Teachers for Social Justice: Centering Pre-Service Teachers' Perspectives in Critical English Language Education

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Teachers for Social Justice

By Way of a (Proud) Introduction

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Abstract: This editorial sets the scene for the special issue "Teachers for Social Justice: Centring Pre-Service Teachers' Perspectives in Critical English Language Education". True to the title of the special issue, it centres the voices of the eight pre-service teachers who contributed their valuable research to the collection by introducing their main arguments and findings, establishing connections between the individual contributions, and contextualising them in the wider landscape of Social Justice (Language) Teacher Education and teacher professionalisation.

Keywords: Social Justice Teacher Education; English Language Education; pre-service teachers; teacher professionalisation

In one's academic and educational journey, there are always some moments that feel particularly important, worth all the long hours of work and dedication, usually accompanied by a great sense of pride and hopefulness. During our critical education journey, we have been fortunate to experience many of these moments together with our students. One of these was on the morning of 22nd March 2024, while preparing for the Second Student-Teacher Conference "Teachers for Social Justice", and with that for a day on which the lucky number thirteen of our students would present their research projects related to the topic of Social Justice Education.[1] These students had for the most part worked on the connection between Social Justice Education and English Language Teaching in one of Eleni Louloudi's seminars entitled "Critical Literacy in English Language Teaching", they had been inspired by the first Conference "Teachers for Social Justice" (2022), or they had discovered related topics as part of their journey to their final degree theses under our supervision.

At some point towards the end of the conference, we gave each other a solemn nod: Impressed by the sheer academic quality, but also by the conviction and commitment of our students to promoting social justice in research and teaching, it was becoming clear that this was, in fact, not only a moment of feeling proud of what had been achieved but also a moment of significant hopefulness towards the new generation of teachers ready to enter the English classrooms, (a bit better) prepared to embrace criticality.

Such an endeavour could not but take a more academic format – a special journal issue dedicated to our students' perspectives on critical language teacher education – not only because these projects are extremely relevant to

[1] We are very grateful to David Gerlach, who honored us with delivering the keynote for this conference.

the scientific community and (still significant) gap of critical studies in the German ELT context (König, 2023), but also because they represent a core idea of criticality: centring students' voices. Hence, this publication project aims to give an idea of in what way pre-service teachers can become advocates of social change in teacher education and beyond. More specifically, the contributions in this special issue of the Bielefeld journal *PraxisForschung-Lehrer*innenbildung* are all written by teacher-researchers that have embarked on this critical education journey in various moments during their professionalisation: from very early in their BAs to later on in their MAs; they all, however, have one common goal: to better understand, analyse and reshape the discourse dedicated to questions of social justice and teacher education.

The articles derive both from empirical and conceptual research in the field of Social Justice Education. Therefore, we arranged them in two main parts: The empirical contributions by (in alphabetical order) Luisa Hopfendorf, Magdelena Klaes, Michael Koppel, Leila Pimentel Lechthoff, and Torben Schulte focus on the ways both in-service and pre-service teachers position themselves towards Social Justice Education. Jannik Handke, Vanessa Krjutschkow, and Svenja Schillings show at the example of various analogue and digital materials, how English language lessons can relate to social justice topics.

Even by this very short introduction, it becomes clear that the common denominator for our work on critical language education is an understanding of criticality as profoundly connected to social justice. In line with Fraser, we understand social justice as "parity of participation" (Fraser, 1998, 2001), which refers to the three dimensions of "redistribution, recognition and representation" (Fraser, 2009). In addition to equal access to social recognition and to resources that make participation possible in the first place, this refers in particular to an "equal voice in public deliberation and decision-making" (Kerner, 2010, p. 44). This equity of voice can only be achieved if, supported through an active and continuous empowerment, minoritised groups not only participate in the discourse, but reshape it accordingly. This requires (especially) the more privileged actors to use their privilege towards the liberation of the oppressed, to use Freire's (1993/1970) famous terminology. In this sense, social justice, and parity of participation, can only be striven for when connected to societal transformation (Luke, 2019). This addresses a central concern of *Social Justice Education*, namely

> "creating a society where everyone has fair access to the resources and opportunities to develop their full capacities, and everyone is welcome to participate democratically with others to mutually shape social policies and institutions that govern civic life." (Bell, 2023, n.p.)

To achieve this goal, learners must be equipped to recognise and deconstruct key mechanisms of marginalisation and oppression and find ways to replace them with more socially just practices. Due to this objective, *Social Justice Education* is closely linked to approaches that go back to Paolo Freire's critical pedagogy, where "reflection and action […] upon the[] world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1993/1970, p. 52) are placed at the centre of a dialogical pedagogical interaction that aims to identify and disrupt the causes and roots of social inequality. These approaches are continued, for example, in the current strand of *critical literacy*, which emphasises the ability to engage in the use

> "of the technologies of print and other media of communication to analyze, critique, and transform the norms, rule systems, and practices governing the social fields of institutions and everyday life" (Luke, 2014, p. 21).

As Blume & Gerlach (in press) show, such an educational policy has only recently started to gain traction in the German discourse on English Language Teaching (cf. also König, 2023). Besides the contributions to David Gerlach's (2020) seminal collection on *Kritische Fremdsprachendidaktik*, recent work has focused on opening up the formerly-tabooed PARSNIP topics – politics, alcohol, religion, sexuality, narcotics, -isms, and pornography – for English Language Teaching (Ludwig & Summer, 2023), with mental health (Ludwig et al., 2024) and gender (König, 2018; König et al., 2016; Louloudi & Schildhauer, 2023) providing further crucial fields for Social Justice Education. This trend is continued by some contributions in the special issue at hand:

Jannik Handke explores critical deconstructions of racism in the example of high school sports. In doing so, he centres literature, and in particular the novel *Friday Night Lights* (Bissinger, 1990), as the main medium around which critical reflection questions are built, thereby highlighting the essential role of literary materials in creating mirrors, windows and sliding doors in the ELT classroom (after Bishop, 1990). Furthermore, his teaching unit emphasises the importance of centring students' voices and paying attention to their own experiences with the respective socio-political topic.

Svenja Schillings introduces queer critical literacies (after Govender & Andrews, 2022) as a fundamental framework to help "challenge the cis- and heteronormative gaze in ELT" (abstract). In doing so, she puts gender at the core of an intersectional approach to English education, underlining that criticality should foster an understanding of social categories (as well as privilege and disadvantage) as entangled and interconnected. In her teaching unit, she also highlights the important role of a multimodal approach in helping students understand intersectionality as profoundly connected to all the life worlds they inhabit.

Finally, in the same manner, *Vanessa Krjutschkow* focuses on the development of a critical lesson unit that combines the literary classic *The Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger, 2014/1951) with the exceedingly popular narrative adventure game *Life is Strange* (Dontnod, 2015). Vanessa not only emphasises the importance of deconstructing canonical literature but underlines the fact that doing so through materials with which students can better identify is key to building critical competences.

Jannik's, Svenja's and Vanessa's contributions focus on the exploration of critical literacies as a fundamental conceptual source for the ELT classroom that has not yet been adopted in the German *Bildungspolitik* widely, or systematically and systemically. However, Social Justice Education in itself is not necessarily new to the field. In fact, social justice-related questions have a far longer tradition in the German ELT discourse. In particular, they are at the core of the debate on inclusive ELT, which was fuelled by the UN Resolution on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ratified by Germany in 2008): True to the title of Küchler & Roters' (2014) seminal contribution, many voices in this discourse argue for "Embracing Everyone" and providing English Language Teaching for all learners, across all (special) needs they may have (see Gerlach & Schmidt, 2021, and Schildhauer & Zehne, 2022, for comprehensive summaries), which means that social justice questions often arise in relation to the "challenge" (Schildhauer et al., 2024) of providing English instruction under conditions of what Krause & Kuhl (2018) term "maximal heterogeneity" (p. 11; our translation).

