledge of the English language and culture</i> and of one's own learning, pupils should develop insight into the language as communication and as an expression of culture. They should learn about historical and current developments in English-speaking countries. They should develop insight into how they can work with the process of learning English, and become increasingly independent as users of the language

Teaching hours:

	Grades 1-4	Grades 5-7	Grades 8-10	total
English	95	266	342	703
Finnish/Sami				1111
Supplementary language (most often: German, French, Finnish) Or supplementary language which they already know (usually: English)			304	304

It is important to enable students to independently discover and use the language and gradually systematize what has been learned. Work with authentic texts is emphasized which will inspire them and arouse their curiosity. Most of the classroom communication will be in English. There are three main stages: at the beginning – play, exploration and play in addition to acquiring basic facts but

through play, and use of their senses. This should lead to developing criticism and independent learning. One should keep in mind that pupils acquire languages differently which leaves room for students to create their own manner of learning. There are four basic guidelines: enable contact with written and spoken language, language use, knowledge of language and cultural context and encouraging awareness about their own process of learning. The main purpose of assessment is to promote learning and development. A pupil should have an active role in the assessment of his/her own learning and take responsibility for assessment. There are no marks in primary school and the individual evaluation is part of the daily process of learning and also includes regular communication between teachers, pupils and parents. Marks are introduced at the intermediate stage. They are founded in the aims and content of particular subject syllabi and should reflect the individual evaluation without grades.

Group B1. Ireland, Scotland

Ireland⁴

Subject name: primary education – *Language 1* and *Language 2*; junior high school education – *Modern Language*

Foreign language in primary education belongs to the curricular subarea *Language*, and in junior high school to the area *Language and Literature (and communication)*. Irish (Gaeilge), English and other modern foreign languages are offered so as to develop European and global dimensions. Language is the key to developing the cultural identity of an Irish child who has a right to knowing both languages (historically, linguistically and psychologically speaking). There are three different educational contexts for English and Gaeilge: schools where English is the official teaching language (cases where English is the mother tongue to pupils), schools in which Irish is the official teaching language since children use it as a first language at home and the third variety is where Irish is not the language spoken at home, but is the official language of the educational system of a school. Since 1998, in grade five and six (age 10-12) pupils can enroll into pilot projects of learning modern foreign languages (French, German, Italian, Spanish) 1.5 hours per week. The majority (in the project) learn French, followed in popularity by German, Spanish and Italian. At the moment the results of the projects are being expected. A decision will also be reached on the possibility of introducing a foreign language into primary education. Irish and English are compulsory in primary education, and at the moment, European foreign languages are learned only as pilot projects. In junior cycle, languages are learned as recommended compulsory subjects (Irish, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish). Throughout the junior cycle, a pupil can learn Irish, English, and Latin and Greek and other modern languages

⁴ Primary School Curriculum, The Curriculum at Junior Cycle, History Syllabus (Junior cycle 12-15), History Guidelines for Teachers (Junior cycle 12-15)

(French, German, Italian, Spanish). A particular language exists as an independent subject within the curricular area: language 1 and language 2. Integrated teaching permeates the entire primary education. There are not details about cross-curricular topics. In junior high school language is seen as a separate subject area.

Among *general learning aims* the following is mentioned: develop competence in the second, perhaps even third language in accordance with abilities and cultural and language background. Among *key issues in primary education* the following is emphasized: for Irish language – provide the experience of learning languages in two languages; learning Irish throughout entire primary education in order to deepen language and cultural awareness; modern foreign languages – enrich life and learning with the European and global dimension for better understanding of the world and acceptance of differences.

Foreign language teaching is currently carried out as a pilot project in a large number of schools. Foreign language learning aims in primary education are presented in the following way:

Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – promote positive attitudes towards foreign language learning and strengthen self-confidence and pleasure in language learning – develop communicative competence by enabling a student to use language in various contexts – develop language awareness – develop cultural awareness and respect for other cultures, especially ones related to the language being learned
Broad objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – gain pleasure and fulfillment from language activity – explore, experiment and enjoy elements of language play – participate in learning activities with self-confidence in order to develop self-respect – develop the skill of active listening through various activities such as stories, songs, games appropriate audio-visual materials and computer software – become aware of how inflections, stress and word order can influence meaning – develop the skill of listening actively and appreciate the significance of tone of voice, facial expression and gesture – acquire confidence in presenting personal ideas and experiences – acquire correct pronunciation through being exposed to authentic materials – develop and expand vocabulary – develop knowledge of grammar necessary for simple and efficient communication – start reading and writing as oral competency grows – recognize relationships between languages through raising awareness about similarities and differences – strengthen language learning through becoming aware of various grammatical and sentence structures – gain knowledge about cultural aspects of other countries, such as lifestyle, customs, traditions, music, art and literature – accept identity and cultural differences

In the junior cycle, where foreign language is a recommended compulsory subject aims are presented in the following way:

General aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – develop awareness of language as a system of communication – enable pupils to acquire awareness of other cultures and in that way get an objective image of their own culture – help pupils to develop the ability to communicate successfully with other people – contribute to a pupil’s general personal and social development – enable pupils to use sources of information, cultural enrichment and fun through foreign language learning – encourage and enable pupils to participate in activities which include foreign language use – enable pupils to have the opportunity to choose their future profession or school for which they will need to know a foreign language. – ensure that pupils get experience in learning a language which will encourage pupils to learn other foreign languages and thus ease the process – contribute to the increase of possibilities for a pupil’s further work, education and free time.
Communicative aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – enable pupils to use a foreign language in a classroom – prepare pupils to acquire competences in a foreign language which will enable them to meet their basic needs in a foreign country without serious embarrassment and to be able to participate in social interaction to a certain degree – enable pupils to acquire language skills which will help them achieve some of their interests using a foreign language – ensure that pupils acquire that degree of competence which will enable them to achieve general aims (mentioned above)
Behavioral aims	<p>Are expressed as a type of expected attainment, i.e., communicative tasks which pupils should be able to conduct so as to achieve the general aims of foreign language learning.</p>

As for teaching hours, curricula for primary education recommend the following minimum: language 1-4 hours weekly; language 2-3 hours 30 minutes, and for junior high school: 20% of the total teaching hours for their own language and 1’% of the total teaching hours for another European foreign language.

A communicative approach is used and topics are related to pupils’ interests, wishes and needs and language use is encouraged through contexts from real life situations and every day life. Emphasis is on activities such as problem solving (not language problems), conversation, role-play, sketches, performances, etc. Teachers use those approaches and strategies which lead to pupil autonomy. Pupils are encouraged to cooperate, work in groups or in pairs, and motivation for learning and enjoyment in learning is achieved by using chants, songs, rhymes, stories, riddles, etc. Children are granted freedom of expression which includes tolerance towards mistakes which are an integral part of language learning. Teaching must include short breaks for thinking about the language, which promotes development of language awareness. For a modern foreign language (German and French) the communicative approach

is recommended; in line with pupils' needs, expectations and interests; the aim is for pupils to be able to use the language in a particular country, to be able to participate in social interactions which could demand knowledge of language; transactions (information exchange) and interactive activities (oriented towards to listener) – necessary balance; various classroom activities are emphasized for motivation; communicative aims which are set in the program are classified according to the level of acquisition (productive and receptive); neutral tasks since the goal is to move beyond current issues and topics and think towards future needs; the importance of authentic language use; the communicative tasks are compulsory from the syllabus but language elements are not. The teacher must include set communicative tasks and can choose language elements since they are not set. Evaluation is done by means of *The Intermediate Certificate Examination*, which can include speaking skills (understanding, accuracy, vocabulary size, easy expression and fluency are measured) conversation about everyday topics adequate for pupils in the age of 15 or over.

Scotland⁵

Subject title: *modern foreign language, Latin* (is offered in some high schools).

The subject is part of the curriculum area *Language and Language and Communication*. It is organized as an independent subject where other curricular topics can be included. Foreign language commences in grade 6 at the latest. One foreign language is compulsory in high school, and depending on the type of school another foreign language can be learned, Latin Old Greek, Gaelige (as mother tongue or foreign language)

It is emphasized that pupils should develop their communicative competences in an environment which they consider attractive and relevant. There are four attainment outcomes within the framework:

Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
listening and reacting verbally and non-verbally to a wide range of texts in varying forms. Listening for a variety of purposes: to extract information and instructions, to react to others and for enjoyment. Listening may also involve watching.	developing the fluency and, where the task and the degree of support allow, accuracy to speak in the foreign language for a variety of purposes, including transactions, social interaction and the expression of opinions and feelings.	– reading a growing range of printed and screen material for a variety of purposes, including the gathering of information, the deduction of meaning and the enjoyment of the texts themselves. Reading is also closely connected to writing and speaking, encouraging young people to see the relationship between the written and spoken forms of the language	– writing or word-process texts for a variety of purposes, including the transfer of information, the consolidation of understanding, the establishment of contact and the creation of imaginative pieces

⁵ Curriculum, The Structure and Balance of Curriculum, 5-14 National Guidelines [Kurikulum, Struktura i ravnoteža kurikuluma, Za učenike 5-14 godina, Nacionalne smjernice] 215

A pupil should be encouraged to develop communicative competence and become a self-confident and successful learner and user of a foreign language. It is expected that from the beginning of learning, foreign language will contribute to the development of a pupil's literacy, personal and interpersonal skills, communicative skills and skills in using information technology as well as cooperation with other people. One of the aims is to encourage responsibility for one's learning, evaluation of one's good and bad points and the awareness of other people's needs. After the age of 14, foreign language should be more focused on language for specific purposes.

In primary school, the minimum recommended teaching hours, for the curricular area (mother tongue and foreign language) is 20% of the total teaching hours. Throughout high school in 1st and 2nd grade the language area (English, modern language, Gaelic, Latin, Ancient Greek) is covered by 20% of the total teaching hours, in grades 3 and 4 360 hours are allocated as the minimum teaching hours for the curricular area *Language and communication* which covers all languages a pupil is learning..

Preconditions for teaching depend on the school and are therefore varied. Programs should ensure broadness, balance, coherence, continuity and progression. The role of information technology and foreign language are emphasized. In addition to the aspects which are in common for other subjects, for foreign language teaching the following is stressed as relevant: creation and presentation through published texts, projects and web pages; searches and research using search engines so as to find and compare information; communication and cooperation in developing and preparing individual and group communication via e-mail. There is a note on the necessity of including reading and writing into teaching as early as possible due to the growing use of fax and e-mail.

Group B2. England

*England*⁶

The subject is called *Modern Foreign Languages* and represents an independent curricular area of the same name.