Recently, this discourse has moved further from its original focus on a narrow understanding of inclusive practice focused on "special educational needs" (still exemplified by the recent volume of Schick & Rohde, 2022) to considering linguistic diversity regarding first/family languages as a crucial field (e.g., Elsner & Lohe, 2021). Here, the influence of international discourses concerned with plurilingualism and translanguaging – which are mostly based

on critical roots, too (e.g. Pennycook, 2006, 2021) – provides essential incentives for raising awareness and developing revised classroom discourse practices in the light of linguistic justice (e.g. García et al., 2017; García & Wei, 2014; Lau & Van Viegen, 2020; Louloudi, 2024; Panagiotopoulou et al., 2020; Seltzer, 2023; Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2023). Two contributions in the present special issue take up this thread and spin it further, providing new empirical insights from various contexts:

Luisa Hopfendorf explores in-service teachers' perspectives of translanguaging pedagogies. Using qualitative expert interviews as her primary methodology, she investigates how English teachers from Germany and Finland understand and reflect on translanguaging as a relevant concept for their ELT classrooms. Taking into consideration the situatedness of each field of study, she draws on similarities and differences that emerge from these international contexts, concluding that "systemic structures that perpetuate monolingual ideologies" (p. 35) are still a major factor of influence in the way these teachers think of following a translanguaging pedagogy. Among the systemic changes needed, Luisa mentions teacher education that could empower "teachers to reflect on their stances and teaching practices" (p. 36).

In a similar vein, *Leila Pimentel Lechthoff* conducted interviews with three teachers at a comprehensive school in Germany whose classrooms hosted recently immigrated students. Her qualitative content analysis uncovers that the teachers are aware of the needs of the recently immigrated students to varying extents, but that they have to navigate these needs in a system that is detrimental to socially just teaching practices. For this reason (and some others), the teachers perpetuate a double-monolingual policy: They follow an immersion-oriented approach to teaching English that allows – if any – only German as an auxiliary tool in the classroom, putting the recently immigrated students at a doubled disadvantage and very effectively depriving them of their voice in Fraser's terminology. Amongst others, Leila also calls for changes in teacher education as a necessary measure to move to a more socially just teaching environment for recently immigrated students.

Thereby, Leila and Luisa touch upon the crucial question of what kind of teacher education is needed to become a critical foreign language teacher (Gerlach & Lüke, 2024), who, amongst others, possesses a Critical Classroom Discourse Competence that allows teachers to be willing and knowledgeable enough to reflect on their own socio-cultural positioning (Gerlach & Fasching-Varner, 2020) in order to discover and transform practices in their own

English teaching that are not conducive to fostering social justice (Schildhauer, 2023). What is needed, therefore, is a Social Justice Teacher Education that

> "goes beyond a celebration of diversity to attempt to prepare teachers who are willing and able to work within and outside of their classrooms to change the inequities that exist in both schooling and the wider society" (Zeichner, 2011, p. 10).

Elsewhere (Louloudi & Schildhauer, 2024), we argue that besides developing a critical professional vision (Schildhauer, 2024), Social Justice Teacher Education must enable student-teachers to exercise criticality, student-centredness, and discomfort in their teaching. It has to enable future teachers to situate their teaching on the cross-sections of the various digital cultures in which their learners encounter and negotiate social justice topics and to base their classroom discourse on translanguaging practices that allow for the authentic negotiation of these subjectively relevant and sensitive topics.

In order to pursue this ambitious trajectory, we have to understand more thoroughly the various perspectives and positionings of pre- as well as in-service teachers in relation to Social Justice Education. In this special issue, three authors provide valuable contributions to that endeavour:

First, *Michael Koppel* investigates pre-service teachers' perspectives on global citizenship education (GCE). After giving an overview of how GCE has been developing in ELT in the recent years, he focuses on teacher education as the main influence of how (future) teachers think of integrating GCE into their English classroom. His results show a clear negotiation of theoretical GCE strands: even though pre-service teachers find the concept highly relevant for their future classrooms, they still criticise its potentially problematic connection to (the German understanding of) interculturality, as well as its broadness and lack of systemic embeddedness.

Torben Schulte emphasises the importance of looking into in-service teachers' perspectives on gender and the ways they think of its inclusion in their ELT classrooms. Through expert interviews and a qualitative content analysis research design, he first explores how the participating teachers understand gender – namely "ranging from biological essentialism to more socially constructed viewpoints" (p. 166) – and then delves into the connections they made with regard to its implementation in the classroom. Here, a wide span of perceptions arises as well, "with the participants either actively supplementing male-dominant teaching materials with female perspectives, trusting

the textbook without further reflection, or either accepting or being unaware of gender biases" (p. 170). A great emphasis is also put on the lack of support and reflection on a teacher education-level.

Both Michael's and Torben's contributions highlight how crucial it is that certain topics and goals are relevant to language teachers in the first place for transformation to take place in their classrooms. This argument implicitly relates to the concept of Language Teacher Identity (LTI) that has recently gained traction in the discourse on (critical) language teacher education. LTI refers to "the ways in which teachers view themselves, how they think about themselves and their profession, and how they position themselves within the institutional frame in which they work" (Gerlach, 2023, p. 145; our translation). Working on LTI in teacher education is profoundly important as it is believed to have a considerable impact on how teachers teach (Gerlach, 2023, p. 149), i.e. eventually reflexively transform what they gained in teacher education into their own teaching practice (Bergmann et al., 2021). In line with this reasoning,

Magdalena Klaes investigates racial criticism as connected to Language Teacher Identity. In particular, she reflects on the results of her qualitative research based on focus-group interviews with pre-service teachers about their attitudes towards problematic classroom materials, to find out that they "positioned themselves as strong advocators of taking racial critical approaches into account when planning and giving (future) lessons as well as designing and using teaching materials" (p. 109). In that, the participants strongly emphasise the role of teacher education in fostering such a perspective, and ultimately, also helping form a critical stance (and LTI) towards education in general. Consequently, Magdalena closes her contribution by advocating for a six-point program for teacher education, which includes the active work on LTI as a central component.

Magdalena's contribution, thus, exemplifies what is true for all articles in this special issue: All of them dedicate themselves to raising the painful topics that *must* be part of the agenda of Social Justice (Teacher) Education in English Language Teaching in the years to come. At the same time, they exemplify that critical language education should

> "seek to connect the local conditions of language to broader social formations, drawing connections between classrooms, conversations, textbooks, tests, or translations and issues of gender, class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, identity, politics, ideology or discourse" (Pennycook, 2008, p. 169).

In this extensive and discomforting attempt to disrupt and restructure a well-established system, we argue that teacher education plays, in fact, the most profound role.

In the spirit of the title of this special issue – centring pre-service teachers' perspectives in Critical English language education – we close this introduction to leave the stage to our wonderful students, whose fantastic work fills us with much optimism in dark times. It has been an absolute pleasure to mentor them, learn alongside them and have, truly, one of the most uncomplicated, professional, and eye-opening editorial experiences in our academic journeys.

From the bottom of our hearts, we would like to thank them for sharing their work, but also all the moments of discomfort, fear, anger, frustration, and hope that brought us here today. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Lotta König for supporting us in this endeavour by shared spirit and deed and to Gurco Sevim Cakmak, whose keen-eyed support in proofreading and style sheeting has been greatly appreciated by all of us. Last but not least, we are very grateful that Lilian Streblow as representative of the PFLB editorial board supported our somewhat unconventional project so whole-heartedly and that Sylvia Schütze used her super-human editorial skills in the final stages of this project once more.