Foreign language is part of the major subject group which is not considered central. Foreign language fosters spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of a pupil and it enables the development of key skills for communication, use of numbers, information technology, improvement of learning strategies and problem-solving. Foreign language also enables to ensure knowledge, skills and understanding acquired through other subjects. Foreign language is compulsory

⁶ The National Curriculum: Handbook for secondary teachers in England (www.nc.uk.net), Key stages 3 and 2004, Revised 2004. Jointly published by Department for Education and Skills and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. History. The National Curriculum for England (www.nc.uk.net). Key stages 1-3. Jointly published by Department for Education and Skills and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

starting in the third educational cycle age 11 and the government is encouraging an earlier start (from the age of 7, i.e., in the second educational cycle). Modern foreign languages in the fourth educational cycle are one of the areas which students have a right to learn: the school must ensure at least one module which will enable a student to acquire the qualification recognized by the state. In 2002, the *Department for Education and Skills* published the document *National Languages Strategy for England*: by 2010 all children should have a chance to learn at least one foreign language between the ages of 7 and 11. At the local level there have been pilot projects since 2003, based on which strategies for successful introduction of foreign languages into the second educational cycle are developed. All schools should offer at least one of the official working languages of the EU. In addition to that, schools can offer other foreign languages as well.

By learning a foreign language, pupils should acquire knowledge and understanding of a foreign language; develop language skills, learning strategies and cultural awareness. The aims are defined according to key stages which have particular attainment stages defined according to levels. There are eight levels and the excellence level beyond the eighth level. Knowledge, skills and understanding in a foreign language are acquired through communication in a foreign language in pairs, groups or with the teacher in spontaneous speech in class, conversation about feelings and attitudes, creative and imaginative use of language, using language for authentic purposes, etc.

The attainment targets of pupils according to key stages:

Key stage	Attainment targets	The level which the majority of pupils should attain by the end of a stage
2	2 – 5	<p>Level 4:</p> <p><u>Listening and responding:</u> Pupils understand longer passages which are made up of simple sentences and familiar words spoken at an almost natural speed.</p> <p><u>Speaking:</u> Pupils take part in simple conversations, supported by visual or other cues, and express their opinions. They begin to use their knowledge of grammar to adapt and substitute single words and phrases. Their pronunciation is generally accurate and they show some consistency in their intonation.</p> <p><u>Reading and responding :</u> Pupils show that they understand the main points and some of the detail in short written texts from familiar contexts. When reading on their own, as well as using a bilingual dictionary or glossary, they begin to use context to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words.</p> <p><u>Writing:</u> Pupils write short texts (three or four sentences) on familiar topics, adapting language that they have already learnt. They draw largely on memorised language. They begin to use their knowledge of grammar to adapt and substitute individual words and set phrases. They begin to use dictionaries or glossaries to check words they have learnt.</p>

Three	3 – 7	<p>Level 5/6:</p> <p><u>Listening and responding:</u></p> <p>(5) Pupils show that they understand the main points and opinions in spoken passages made up of familiar material from various contexts, including present and past or future events. They may need some repetition.</p> <p>(6) Pupils show that they understand the difference between present, past and future events in a range of spoken material that includes familiar language in less familiar contexts. They identify and note the main points and specific details. They need little repetition.</p> <p><u>Speaking:</u></p> <p>(5) Pupils give a short prepared talk that includes expressing their opinions. They take part in short conversations, seeking and conveying information, opinions and reasons in simple terms. They refer to recent experiences or future plans, as well as everyday activities and interests.</p> <p>(6) They apply their knowledge of grammar in new contexts. They take part in conversations, using a variety of structures and producing more detailed or extended responses. Although they may be hesitant at times, pupils make themselves understood with little or no difficulty and with increasing confidence.</p> <p><u>Reading and responding:</u></p> <p>(5) Pupils show that they understand the main points and opinions in written texts from various contexts, including present, past or future events. Their independent reading includes authentic materials. They are generally confident in reading aloud, and in using reference materials.</p> <p>(6) They scan written material for stories or articles of interest and choose books or texts to read independently, at their own level. They are more confident in using context and their knowledge of grammar to work out the meaning of unfamiliar language.</p> <p><u>Writing:</u></p> <p>(5) Pupils write short texts on a range of familiar topics, using simple sentences. They refer to recent experiences or future plans, as well as to everyday activities. Although there may be some mistakes, the meaning can be understood with little or no difficulty. They use dictionaries or glossaries to check words they have learnt and to look up unknown words.</p> <p>(6) Pupils write texts in paragraph form using simple descriptive language. They use descriptive language and a variety of structures. They apply grammar in new contexts. Although there may be a few mistakes, the meaning is usually clear.</p>
Four		National examinations

Each school decides on its teaching hours and work methods.

Schools have the responsibility to ensure that each student learns a foreign language. Three principles are insisted on: determine appropriate aims (using a flexible approach enable each student to experience success and reach a higher

standard), meet various learning needs of students (in planning the teacher should set high expectations and provide conditions for all students to attain them, a teacher must be acquainted with regulations on racial, gender and physical equality, a teacher must take all measures necessary to meet students needs – detailed examples are given), remove potential obstacles for learning and evaluate knowledge for individuals and groups (detailed suggestions are given).

A teacher should use the foreign language in teaching, and use the mother tongue only when necessary (e.g. when explaining grammar or comparing the mother tongue with the foreign language). For the third cycle *Qualifications and Curriculum Authority* (QCA) developed optional work plans for teachers, including foreign languages (French, German and Spanish). In terms of evaluation, each cycle comprises of a range of levels of attainment targets (8 + exceptional performance) (key stage 3 → levels 3-7) and the attainment target which the majority of the pupils should achieve (key stage 3→5/6). At the end of each cycle there is external evaluation. The QCA publishes a yearly brochure with descriptions of the exam and information on success.