Leni & Peter
Bielefeld, Halloween 2024

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Living the Idea That All Languages Are Equal? – Teachers' Perspectives on Translanguaging in the ELT Classroom

An Interview Study with English Teachers in Germany and Finland

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Abstract: As part of ongoing processes of globalization, multilingual landscapes are increasingly becoming visible, not least in educational settings. This article deals with translanguaging as one of many possible pedagogical responses to linguistic diversity in the classroom and beyond. It focuses on the empirical investigation of teachers' perspectives on translanguaging and its role in the English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom in international contexts. To do so, this article presents selected results of comparative case studies comprising of expert interviews with teachers of English in Germany and Finland. The studies aim at reconstructing teachers' perspectives on translanguaging in order to contribute to a better global understanding of approaches to multilingual education and analyze implications for critical, social justice-oriented ways of teaching and learning in the light of current approaches to (teacher) education. The results indicate that teachers' linguistic ideologies are strongly influenced by monolingual norms that are deeply rooted in social and educational systems in both Germany and Finland. Thus, the results point towards the need for systemic transformation and professional collaboration across different levels of the (teacher) education system.

Keywords: translanguaging; social justice; language ideologies; linguistically just pedagogies

1 Introduction

Ongoing processes of globalization with an increase in physical and virtual mobility have not only been changing societies and cultures worldwide significantly, but have also led to diversified educational settings. Among various dimensions of diversity, one whose immediate relevance for education quickly becomes obvious is that of linguistic diversity. Multilingual landscapes are visible in schools and beyond, and education is bound to adapt to societal changes to match our lived realities. In addition, building an awareness of current developments in societies around the world also means building an awareness of injustices caused by the unequal distribution of power. In educational contexts, languages are for one thing powerful in the sense that they are closely linked to students' identities (García & Lin, 2017, pp. 6–7), and at the same time, language plays a crucial role in the accessibility of education as it is the medium of communication. Since the use and desirability of different languages and language varieties in public spheres mirrors power relations (García & Lin, 2017, p. 5), all linguistic practices applied in the classroom are a matter of social justice.

As the need for and the engagement with Social Justice Education is growing, the academic discourse has been discussing "culturally and linguistically sustaining approaches […] in education that integrate the lived realities of multilingual students" (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2023b, p. 1). One of these approaches that has been under study "across a variety of educational contexts" (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2023b, p. 1) in the past few years is translanguaging. By making use of *all* students' full linguistic repertoires for teaching and learning, translanguaging pedagogies aim at destabilizing existing linguistic hierarchies and monolingual practices in the classroom to turn it into an open, critical, and just space for everyone. Teachers may operate as activists for linguistic justice and initiators of processes of transformation in the context of translanguaging pedagogies by including dominant as well as non-dominant language practices – such as minoritized immigrant and Indigenous languages and varieties – in their teaching (García & Li, 2014, p. 68).

When it comes to English Language Teaching (hereafter: ELT), a subject that revolves around a language, linguistic ideologies that shape classroom practices become particularly visible and relevant. Considering the fact that English is a colonial language that is commonly thought of as a global lingua franca and valued highly in various educational contexts worldwide (e.g. Paulsrud et al., 2023, p. 70), this becomes even more significant. Research is assertive of multilingual teaching approaches, but these are not yet widely reflected in practice across various educational contexts ranging from early childhood education up to university (May, 2017; Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2023a). In Germany and Finland, for example, which are going to be the main contexts of interest in this article, prior research has demonstrated the prevalence of monolingual norms and ideologies in educational settings, and linguistically sustaining approaches are rarely implemented in ELT and beyond (e.g. Ennser-Kananen et al., 2021; Montanari & Panagiotopoulou, 2019). This reveals a gap between research and practice: Despite the fact that empirical research has highlighted assets of translanguaging pedagogies in various contexts, pre- and in-service teachers in Germany and Finland seem to have internalized monolingual ideologies and perpetuated them in their practice (e.g. Alisaari et al., 2019; Panagiotopoulou & Knappik, 2022; Pitkänen-Huhta, 2021; Skintey, 2022).

Thus, the crucial role of teachers in linguistically just pedagogies becomes apparent: Apart from policies and curricula, teachers are, in the end, managers and decision-makers when it comes to classroom practices (see Schildhauer, 2023); yet, centering their perspectives and expertise has been identified as a

methodological gap, especially in comparative research contexts (e.g. Louloudi, 2023, pp. 107–130). Teachers' linguistic ideologies and attitudes towards students' multilingualism inform their didactic decisions, which is why their perspectives are crucial to the implementation and development of translanguaging pedagogies. However, research on educators' understandings of multilingualism and multilingual teaching, particularly on social justice-oriented approaches, is scarce, even more so in ELT and in an international comparative context (e.g. Hall, 2020). In addition, an aspect that is significantly understudied is the distinct status of English and teachers' perspectives on translanguaging in ELT in contexts where English is *not* the language of the system, but an additional language, such as in Germany and Finland (Louloudi, 2024).

Drawing on data collected as part of a master's project (Hopfendorf, 2024), this article will focus on some of the results from a comparative interview study centering the perspectives of English teachers in Germany and Finland on translanguaging. First, a brief overview of the underlying theoretical background and current research on translanguaging will be provided, followed by methodological considerations of the research project. Afterwards, some of the results that are representative for each of the observed contexts will be summarized in order to draw a conclusion on in-service teachers' perspectives on translanguaging in ELT and how such findings might lead the way for current and future developments of linguistically just approaches to language teaching.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Defining translanguaging and its role in ELT

Linguistic as well as educational conceptualizations of bi-/multilingualism have been discussed in different fields of research for decades (May, 2017). Definitions of bilingualism vary from narrow understandings such as subtractive or additive bilingualism (García, 2009, pp. 51–52) to broader understandings like recursive and dynamic bilingualism as well as plurilingualism (pp. 52–55). Correspondingly, the way bilingualism is conceptualized in educational settings affects pedagogical approaches to it. As I pointed out elsewhere (Hopfendorf, 2024), the concepts are therefore "ideologically charged" (p. 3) because stances towards different languages and varieties are reflected in those understandings and practices, making them a matter of linguistic and social justice.

Taking the diversity and individuality of linguistic practices into account, García and Lin (2017) suggest a definition of bilingual education as "the use of diverse language practices to educate" (p. 2). Bilingualism is thus understood on broader terms, conceptualizing language(s) and bilingualism "as complex, dynamic, diverse systems" (Hopfendorf, 2024, p. 4). Students' full linguistic repertoires comprising of all their linguistic knowledge and skills without limitations to certain named languages or varieties are thus taken into account. García (2009) also points out that bilingualism is characterized by "all language practices that include features beyond those described by linguists and educators as forming a single autonomous language" (p. 158), so bilingualism is something that *everyone* does in one way or another. Bilingualism and bilingual education therefore concern *all* students' full linguistic repertoires and practices, not just singular aspects of language(s) and certainly not just language-minoritized students. Supporting this view means adopting a critical perspective towards monolingual norms and taking a stance for social justice in doing so (García & Lin, 2017, pp. 2–4).