Group C. Austria, Hungary, Slovenia

*Austria*⁷

The subject in the native language is called *Lebende Fremdsprache (alle Sprachen)* and Verbindliche Uebung „Lebende Fremdsprache“⁸

Foreign language is a compulsory subject throughout the entire compulsory education. The following foreign languages are offered in primary education: English, French, Italian, Spanish, Czech, Slovene, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Hungarian, Croatian. In junior high school the following foreign languages are offered: English, French, Italian, Croatian, Slovak, Slovene, Czech, Hungarian. The subjects offer numerous possibilities of researching intercultural topics, that is, enables pupil sensitization for understanding other cultures and other ways of life – the comparison with Austria's own experiences and circumstances is useful. Foreign language teaching should be a basis for further independent learning. It should contribute to the development of appropriate and social behavior in pupils. In grades 1 and 2 foreign language is learned in integration, as a means of communication within the framework of compulsory subjects, while in grades 3 and 4 foreign language is meant to be a separate subject. Foreign language teaching in high school contributes to other educational areas. Contribution to the educational area “man and society”: foreign language as an expression of cultural and life forms, language mediation effects on the social, economical and cultural area, introduction of foreign

⁷ *Lehrplan der Volksschule, Lehrplan AHS, Lehrplan Hauptschule*, Bundesministerium fuer Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur, Wien, 2001, <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/>

⁸ A foreign language is not a compulsory subject, but compulsory practice for which a mark is not given.

cultures and decrease of prejudice. Contribution to the educational area “language and communication”: aims and tasks of foreign language teaching relate to all aspects of this area, i.e., language competence, development of cognitive, emotional, social and creative abilities, understanding the language structure philosophy and culture, intercultural learning, critical and constructive use of the media. Contribution to the educational area “creativity and modeling”: encouraging creative activities through foreign language teaching (theater performances in a foreign language, understanding lyrics). Contribution to the educational period “health and movement”: mediation of sport related vocabulary, being informed and performing foreign sports. The subject is conceived so as to contribute to each of the five educational areas.⁹

Foreign language teaching in primary school should provide pupils with opportunities to meet other languages in an appropriate and free (non forceful) atmosphere. Happiness in learning another language should be encouraged and a positive attitude towards foreign languages should be developed. Foreign language acquisition is perceived as concrete action based on topics, situations and activities which take into consideration pupils’ immediate interests. In junior high-school, the subject is organized in such a way to enable pupils to become informed and be able to express themselves in a foreign language depending on the appropriate age, adequate situation and degree of education.

Foreign language teaching aims:

Primary school	Junior high-school
Developing motivation for learning other foreign languages; Developing the ability for communicating in a foreign language; Enabling pupils to openly and without prejudice approach people in a foreign language and people of other cultures and to perceive themselves as part of a wider, primarily European community. In that way a significant contribution is given to a pupil’s personal development, especially relating to developing social competences.	Mastery of the four skills (listening comprehension, spoken communication, reading comprehension, written communication) should be adapted to the age of the pupil and carried out through daily situations and situations in the classroom. Understanding of the spoken language in immediate contact or through media by working on the suggested topics, starting from standard pronunciation and average speaking rate. Active use of acquired speaking tools in situations which are relevant for pupils. Independent understanding of various written texts in a foreign language relating to the suggested topics and language tools. Written application of the acquired language tools in an appropriate form and having in mind the application of new technologies (text processing, e-mail).

⁹ The subjects are not a product of educational (curricular) areas (Bildungsbereiche) considering that the latter are defined in terms of general educational aims (Ziele der Allgemeinbildung) and refer to all school subjects. Educational areas mark important segments in the educational process and make the basis for cross-curricular integration of particular subjects. A total of five such areas are defined: «nature and technology», «language and communication», «man and society», «creativity and design» and «health and fitness».

Scheduling in primary school amounts to 32 hours per year in grades 1 and 2, and in grades 3 and 4 one hour per week. In junior high school: in grades 1 and 2 it is 4 hours per week and three hours per week in grades 3 and 4.

Learning a foreign language in primary school emphasizes the development of listening comprehension and the ability spoken communication. Understanding through reading and writing is introduced as a supplementary activity only in grade 3 once the sound picture is established. In grades 1 and 2 foreign language learning is conducted as an integral part of teaching (within compulsory subjects) in shorter time periods and as a means of communication, the length of which is determined depending on the receptivity of children during the lesson. In grades 3 and 4, one hour per week is allocated for foreign language – when lessons can be organized in longer time periods – however it can continue to be integrated with compulsory subjects. A teacher-centered approach is characteristic for grades 1 and 2, after which there is a gradual movement to pupil-centered teaching (group work, etc.) Pupils should not be forced to speak, rather they should be given time. Even in integrated teaching, focus is on teaching in one language – the rule is to use German as least as possible. In such teaching, the principle of imagery is extremely important (use of media and teaching aids). Attention should also be given to repetition for which various games are recommended. In grades 1 and 2, the set tasks should not assume knowledge of reading and writing. At this level, the aim is to acquire language in spoken communication. Pronunciation practice should not be done in isolation, but integrated in all phases of teaching. Whenever possible, it is encouraged and considered important to teach through play. Correcting spoken errors must be done carefully and with empathy. In teaching foreign language in high-school, the foreign language should be used more than the native language. Emphasis in teaching is on transfer of the language fund in a varied and related form (vocabulary in context, collocation, vocabulary with implicit grammar, phrases). The four skills should be practiced regularly and be integrated whenever possible. Listening exercises should be regular and pupils must be given frequent opportunity for using a foreign language. Functional aspects of grammar should have an advantage before the formal aspect. Conscious and thoughtful use of language should be encouraged. In grades 1 and 2 comparative and contrastive techniques should be avoided, while in grades 3 and 4 the same should be used where necessary. Artistic and creative elements should be used considering that they have a motivational effect and that they are useful from the educational-psychological aspect. Information on culture should be linked with topics and communicative situations, actively moderated and used for raising awareness and becoming informed. Personal encounters are encouraged (native speakers, student exchanges, etc.), as well as use of audio-visual technology and new technologies. A cross curricular function of language should be encouraged. One of the most important tasks should be mastery of learning strategies. For successful learning, all four skills should have equal importance. Textual translations carry a distinct value. Violation of language accuracy cannot be exclusive criteria for success. If

there are pupils in the classroom whose foreign language is their mother tongue, they should have particular knowledge and skills. Such a constellation gives other pupils a chance to acquire direct information about the foreign culture and enables positive accentuation of plurilingualism. In high school, the teaching plan carries the basis for educational outcomes. In that respect teachers must: make a selection of teaching content and methods in order to achieve the aims; create teaching situations which are appropriate for learning and introduce and support learning processes; be open to various approaches to knowledge and offer information; create opportunities, develop and apply knowledge and emphasize experience and impressions.

*Hungary*¹⁰

The subject is called *foreign language*.

Foreign language is learned from grade four (pupil age is around 9) until the end of compulsory education. From grade 9 two foreign languages are learned. Foreign languages are stressed as especially important in the 21st century and therefore the Ministry of Education introduced two foreign languages in high school. A foreign language is one of the four compulsory subjects at the *matura exam*. Two foreign languages are compulsory in high school unless students choose one of the subjects for the *matura exam* which leads them into the future profession instead of one foreign language; one of four compulsory subjects at the *matura exam*. In grade four of primary school, learning a foreign language has a psychological effect – ensuring a sense of success and importance for further learning, creating a foundation for later learning and developing receptive skills. Great emphasis is also given to learning strategies. In later phases oral fluency is stressed as well as developing a need for reading in a foreign language. In grammar schools (Gymnasia) English and German are the most popular languages, followed by Russian, French, Italian and Spanish. In vocational high schools German is the most popular, followed by English, French Italian and Spanish. Teaching is planned as compulsory in accordance with the curriculum framework and the local school curriculum (beyond the framework), and as optional. Foreign language belongs to the curriculum area: *foreign languages*.

Aims and tasks of foreign language teaching are shown thoroughly and in detail by grade level. They are based on content, communicative intent and concepts. For each grade there are attainment levels which must be met as a condition for moving to the following grade level.

¹⁰ *Framework Curricula for Primary Education*, on behalf of Ministry of Education, Dinasztia Publishing Company, Budapest, 2000

Educational period	General aims	Expected pupil attainment
Grade 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ensure adequate physical and spiritual development of a child; ease socialization; enable the development of literacy – develop an interest for learning a foreign language – provide a sense of success – create the foundation for further learning of foreign languages, especially by developing receptive skills – create the foundation for developing strategies for learning a language and autonomous learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – defined at the level of the four language skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing) – harmonized with the European framework of the Council of Europe
Grades 5-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – further socialization, development of basic values – maintaining motivation for learning a foreign language – further development of receptive skills as the basis for productive skills – development of autonomy in learning a language (through learning strategies, self-correction, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – defined for each grade at the level of the four language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) and presented as a precondition for moving onto the next grade – harmonized with the European framework of the Council of Europe

Yearly, 111 hours are allocated to the first foreign language which is learned from the fourth grade of primary education until the eleventh grade of high school. In grade 12 there are 96 teaching hours. The second foreign language is allocated 111 hours per year and in grade twelve 96 hours. In high school, within the framework of the local curriculum, the teaching hours of one foreign language can be increased or decreased but by the end of the final year both must have carried out in the number of hours proscribed by the framework curriculum and all content must be taught. Part of the entire scheduling of one or the other foreign language can be used for minority language teaching.

Teaching at an early age (grade 4) is based on the natural process of learning. Pupils are engaged in activities which are interesting and motivating and their challenge is adapted to children's cognitive abilities. Children listen to the foreign language and try to understand the context. The process is slow and children go through the "silent period", but are involved in activities through play. Pupils explain what they hear in a foreign language according to what is happening in the classroom and according to their knowledge of the world and it is therefore important to base content on the already acquired knowledge (topics acquired through other subjects). Language development is based on understanding through listening.

Questions and answers in Hungarian are a natural part of teaching although the teacher tries to use the foreign language. The main goal in the period from grade 5 to grade 8 is to maintain the level of motivation for learning. The central aim is to further develop receptive skills of understanding the spoken and written language so as to influence the faster the development of productive skills in an indirect way. Teaching topics are based on topics from other curricular subjects. Pupils are encouraged to observe independently and to correct their errors; learning autonomy is encouraged. Unconventional teaching can also take place provided that all content is presented and all aims are achieved. Supplementary teaching is organized for the application of previously acquired knowledge, further development of abilities and skills, acquisition of extra knowledge skills for teaching subjects which are not part of the curriculum framework. From grades 1-3 foreign language can only be learned as a supplementary subject. It is possible that advanced programs within the local curricula are approved either as compulsory or supplementary teaching if the program offers a higher level than the set program framework, if its duration is at least two years and if it has at least 50% more yearly teaching hours than the set framework. Foreign language has an additional requirement which demands that a section (class) must be divided into smaller groups. Pupil performance in the communicative use of foreign language through four language skill is evaluated according to the accepted European levels of communicative and language competence (CEFR).