As 'bilingualism' and 'bilingual education' have become quite ambiguous terms due to divergent definitions, García (2009) puts forth the concept of *translanguaging*. Originally coined by Cen Williams (1996), the term was introduced to characterize a "pedagogical practice where students are asked to alternate languages for the purposes of receptive or productive use" (García & Li, 2014, p. 20). Putting this into practice would mean for the parties involved to not only position themselves towards the use of multiple languages in classroom settings, but also towards linguistic diversity and bilingualism in general. Therefore, the concept of translanguaging entails both a sociolinguistic and a pedagogical dimension:

> "From a sociolinguistic perspective it describes the fluid language practices of bilingual communities. From a pedagogical perspective it describes the process whereby teachers build bridges between these language practices and the language practices desired in formal school settings." (Flores & Schissel, 2014, pp. 461–462)

Regarding the sociolinguistic perspective, the term translanguaging thus reflects the idea that from the point of view of multilingual speakers, languages and linguistic skills are not to be thought of as separate systems but rather as the aforementioned complex, dynamic linguistic repertoire of the individual speaker. In other words, translanguaging refers to the "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds" (García, 2009, p. 45). Any linguistic resources available to the speaker can be adapted to the specific communicative context and can be used

flexibly and creatively, "transcending and disrupting boundaries between named languages" (Hopfendorf, 2024, p. 5).

Regarding the pedagogical perspective, translanguaging is the flexible, purposeful use of multiple languages in the classroom in order to be able to leverage *all* students' entire linguistic repertoires for learning and incorporate them in a holistic translanguaging pedagogy that is targeted at *all* students, meaning those that are language-minoritized just as much as those that are not:

> "Translanguaging in instruction means that you *purposefully and strategically* design your classroom space, your unit and lesson plans, and your pedagogical strategies with the translanguaging corriente and students' general linguistic and language-specific performances at the center." (García et al., 2017, p. 79; original emphasis)

A translanguaging pedagogy is therefore student-centered, tapping into the *translanguaging corriente*, the natural, omnipresent flow of linguistic practices produced by students (García et al., 2017, pp. xi–xii) to make use of it for learning. In doing so, prevalent monolingual, hierarchical linguistic practices are *trans*formed and boundaries are *trans*cended by opening up teaching and learning to diverse language use. Language(s) and *languaging* are thus acknowledged as "situated social practice" (Tian et al., 2020b, p. 9) in a translanguaging pedagogy. The power of languages and language use in shaping identities and mirroring power relations and ideologies is thus taken into account with the aim of making linguistic practices in the classroom inclusive and oriented towards linguistic justice (García & Li, 2014, p. 8; Seltzer, 2023, p. 303).

In ELT, the deliberate use of *all* students' linguistic repertoires for learning has the unique function of contributing to the decolonization of English and ELT: In many European countries, English is taught from a colonial perspective, and its status as a global lingua franca is not yet prominently connected to opportunities of decolonization in and through the language itself. The monolingual bias in ELT is mainly rooted in and perpetuated by three central conceptualizations: "'English' as a monolithic entity, 'native-speakerism' as a pervasive ideology, and 'English-only' as monolingual approaches" (Tian et al., 2020b, p. 8; see also Pimentel Lechthoff's contribution, pp. 42–77 in this issue). Through a translanguaging lens, these orientations are challenged by holding three key assertions against such monolingual biases: First of all, English is to be defined as a diverse linguistic system comprising of a large number of equally valuable varieties – English*es* –, which can dynamically

be used and adapted in communicative contexts to account for languaging as a situated social practice – English*ing* (Tian et al., 2020b, pp. 8–9). Secondly, translanguaging "problematiz[es] the false dichotomy of 'native' vs. 'non-native'" (Tian et al., 2020b, pp. 9–10), building onto the notion of English*es* and the idea that hierarchical views on different varieties of English are socially constructed. Thirdly, by adopting a translanguaging stance (García et al., 2017, p. xii), 'English' as both a language and a subject is reimagined. The ELT classroom is thought of as a linguistically diverse inclusive space where linguistic practices can be negotiated among students and teachers as co-learners (Canagarajah, 2014), which leads to an essential shift in the conceptualization of ELT:

> "The goal of English teaching and learning in the post-multilingual era is no longer acquiring the native-like form of English and becoming another monolingual, but becoming a competent, multilingual language user who are [sic!] aware of and sensitive to the context and could perform fluid, dynamic, and complex language practices with creativity and criticality to achieve their expressive and communicative needs." (Tian et al., 2020b, p. 10)

The idea is to thereby destabilize monolingual 'English only' approaches and language hierarchies and empower (language-)minoritized students in particular, adopting a social justice agenda. Thus, translanguaging can be understood as a holistic, flexible, purposeful pedagogy that aims at decolonizing ELT by taking an affirmative, social justice-oriented stance towards linguistic diversity. It is particularly important to understand this underlying objective of translanguaging in countries and contexts where English is still conceptualized and taught as a 'foreign' language to transform current practices into linguistically just approaches (Louloudi, in print).

2.2 Current research on translanguaging in Germany and Finland

Concerning current research on translanguaging, it can be said that theoretical and empirical studies are predominantly supportive of the concept with only a few exceptions. In the German context, studies in early childhood education and primary schools have revealed positive effects of translanguaging pedagogies on creating opportunities for engagement and joint learning as well as on the self-conception and empowerment of multilingual students (Fürstenau et al., 2020; Panagiotopoulou & Hammel, 2020). Similarly, studies in the Finnish context have shown that translanguaging can empower students and foster joint meaning-making processes (Slotte & Ahlholm, 2017). In addition, incorporating translanguaging elements into multilingual school projects was

found to affect students' motivation positively and cultivate a cooperative learning culture (Lehtonen, 2019).

Despite such reassuring findings, translanguaging practices are only slowly establishing themselves and are still overshadowed by the prevalence of monolingual approaches to teaching both in Germany (Montanari & Panagiotopoulou, 2019, pp. 17–20; see also Pimentel Lechthoff's contribution in this issue) and in Finland (cf. Pitkänen-Huhta, 2021). Not only does this make the gap between theory/research and actual practice visible, but it also demonstrates that a growing awareness of multilingual realities does not guarantee the implementation of translanguaging pedagogies. The fact that multilingualism is (at least marginally) represented in curricula (see Reckermann et al.'s, 2024, analysis of the recent *Bildungsstandards*) and intended to be put into practice by an increasing number of educators does not automatically mean that the approaches are linguistically sustaining and oriented towards social justice; in other words: it needs to be "problematiz[ed] […] that multilingual pedagogies are, by definition, equity-oriented" (Ennser-Kananen et al., 2021, p. 201) because the ways they are put into practice might not reflect such ideologies.[1] This becomes particularly visible when examining teachers' perspectives on translanguaging and related concepts: In the German context, for example, both pre- and in-service teachers' interactions with multilingual students showcase negative, deficit-oriented attitudes towards students' multilingualism and an orientation towards monolingual norms (cf. Panagiotopoulou & Knappik, 2022; Skintey, 2022). Exploring in-service teachers' views on multilingualism in contexts of language education in Finland, Pitkänen-Huhta (2021) finds "the most prominent way of constructing multilingualism [to be] that of a problem" (p. 239), evoking insecurities as to how to cater to multilingual students' needs and focus on the target language(s). In another study, Finnish teachers' perspectives on linguistic diversity are contradictory as they deem it relevant to account for students' multilingualism on the one hand but display negative, problem-oriented beliefs when it comes to the implementation of multilingual approaches on the other hand (cf. Alisaari et al., 2019).

[1] A similar observation like Ennser-Kananen et al.'s (2021) in the Finnish context has been made in the German context, where Wilken (2021) shows that ingrained norms as well as English teachers' habitus are a crucial part of the problem; while a change in curricula might be powerful, curricular changes alone do not guarantee a change in practice.

This study aims at exploring German and Finnish teachers' perspectives on translanguaging further, specifically in the ELT context, in order to build on what has been researched before and look into implications for Social Justice Education from an international perspective. In the following section, methodological aspects of this endeavor will be outlined.