Slovenia¹¹

Subject name: English language

English is an independent subject in the curriculum. It represents a general educational subject which is foreign language to the pupils. The role of the English language is to acquire knowledge and develop language skills which is important due to the immediate use of language in further education, for work, lifelong learning, for expanding communicative abilities beyond the areas of in which the pupil's mother tongue was used either in private or in professional life; it is used for developing wider intercultural communicative abilities. However, English contributes to the humanistic development of pupils since it enables direct contact with other people and their cultures. In primary school pupils can start learning English as part of the compulsory program (first foreign language) from grade 4, or as a compulsory elective subject (second foreign language) from grade 7. The subject is included into the curriculum through cross-curricular links. One level of relatedness is the link between English and the mother tongue (Slovene) and other foreign language, while the other level refers to other areas such as music, art, physical education and science and IT. However correlations with social studies, geography, history, home economics, biology, physics, Chemistry, health and traffic and education for vocations are also possible. The subject can also be linked with other areas at the level of content, level of knowledge and abilities and at the organizational level. The

¹¹ http://www.mszs.si/slo/solstvo/os/ucni_nacrti/os/9letna/ucni_nacrti/skupni_predmeti.asp

subject is internally organized in a manner that a topic is taken as an outcome with specific language content which are defined in detailed with the help of aims.

English language teaching aims:

General aims	Specific aims
<p>Learn ways of communication and language as a means of communication;</p> <p>Form awareness of themselves as individuals and members of a community, social and national/ethnic or international community while developing and nourishing cultural values;</p> <p>Learn and become aware of differences between people, and national communities, values and attitudes and learn to respect and value that diversity;</p> <p>Learn that English is a means of international communication and see themselves as pupils who use the language;</p> <p>Expand their communicative skills over the boundaries into areas where their mother tongue is used, that is, multicultural environment;</p> <p>Become familiar with characteristics of the culture and achievements of countries in which the English language is used;</p> <p>Cherish their curiosity, desire and need for new knowledge and develop abilities for acquiring and preserving knowledge and skills;</p> <p>Develop their higher level cognitive abilities, that is, analysis, synthesis, judgment and evaluation which enable efficient use of information under new circumstances;</p> <p>Develop creativity, the need for expression and emotions for esthetic values;</p> <p>Awareness that they are responsible for their learning and knowledge and take on part of the responsibility for that;</p> <p>Learn to become aware of their own and other peoples' emotions and act accordingly;</p> <p>Develop the ability for quality interpersonal communication and overcoming disagreement;</p> <p>Develop abilities for working in groups, interpersonal cooperation and support;</p> <p>Develop abilities of bodily response to verbal and nonverbal cues;</p> <p>Shape personal learning goals, become aware of and evaluate their achievements and work on their improvement;</p> <p>Shape general cultural and educational values;</p>	<p><i>Language knowledge and competences</i></p> <p>Pupils: are introduced to the English language at the phonetic, morphological and syntactic level; develop language abilities for understanding spoken and written texts, spoken and written communication.</p> <p><i>Sociolinguistic competences</i></p> <p>Pupils: develop the ability to understand texts depending on context, sub-text and situation communicating;</p> <p><i>Discourse competences</i></p> <p>Pupils: develop appropriate strategies for understanding and developing verbal and written texts; develop strategies for participating in a conversation.</p> <p><i>Strategic competences</i></p> <p>Pupils: develop the ability of choosing and aligning messages; develop ability overcome obstacles in understanding and in misunderstandings; develop the ability to respect the interlocutor.</p> <p><i>Social-cultural competences</i></p> <p>Pupils: expand their communicative competences over the language borders in areas where their mother tongue is used; learn about various cultures of the English speaking areas and accordingly align their messages.</p> <p><i>Independent learning strategies</i></p> <p>Pupils. Learn and develop strategies for autonomous learning (activities which help them acquire, store and use information and knowledge) and which provides them with easier, comfortable and efficient learning which is applicable in new situations and independently guide it. The intention of such activities, which pupils continue to develop at the high-school level, is to develop abilities for life long learning. The type of strategy, manner of development depends on the age of the pupil, his cognitive abilities, learning style, etc.</p>

Teaching hours:

	Grade						Total in primary school
	4	5	6	7	8	9	
First foreign language – weekly	2	3	4	4	3	3	
First foreign language – yearly	70	105	140	140	105	105	665
Second foreign language – weekly				2	2	2	
Second foreign language – yearly				70	70	70	210

Considering that learning English is focused on developing skills in listening and understanding, reading, spoken and written communication, there are no proscribed, but only suggested activities and conditions for teaching in order to achieve the above goals. Particular didactic recommendations are given with subject matter with which we can realize the set aims and topics. The suggested topics do not necessarily have to be taught in the given order, nor in the grade for which they are suggested. However, when planning the teaching, it is necessary to take into consideration some knowledge which is necessary for acquiring new knowledge. In planning their teaching, teachers must take into consideration various cognitive abilities and learning styles and accordingly use activities for auditory, visual and kinesthetic learning styles. In teaching, positive motivation methods which encourage pupils to rely on their own efforts should be used as well as avoid negative criticism which can hinder communication in the classroom. They should also use modern teaching aids with a rich pictorial subject matter, audio and video materials and specially designed computer programs. In teaching foreign languages, the teacher pupil relationship is very important. If the relationship is intimate, and if the teacher sees the pupil as an equal interlocutor, then language learning and language acquisition can be greater and more efficient. Contemporary English language teaching should be planned for focusing on the pupil and the learning process, i.e., that it takes into consideration the age, ability, needs and interests of the pupils and offers as many opportunities as possible for active participation. It is recommended that the activities are as varied as possible so as to motivate pupils and enable the development of various abilities and skills. Assessment and marking of knowledge takes place according to the criteria and aims which are defined in the teaching curriculum. An important part of grading is assessment of a pupil's participation in the learning process (in the sense of recognizing ways of participating in teaching, etc.). Three types of assessment of knowledge are recommended: diagnostic, formative and summative. The most common methods of assessment are observation of a pupil's use of language during teaching activities, paper and pencil tests, writing tests, portfolios, self assessment and homework assessment.