3 Methodology

Building onto the theoretical background and status quo of research on linguistically sustaining approaches to education, this study aims at exploring in-service teachers' perspectives on translanguaging in the ELT classroom by pursuing the following research questions:

I. How do English teachers define multilingualism and/or translanguaging in their own words?

II. What are their experiences with and beliefs about the implementation of translanguaging in everyday teaching?

III. How do they view the role of multilingual teaching approaches like translanguaging in their teaching and, in hindsight, in their teacher training?

By seeking answers to these research questions, the underlying aim is to find out how teachers' perspectives on translanguaging connect to social justice and to draw conclusions on how they might shape current and future ways of educating. The intention is to thus contribute to filling a research gap that has been identified by Ennser-Kananen et al. (2021): "In Finland, studies with an explicit social justice framework are scarce, particularly in the field of language education. Teaching and learning English does not have a tradition of being viewed as a sociopolitically sensitive endeavor" (p. 202).

While this refers to the Finnish context, the same goes for other national contexts and even more so for international comparative research in the field. Therefore, to answer the research questions, the study presented in this paper was conducted as a comparative case study (cf. Flick, 2018; Yin, 2014) consisting of expert interviews (cf. Yin, 2014) with in-service teachers of English at comprehensive schools in Germany and Finland. These two countries have been selected for several reasons: Other than aspects of practicability, the German educational context is particularly interesting for a study on translanguaging because while the German society is culturally and linguistically diverse in many regards, the school system is very selective, and equity-

oriented approaches to (language) teaching are only marginally represented in curricula and policies. Finland, by contrast, has the reputation of having quite a progressive school system with good academic achievements and advanced approaches – at least in the international discourse (cf. Kumpulainen & Sefton-Green, 2020). From the Finnish perspective, researchers have been raising criticism of the alleged progressiveness of their educational system (cf. Ennser-Kananen et al., 2023; other contributions in Thrupp et al., 2023).

For those reasons, the data for this study was collected in the form of comparative case studies to be able to draw comparisons between teachers' perspectives on translanguaging in Germany and in Finland. When it comes to ELT and the role of translanguaging in the respective context, the two are well-suited for comparison because their curricula are competence-based and English is a second language that starts being taught early at schools in both contexts. Both systems and curricula conceptualize and approach English as an additional – even 'foreign' – language that is not the language of the system or potentially treated as not a direct part of students' lived realities in other ways, but rather a separate linguistic entity.

As for the participants of this comparative case studies three teachers of English at a German comprehensive school (grades 5–13) in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia were interviewed in June and July 2023. Then, three teachers of English at two different Finnish comprehensive schools (grades 1–9) in the province of Pohjois-Pohjanmaa were interviewed in November and December 2023 (cf. Table 1).

Table 1: Overview of the interviewees and interviews of both case studies (own research)

Interviewee	*Interviewee's subjects*	*Date of the interview*	*Duration*
Case Study I: Interviews conducted in Germany			
Tina	English, German	14.06.2023	00:25:21
Lisa	English, German, Arts	20.06.2023	00:25:16
David	English, Maths	07.07.2023	00:32:33
Case Study II: Interviews conducted in Finland			
Pekka	English, German, Swedish	09.11.2023	00:36:53
Veera	English, German, Spanish	24.11.2023	00:34:05
Sanna	English, Swedish	05.12.2023	00:16:31

The comparative case study is thus comprised of two cases made up of three semi-structured ethnographic expert interviews each, aiming at exploring in-service teachers' perspectives and centering their voices. Teachers in this study are understood as experts because of their professional experience and their explicit and implicit knowledge in the field of education (Bogner et al., 2009). In addition, their perspectives are particularly valuable as they play a crucial role in transforming education (García & Lin, 2017, p. 12).

Concerning the analysis of the generated set of data, all interviews were transcribed shortly after having been conducted, and then analyzed by means of Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) (Flick, 2018; Mayring & Fenzl, 2019) with a coding frame (cf. Table 2). The coding process was conducted repeatedly and the categories were revised several times in close collaboration with fellow students and my supervisor.

Table 2: Summary of the coding frame for both case studies (own research)

Main Code	*Categories: Case Study I (Germany)*	*Categories: Case Study II (Finland)*
Theme I: Definition of multilingualism and/or translanguaging	• Multilingualism as the command of several languages • Translanguaging in the classroom • Translanguaging as a pedagogy	• Translanguaging as internal multilingualism • Multilingualism as determined by external factors
Theme II: Implementation of translanguaging in the classroom	• Connecting to students' identities through translanguaging • Building roles in the classroom through translanguaging • Translanguaging as multilingual methods and materials	• Translanguaging as mediation • Translanguaging as part of the curriculum • Translanguaging as a challenge • Translanguaging as a chance
Theme III: Translanguaging in teacher education	• Shortcomings of university studies regarding translanguaging • Teacher training (Referendariat): one-language policy	• Translanguaging coming short in teacher education • Relevance of translanguaging in teacher education

Main Code	*Categories: Case Study I (Germany)*	*Categories: Case Study II (Finland)*
	• Translanguaging in one's own research and practice • Translanguaging at different types of schools	
Theme IV: Language ideologies, attitudes, and social justice	• Personal attitudes towards translanguaging • Language ideologies, attitudes, and social justice • Translanguaging clashing with 'English-only'/focus on target language approach • Representation of a variety of languages in the classroom through translanguaging	• Teachers' critical role in translanguaging • Translanguaging for social justice • Translanguaging as a hindrance to ELT • Translanguaging as a way of navigating through a globalized world

4 Results

4.1 Summary of the Case Studies

Four overarching themes have been identified in both of the case studies:

Theme I: Definition of multilingualism and/or translanguaging

Theme II: Implementation of translanguaging in the classroom

Theme III: Translanguaging in teacher education

Theme IV: Language ideologies, attitudes, and social justice

The categories within these themes, however, are distinct for each of the case studies and center the individual aspects raised by the participants.

As for the case study carried out in Germany, the data reveals three dimensions of multilingualism/translanguaging identified by the interviewees (theme I): Firstly, multilingualism is defined as the command of several languages as seen from an introspective point of view; secondly, the participants characterize multilingualism by how it is represented in the classroom; and

finally, they consider translanguaging as a pedagogy. Referring to the implementation of translanguaging in the classroom (theme II), the German teachers take two different levels into account: “The impact of translanguaging on identities, relationships and roles in the classroom as well as multilingual methods and materials that they understand as translanguaging” (Hopfendorf, 2024, p. 28). Recalling their experience with multilingualism and/or translanguaging in teacher education, the participants point out shortcomings of their studies and their practical training with regard to approaches to linguistic diversity and emphasize that monolingual policies were advocated in their training. Finally, concerning language ideologies, teachers’ attitudes and their connection to matters of social justice (theme IV), the interviewees have been found to express interest in multilingualism and an awareness of students’ multilingual realities to varying extents. On the one hand, they see translanguaging as an opportunity to promote linguistic diversity and the representation of a variety of languages in the classroom. Moreover, they think of it as an impediment to the ‘English-only’ approach and the focus on English as the target language.