Group D. The Netherlands

*The Netherlands*¹²

Subject: English language; second foreign language (usually French or German)

English is one of the compulsory subjects in primary education and should commence by age 10 at the latest (the last two years of primary education). The importance of English is twofold: the first is introducing children to a foreign language at an early age, and the second is the importance of English as an international language. From the age of 12 (first year of junior high school), in addition to English, a second foreign language is among the 15 compulsory subjects, usually French or German. If a pupil is enrolled into the 5-year general high school, or 6-year academic high school (college preparation), during the first cycle (12 – 15 years of age) a third foreign language must be learned (French or German) and the schedule should have hours allocated for literature for all the languages. Pupils in grammar school also learn Latin and Greek with their literatures.

Aims of foreign language teaching (given in the example of the English language) are expressed through expected learner attainment, and defined at two levels: the level of cross-curricular aims and aims specific of foreign language learning:

Cross-curricular expected learner attainment	Grouped around the following topics: Attitude towards work, social behavior, use of various learning strategies, the concept of self
Expected pupil achievement in the English language in primary education	Area of oral language skills: Understanding of simple language relating to everyday situations, personal messages, etc.
	Area of reading skills: Understanding the main idea of a simply written text, dictionary use

Teaching hours:

Primary school	Junior high school (total hours for three years)		
English language	English language	Second foreign language	Third foreign language
Schools decide on the number of hours	The number of teaching hours varies depending on the type of school: Theoretical program – 480 hours, basic vocational program – 400 hours, intermediate managerial program – 440 hours, combined program – 480 hours	Between 120 and 240 hours	20 hours

¹² Attainment Targets For Compulsory Education, http://www.minocw.nl/english/education/doc/Kerdoelen_basisonderwijs_Engels.doc

An interdisciplinary approach is encouraged in foreign language teaching. It is believed that children recognize English as a source of loan-words in Dutch, their mother tongue. That vocabulary makes the basis for learning English through everyday situations. In learning a foreign language vocabulary which is part of daily life should be the starting point followed by work on sentence structure and „guessing“ the meaning of words.

Group E. Germany

*Germany*¹³

Course title: *live foreign language*

English language teaching mediates skills and abilities, knowledge and attitudes in areas of “language”, “intercultural learning” and “language learning” in their significant experiential contexts. The course is structured in three basic (subject) areas: language, intercultural learning; language learning (basic work techniques and learning strategies). Subject areas are given main tasks/focus points from which teaching content and topics are selected. Their selection is determined by experiential content. In junior high school emphasis is given to applicability, strengthening spoken communication; broadening knowledge necessary for intercultural competence; internationalization of language standards oriented towards the levels of the Common European Framework for Languages; accentuating various profiles of knowledge according to the type of education;

Aims are expressed through competences which should be acquired:

General aim: communication, intercultural and language competence		
Communicative competence	Intercultural competence	Language competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – listening comprehension – oral interaction – oral production – reading and understanding – written production – mediation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – intercultural orientation – values and attitudes – social interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – pronunciation and intonation – lexis – grammar – spelling

The teaching hours for primary school amount to two hours per week, for high school (grammar school, *Hauptschule*) in grades 5 and 6, four to five hours per week, and in grades 7-10 three to four hours per week. Starting in grade 7, depending on the type of school, an additional three to five hours are allocated to the second foreign language as compulsory or elective subject.

¹³ The experimental plan for the federal state Nordrhein-Westfalen (*Richtlinien und Lehrpläne zur Erprobung für die Grundschule in Nordrhein-Westfalen*) was analyzed, relating only to the first four grades of primary school. In the school year 2003/04 the plans were adopted by schools which wanted to introduce it, and as of school year 2004/5 and 2005/06 they became experimental in *all* schools. These guidelines and teaching plans are a replacement for the ones from 1985.

The following teaching principles are characteristic for primary school: language work as a permeating principle; relatedness of teaching topics and situations; authenticity; structure; attention to individual learning achievements. Considering that English language teaching especially promotes the ability of language activities of a pupil in the area of oral communication, emphasis is given to concrete speaking situations. Such speaking situations are structured around topics which carry meaning an importance to the pupils. Situations, vocabulary and language structures are authentic – they reflect a realistic Anglophone daily life. At the same time, such situations, and related speaking activities, are structures so as to enable learning. That demands simplification, thorough practice and repetition as well as constant reinforcement of the learned. Even in English language teaching there is an imbalance in the development of pupils which includes differences in aptitude and assumptions for learning by girls and by boys. Individual development is encouraged in each pupil. For that purpose and individual portfolio into which pupils document their language development can be beneficial. Various acquired learning strategies enable students to, according to circumstances, organize their work autonomously. The teaching process takes place through forms of complex learning situation within which experiential contexts, subject areas and main tasks/focus points create an interrelated dimension of planning. English language teaching promotes those teaching forms which enable: discovery and experimental work with language (sensitizing a pupil to language rule and repeating patterns as well as for similarities and differences in relation to the German language); learning through play, expressive and creative language learning (using readiness and ability of pupils for play and creative expressiveness); using specific assumptions about learning which are present in pupils (individualizing teaching methods to the needs of pupils). Pupils' achievements are seen as a learning process – tests and dictations are not recommended. Considering that emphasis in primary school is given to oral communication, assessment should also center on understanding and speaking, rather than on reading and writing. The key criteria are readiness and ability to communicate, spontaneity and comprehensiveness as well as use of elementary speaking tools. Criteria for language accuracy are not excluded but are not given priority. A pupil portfolio can serve as an assessment tool. In junior high school orientation towards the pupil, communication and content orientation are stressed as the most important didactic and teaching guidelines. Criteria on interculturalism and authenticity are also present. In the same way processes for self-reflexive and autonomous learning are applied, with the aim of making the learning process more autonomous. Social and work forms are applied in compliance with the characteristics and age of pupils. The principle of uniformity is realized as a functional monolingual teaching. One should take into consideration the everyday plurilinguagism present in classrooms. Teaching should, from the thematic-content perspective, build socio-cultural oriented knowledge in areas of “personal life plan”, “education/school”, “participation in social life” and “professional orientation”.. Written examinations should consist of