In the case study in Finland, the participants define multilingualism/translanguaging on two different levels (theme I): Firstly, they understand it as internal multilingualism seen from the perspective of the individual speaker; secondly, they think of multilingualism as a category that is determined by external factors. When it comes to the implementation of translanguaging in the classroom (theme II), the interviewees interpret the concept mainly as types of mediation and construct a translanguaging pedagogy as both a challenge and a chance for teaching and learning. In addition, curricular aspects are taken into account. Concerning teacher education (theme III), the participants also expose shortcomings of Finnish teacher education programs regarding multilingualism and multilingual education in the theoretical and practical parts of their studies. Moreover, they evaluate the relevance of translanguaging in teacher education and relate it to their specific contexts. As for language ideologies, attitudes, and social justice (theme IV), the interviewees take the critical role of teachers in a translanguaging pedagogy into account and point out ways in which translanguaging can promote linguistic equity, accessibility and inclusion and how it might contribute to a shift of attitudes towards multilingualism. Besides, they highlight the potential of translanguaging for navigating through a globalized world, but they also consider it a hindrance to ELT and the focus on English as a target language.

4.2 Key results of the case study in Germany

4.2.1 Multilingualism as fluency/accuracy in different languages

Teachers' understanding of multilingualism shapes their perception of the potential of translanguaging for ELT. This is why analyzing their definition of the concept can contribute to a better comprehension of their attitudes. For example, one of the German interviewees describes multilingualism as fluency or accuracy in different languages:

> *Maybe you could say that someone is already multilingual if he or she is able to understand the language or communicates […] maybe in parts. […] But to be really multilingual, I would expect someone to be fluent in, or nearly fluent, in more than one language.* (Lisa, interview: 20.06.2023)

Lisa does not seem to be sure whether someone who does not speak a language 'fluently' can be considered multilingual. This seems to reflect a conceptualization of languages as separate, self-contained entities: Multilingual repertoires are not considered 'complete' unless several languages are spoken fluently and without errors. Lisa also speaks of 'passive bilingualism', meaning the ability to understand another language but not being able to speak it fluently. Such understandings resonate with popular notions of a native-speaker ideology in which languaging and multilingualism are not thought of as situated social practice (Tian et al., 2020b, p. 9) and a dynamic, emerging linguistic repertoire but rather as monolithic entities (p. 8). The determining factors of fluency and accuracy indicate an outside perspective on the students' linguistic knowledge and skills. The way in which Lisa phrases her statement also indicates, however, that she is unsure about the definition of multilingualism and is in the process of negotiating potentially contradictory concepts. This understanding may, in turn, reflect back on how (language) teaching is approached.

With regard to her own multilingualism, Lisa also describes herself as a 'passive bilingual' because she is not able to speak Italian, her second family language, fluently. Later in the interview, however, she ponders on whether she might not be multilingual because she speaks German and English fluently and uses both of those languages in teaching on an everyday basis. This critical reflection on her own multilingualism as well as on her initial understanding of the concept shows that she is in the process of (re-)negotiating her views. While the points she raises are in line with common perceptions of multilingualism – such as speaking languages on a 'native-like' level –, putting it into words seems to encourage a reflection process.

4.2.2 Translanguaging as multilingual methods and materials

The most prominent way in which the German participants think of translanguaging as a classroom practice is in the form of multilingual methods and materials:

> *You have to organize a lot. So, when I create my own task, I think a lot about the wording. Which words do I use? Do I need annotations in tasks or in texts? Um, I usually highlight important keywords and tasks.* (Tina, interview: 14.06.2023)

> *[Translanguaging] could be a way of scaffolding if you like. […] There's something called "sprachsensibler Unterricht" in German, where you really have to not only teach content, but make sure that your students also develop their knowledge of the German language further.* (Lisa, interview: 20.06.2023)

It becomes apparent that Tina and Lisa acknowledge the need for education to account for students' multilingualism, and one way they can think of translanguaging being implemented is by means of language-sensitive material design, making materials in the main language of teaching more accessible. From the quotes above, the focus seems to be put on the German or English language as the main target language of the respective classroom and translanguaging seems to be understood as a *"scaffolding"* strategy that is used as a means to promote the first. One could argue that such a perspective revolves around a deficit-oriented understanding of multilingualism: Language-sensitivity in this case rather means using other languages to foster the main target language rather than making use of students' linguistic repertoires to include and foster their identities in the classroom. This negotiates linguistic hierarchies in educational settings and shows how the interviewees make sense of translanguaging in a system that perpetuates monolingual ideologies by default.

4.2.3 Connecting to students' identities through translanguaging

Concerning the implementation of translanguaging and the role it plays in her teaching, Tina argues that a major aspect for her is to connect to students' identities by

> *showing respect and appreciation for what's a part of my students, and language is a part of them.* (Tina, interview: 14.06.2023)

She thus acknowledges the impact of language(s) on shaping identities and points out the potential of translanguaging to make students feel seen and

show them that this aspect of their identity is appreciated at school. In addition, she links this to matters of representation in the classroom:

> *It could be quite nice for students to see their language, their first language, in their classroom. I mean, it's just a simple gesture, but it could show them, "Hey, my language has a place here, too."* (Tina, interview: 14.06.2023)

Making sure that linguistic diversity and all her students' languages are represented in the classroom is a way for Tina to empower especially those students that are (language-)minoritized and show them that their languages and identities are valued. Even though the connection is not made explicit, she thus also acknowledges linguistic hierarchies and makes clear that she intends to embrace *all* her students' languages and include them in her teaching, not just those identified as 'target languages' in contexts of basic education. In doing so, Tina is taking a translanguaging stance (cf. García et al., 2017, p. xii) which conveys her awareness of linguistic inequality and her intention to make students feel they are heard and valued by including all their languages in her teaching.

4.3 Key results of the case study in Finland

4.3.1 Multilingualism as determined by external factors

Other than internal perspectives on multilingualism, a decisive aspect by which the interviewees in Finland define multilingualism and determine whether or not they would consider a setting multilingual is that of external factors. For example, they mention factors such as linguistic demography and (assumed) immigrant backgrounds of students and people in the area to explain why they would (not) describe the school they work at as multilingual:

> *It's kind of a homogenic [sic!] group of students. We don't have that many who have, like, an immigrant background or something like that. […] Of course […] there are students who speak other languages too, in addition to Finnish or English and Swedish. But, um, it's quite rare.* (Sanna, interview: 05.12.2023)

Judging by the number of students who she knows speak other languages than the country's official languages (Finnish and Swedish) and a (prestigious) additional language (English), Sanna argues she would not consider the school she works at a multilingual setting. Even though students may speak two or all three of these languages, she does not classify them as multilingual and, therefore, seems to connect the concept not only to the number of languages a person can speak but also to further factors like an immigrant background and/or being able to speak a 'foreign' minority language. Sanna's argument

can be characterized as a form of what Pitkänen-Huhta (2021) calls *elite multilingualism*: English is valued more highly in comparison to other ‘foreign’ languages and considered so ‘normal’ that Sanna would not even regard English-speaking students as multilingual. ‘Other’ languages are not seen as a part of the *“homogenic group”*, but rather as separate linguistic entities that are *“quite rare”* and therefore not specifically fostered in the educational setting.

While Sanna mentions local demography as a reason not to describe her school as a multilingual setting, another interviewee argues the opposite:

> *[This] is definitely a multilingual area because there are other languages. We have, for example, a Swedish private school here in [the city]. And of course, because of the international companies […]. There’s also the International School here […]. I think we don’t have many immigrants here [in the area of our school], but still the people are, or the pupils can speak a lot of languages.* (Pekka, interview: 09.11.2023)

Both Sanna and Pekka evaluate the linguistic configuration and setting of their respective school based on demographic aspects and local geographies (cf. Bernelius et al., 2021). Even more strongly than Sanna, Pekka draws on his perception of the city, the school’s neighborhood, and the school itself, taking bilingual institutions in the city as well as demographic aspects in and around the school into consideration. Those factors show that the perceived interdependence of the school and the neighborhood has a strong impact on how teachers view their students’ multilingualism and, consequently, how relevant they deem it for their teaching practice. In the Finnish context, the “local geographies of education” (Bernelius et al., 2021, p. 155) thus inform teacher’s views strongly.

4.3.2 Translanguaging as a challenge: linguistic configuration of the class

Building on the understanding that multilingualism is partly determined by external factors such as linguistic demography, the Finnish interviewees identify the linguistic configuration of the class as a challenge for translanguaging in terms of who and how many people in class speak the same language(s):

> *If there are only like one or maximum of two students who are bilingual, for example, I don’t know how I could utilize that for my work. […] It would be easier if it’s a language I know too.* (Sanna, interview: 05.12.2023)

> *I feel, if I think about the usual profile of students, of multilingual students, who are at our schools – that maybe they don’t speak the same languages that I do,*

> *so I don't know from a teacher's perspective how I will be able to support that. […] if there's only this one kid speaking that language, there's no other speaker of that language in the classroom, then I don't know how you would be able to use that and to help.* (Veera, interview: 24.11.2023)

This reveals that translanguaging is primarily thought of as a potential support measure or scaffold for language-minoritized students, not so much for students who have always been speaking Finnish primarily. The linguistic configuration of the class in terms of what kinds of languages are spoken by students, by how many of them, or by the teacher is seen as a challenging factor. This also connects to the idea of linguistic expert knowledge and the prevalent conceptualization of the teacher as the 'expert': The teachers feel they would have to know the same languages as their students to be able to monitor their learning or they would need several students to speak the same language(s) other than the majority language in order to be able to use students' entire linguistic repertoires as a resource for learning. The teachers thus express concerns that are prominent in most critical, social justice-oriented approaches to education: the fear of losing control, which is reflected in other studies as well (e.g. Alisaari et al., 2019; Tian et al., 2020a). This fear might be rooted in the common perception that teachers are knowledge-keepers (see Louloudi, 2023, p. 179), which is a role that they are called to abandon in pedagogies like translanguaging. It seems the interviewees are unsure about positioning themselves as co-learners and seeing it as a chance for learning that "their students' linguistic repertoires never completely match their own or each other's" (García & Li, 2014, p. 71). Rather than seeing the learning opportunities of translanguaging "for deep cognitive engagement and for development and expansion of new language practices" (García & Li, 2014, p. 71), teachers seem to be influenced strongly by ideologies that are deeply rooted in the system (see also Pimentel Lechthoff's contribution in this issue). The widespread idea of the teacher as the all-knowing authority seems to have a negative effect on teachers' self-perception in pedagogies like translanguaging that aim at disrupting and transforming established practices.

4.3.3 Promoting linguistic equity through translanguaging

Despite concerns about how to implement a translanguaging pedagogy and hesitancy to make the necessary shifts, Veera thinks of translanguaging as a way to promote linguistic equity inside and outside of the classroom. She thus acknowledges the transformative potential of the concept in changing attitudes and promoting social justice:

> *I like the diversity of [translanguaging]. Especially to see and to live the idea that all the languages are, um, have the same prestige or are equal. […] I really hope that by just living it, you know, that people's attitudes might change […] if they're aware that the people they work with, that they go to school with, do speak different languages. Maybe […] then you notice, "oh, that's a valid language".* (Veera, interview: 24.11.2023)

Veera thus recognizes translanguaging as a holistic pedagogy, 'living the idea' of linguistic equity and destabilizing prevalent language hierarchies in how teaching and learning are conducted. Later in the interview, she emphasizes that schools play an essential role in promoting linguistic equity and that culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogies like translanguaging might lead the way for inclusion and transformation. She believes this process can be initiated by actively making linguistic diversity an integral part of everyday life at school, thus allowing students to connect to it on a personal level and eventually changing common perceptions of multilingualism in- and outside of school.

4.4 Comparison of the case studies

A comparison of the results of the two case studies in Germany and Finland reveals intra- and inter-case similarities and differences: Central aspects raised in the German study are, for example, the potential effects and challenges of translanguaging in classroom settings that the teachers consider highly multilingual, especially with regard to language-minoritized students. In the Finnish context, the participants focus rather on the practical implications and challenges of translanguaging from the teachers' perspective in a setting where they do not see many minority languages represented.

In both case studies, the interviewees take inside as well as outside perspectives on multilingualism into consideration to define the concept. Five out of six participants define multilingualism primarily as a sociolinguistic phenomenon rather than a pedagogy, characterizing it by the command of several languages and bringing up aspects such as native-like fluency in different languages (German context) or multilingual communicative skills and everyday practices (Finnish context). The linguistic configuration and nationalities of students in the classroom are connected to multilingualism as well, more so with a focus on local geographies (cf. Bernelius et al., 2021) in the Finnish context. Overall, the participants tend to understand languages as separate entities and hierarchize them contextually – ranking official national languages

highly, followed by other prestigious, mostly European languages, then further minority languages such as Indigenous and immigrant languages (cf. Paulsrud et al., 2023).

Concerning the implementation of a translanguaging pedagogy, the participants identify various challenges and the “most prominent way of constructing multilingualism was that of a problem” (Pitkänen-Huhta, 2021, p. 239). While the German teachers do consider benefits of translanguaging for multilingual students such as the empowerment and appreciation of students’ linguistic skills and identities, they also identify challenges “like a lack of time, restrictions of the curriculum, a lack of training and knowledge, and difficulties to bring many different languages together” (Hopfendorf, 2024, p. 65). The interviewees in Finland also mention various challenges with regard to the practicability of translanguaging but they do not consider their curriculum or lack of time particularly restrictive. Generally, both case studies reveal an understanding of translanguaging as singular methods and strategies rather than a holistic pedagogy. Even though the participants express an openness to their students’ multilingualism, they are hesitant when it comes to the implementation of translanguaging as a classroom practice and can mostly imagine it merely as a scaffold.

All participants point out shortcomings of their studies and practical teacher training with regard to multilingualism and multilingual teaching approaches. In both contexts, the interviewees report a focus on English as the target language in ELT teacher training, particularly in the German context, where the ‘English-only’ approach was advocated in the practical *Referendariat*.

As for the underlying language ideologies, it thus becomes clear that most of the participants have adopted the orientation towards English as the target language. They deem certain types of languages more relevant for their respective context than others, both with regard to the multilingual realities of their students and to the languages desired in formal school settings, which mirrors prevalent contextual linguistic hierarchies (cf. Paulsrud et al., 2023). The transformative potential of translanguaging for linguistic and social justice is not taken into consideration as strongly as practical implications for teaching. To varying extents, the interviewees acknowledge language minoritization as a social justice issue and express interest in linguistically sustaining pedagogies like translanguaging; but all in all, the two case studies reveal similarly prevalent monolingual ideologies and argumentations in the observed contexts in Germany and Finland, which I had initially expected differently.

5 Conclusion and outlook

Key takeaways from this comparative case study include the result that monolingual ideologies, an orientation towards English as the target language, and contextual language hierarchies prevail among English teachers in the observed contexts in Germany and Finland. As I summed up in my thesis:

> "[Teachers] often see the incorporation of multiple languages as a challenge for the ELT classroom for different reasons, but many of them seem particularly skeptical to the use of languages they are least familiar with, which are often those that are hierarchically low. For example, European 'global languages' like English or Spanish are frequently connotated positively while non-European languages are, regardless of their global significance, connotated negatively and 'foreign'. In each of the two case studies, one of the participants argued, however, that these circumstances might change in the future due to an increasingly pluralistic society, which they think should be seen as a chance for teaching and learning despite the challenges that they have identified." (Hopfendorf, 2024, p. 71)

The teachers' argumentations suggest that their ideologies and attitudes are strongly influenced by systemic structures that perpetuate monolingual ideologies, such as educational policies and curricula, but also teacher training programs and social structures beyond the educational sector. These results are mostly in line with previous research on linguistic ideologies and teachers' perspectives on multilingualism and multilingual pedagogies in the German context (cf. e.g. Montanari & Panagiotopoulou, 2019; Panagiotopoulou & Knappik, 2022; Skintey, 2022) as well as the Finnish context (cf. e.g. Alisaari et al., 2019; Ennser-Kananen et al., 2021; Pitkänen-Huhta, 2021).