several parts – tasks. Those tasks should thematically and through content relate in such a way that the receptive and productive achievement are tested integrally as a set of complex tasks. In assessment, closed, semi-closed and open ended tasks can be used. In the assessment area “other achievements” covers individual effort in conversation throughout teaching, cooperative achievement in group work, effort in presentations, homework etc. throughout the year. Assessment can encompass alternative forms such as long-term writing projects, etc. Criteria for evaluation must be known and transparent to students.

Comparison of analyzed curricula

Most European countries follow a similar approach and trend in foreign language curricula.

Foreign language is usually part of a language curricular area which includes the mother tongue (e.g. Scotland) or is an independent curricular area (e.g. Finland, Sweden), or an independent subject (e.g. Slovenia).

Most of the curricula emphasize the importance of relating foreign language teaching with other subjects since other content can be learned or revised through the foreign language (e.g. Sweden, England), some even insist on relating the foreign language to the mother tongue (e.g. Slovenia).

The commencement of compulsory foreign language learning varies. In some countries (e.g. England) foreign language learning starts at the age of 11, and in some countries at an earlier age (e.g. Hungary, age 9) however, there is not a country in which at least at the optional level in which a foreign language is not offered for learning from the very start of education. Currently, only a few countries (e.g. Ireland) are conducting national research projects on the optimal age for starting foreign language teaching.

In some countries, students are given the opportunity of learning three languages (e.g. the Netherlands) or even four languages (e.g. Sweden, languages A1, A2, B1 and B2) of which each has a different status and has a different start, different teaching hours and different learning outcomes.

The majority curricula emphasize the importance of the English language as an international language, therefore, in some cases, the expected outcomes for the English language differ from learning outcomes for other languages, that is, much greater outcomes are expected (e.g. Finland).

In most of the countries, the aims are expressed as general competences and as specific learning attainment of pupils, which are most frequently described using descriptors of communicative language levels. Those descriptors are found in the European document *Common European Framework of Reference*. It is interesting that some countries (e.g. Finland) have that document as their foundation, but adapt it to their educational context. In almost all of the countries, the development of openness to “the different”, to other cultures and the global dimension of education

are emphasized among general aims of foreign language learning. Furthermore, at the general level, it is insisted on developing socialization, national identity, team work and learning autonomy. Both general and specific aims are most frequently expressed by through educational cycles/stages.

In some countries (e.g. England) there are internal diversifications of learning attainments: in some stages the levels of expected attainment are given along with the attainment level that the majority of pupils should reach.

It is characteristic for many countries that the scheduling for foreign language is not centrally determined. Instead, scheduling is done according to the particular educational period/stage, and the school itself determines on how it will schedule the hours for the grades (e.g. Finland) or the scheduling is entirely in the jurisdiction of the school (e.g. England).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CROATIA

Based on the study and comparative analysis of 11 curricula from countries of the European Union and the comparison with the Croatian teaching curriculum from 1999, and the Croatian National Educational Standards (CNES) for foreign languages dating from 2005, it can be concluded that Croatian documents relating to foreign language teaching very closely follow the trends of developed countries.

Nevertheless, the following recommendation for aligning the Croatian curriculum with the curriculum of developed European countries:

1. It is necessary to develop a **transparent foreign language learning policy** on which the curriculum should be based. In doing so, decisions such as when to start, what is compulsory and what can be elected are important, as well as continuity of learning a foreign language which a pupil has elected in primary school.
2. Within the global policy on learning foreign languages it would be beneficial to clearly define the position of the English language as a language of international communication. Experiences of Scandinavian and other countries (e.g. the Netherlands, Slovenia) show that the trend in developed countries is to start learning English as the first foreign language from the beginning of primary education.
3. **The expected level of attainment in English language learning** should differ from pupils' attainment levels of other foreign languages.
4. The possibility of introducing Spanish language should be taken into consideration as one of the other foreign language which a student could choose in primary school.
5. The trend of **compulsory learning of at least two foreign languages** in primary school should be followed.

6. It would be beneficial to harmonize the **approach in determining teaching hours** with the current trend in developed countries, that is, define the recommended minimum and give schools the autonomy in defining the final number of teaching hours which should be flexible.
7. At the level of requirements for conducting the teaching process, **optimal group size** for foreign language teaching should be ensured (according to the Hungarian experiences: compulsory division of a classroom into two groups).
8. Considering that the issue is a complex teaching process which presupposes development of skills and the influence of affective factors, it is necessary to **ensure a specialized space**.
9. Assessment and evaluation of knowledge should presuppose **transparent criteria related to learning aims**, and the elimination of grades in the initial years of learning a foreign language should be considered.
10. It would be beneficial to think about **internal differentiation of expected pupil attainment** in particular educational cycles.

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