Therefore, one of the conclusions is that systemic changes are needed to initiate a shift towards linguistically sustaining pedagogies with a specific orientation towards social justice. Since the task of this profound shift "cannot be left to the responsibility and goodwill of individual teachers" (Ennser-Kananen et al., 2021, p. 212), systemic aspects like teacher education programs, policies, curricula and materials need to be targeted to support teachers in the endeavor of transforming education towards social justice. In other words: "If micro-level practices are not supported by macro-level organisation, it is difficult to create collaboration and dialogue between researchers, policymakers and practitioners" (Pitkänen-Huhta, 2021, p. 242).

Still, the need for individual teachers to reflect on their stances and teaching practices becomes clear as well. Critical (self-)reflection is essential to recognizing, deconstructing and changing potential biases and practices in order to decolonize education, making it inclusive and just, and adapting it to social changes and the lived realities of students.

Thus, comparative case studies like this one also point towards the benefits of local, national and international peer-to-peer collaboration as well as teacher-researcher collaboration in education because it "may help further the aims of translanguaging pedagogies through mutual support in addressing everyday issues, sharing information on best practice and the expertise of educators and their knowledge of their context" (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2023b, p. 2).

A professional and personal exchange among teachers and researchers can thus contribute to the shifts that are necessary to transform practices, ideologies and attitudes inside the classroom but also beyond the classroom level. This can foster a critical praxis of constant reflection, feedback and transformation by connecting the levels of teaching, research and activism for social justice. In the end, teachers have the power to make use of the transformative potential of approaches like translanguaging in order to reimagine school as a just learning space for *everyone* by negotiating practices among researchers, teacher educators, teachers and students. It starts with the reassurance that everyone's voice should be heard and valued equally:

Your language has a place here, too.

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Monolingual Ideologies vs. Multilingual Realities

Institutional Structures and the Linguistic Inclusion of Recently Immigrated Students in the German ELT Classroom

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Abstract: Despite the strive for social justice for and inclusion of recently immigrated students (RIS), the German school system (GSS) is deeply rooted in a monolingual ideology that hinders RIS' access to equal education. Additionally, monolingual English teaching practices, often paired with the occasional use of German in specific situations, still dominate in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms, thus placing RIS who cannot speak either language at a disadvantageous position. The questions of what attitudes ELT teachers articulate towards RIS' linguistic inclusion, how they assess the role of institutional structures and what would help them to make their classroom more inclusive for RIS is the focus of the research. The core of the study's data consists of interviews that were conducted with three ELT teachers and evaluated using qualitative content analysis. This article uncovers that the teachers recognize the potential and importance of RIS' linguistic backgrounds and are sensitive to the needs of RIS. Still, they are not able to accommodate them within their lessons due to the structures of the GSS and teacher education. The article concludes by presenting measures for practices and policies in language education based on the interviewees' statements that would improve the linguistic inclusion and access to educational opportunities of the increasing body of RIS, ultimately contributing to social justice at German schools.

Keywords: ELT classroom; linguistic diversity; immigration; social justice in education

1 Introduction

> *As a teacher, you often have very little guidance. Often, they say: "here you go and deal with it". And then you have to somehow figure out what's the best way to do it. And then it's often very difficult to teach in general [laughs]. And that [including newly immigrated pupils] is the first thing that falls away.* (Interviewee 2, ELT teacher at a Gesamtschule in Germany; translation L.P.L.)[1]

Globalization, immigration, and inclusion are keywords that have shaped the educational discourse for several years, and how to integrate students' diverse linguistic repertoires is increasingly forming an integral part of disciplines

[1] The original reads as follows: "Man hat oftmals als Lehrkraft sehr wenig Anleitung. Also das heißt dann immer ganz oft: 'bitte schön und deal with it'. Und dann muss man irgendwie herausfinden, ja, wie kriegt man das jetzt irgendwie am besten hin. Und es ist halt dann oftmals sehr schwer generell irgendwie [lacht] Unterricht zu machen. Und das [Inkludieren neu zugewanderter Schüler*innen] ist so das Erste, was wegfällt."

related to teaching and learning (Jakisch, 2015, p. 15). The concern about integrating students' linguistic repertoires in various educational systems indicates that education today has to be comprehended in dimensions beyond national borders, as schools nowadays are loci for linguistic and cultural diversity (Mattig et al., 2018, p. 7). While students' multifaceted linguistic repertoires must be understood as a potential and their holistic use should be linked to a contribution to greater educational equity and social justice (Pennycook, 2021, p. 53), this linguistic diversity is still treated as a core challenge for teachers and the German school system (Meisnitzer & Wocker, 2017, p. 26).

In Germany, linguistic and cultural diversity are stable phenomena as transnational mobility and immigration are facilitated by globalization and the continuous enlargement of the European Union (Zacharaki, 2015, p. 15). In recent years, linguistic and cultural diversity have been "massively reinforced by recent immigration movements" (Reimann, 2016, p. 59) and rising numbers of immigrants who leave their home countries due to political, social, or economic hardship (Niederhaus & Schmidt, 2016, p. 263). As the immigrant population is significantly younger on average, it is unsurprising that German schools must accommodate recently immigrated students (RIS) with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Gogolin, 2016, p. 61).

Increasing ethnic and linguistic diversity has become a largely acknowledged reality as it is not uncommon for students at German schools to have different prior and family language (FL) skills, for example, in the form of a different FL, which influences teaching, learning, and school life (Jakisch, 2015, p. 47). Considering this reality, schools need to acknowledge and include the pupils' FL and culture of origin to influence their self-concept positively, counter negative stereotypes, and revalue performance expectations that do not consider their linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, recognizing that students' linguistic repertoires can be valuable assets for their personal and academic lives seems especially important to include the students' multifaceted identities in an increasingly multicultural world. Therefore, teachers and schools need to develop and implement inclusive approaches that support, recognize and promote students' holistic linguistic identities at schools and address and deconstruct linguistic inequities to create equitable opportunities for all students (Göbel, 2018, p. 31).

While educational institutions should perceive linguistic diversity as a resource and opportunity, it is often viewed from a deficit-oriented perspective and described as a 'problem' in public and educational discourse in Germany

(Fürstenau, 2011, p. 33). Regarding the response to a linguistically and culturally diverse student body, Germany stands out negatively in international comparisons (Löser, 2011, p. 203), which shows the German School System's (GSS) lack of recognition and systematic inclusion of the linguistic repertoires of students with immigration backgrounds[2] and of those who have recently immigrated[3] (Mattig et al., 2018, p. 13). Students' diverse linguistic identities often seem to be overshadowed by a monolingual ideology deeply rooted in the GSS that is based on the normative premise that being a monolingual German speaker represents the ideal and 'normal' starting point at German schools (Fürstenau & Gomolla, 2011, p. 15). The inconsideration of the needs of linguistically diverse students, paired with a strive for quick assimilation to socially dominant linguistic norms, has significant consequences for RIS, as their German proficiency is not compatible with the requirements and structures of the GSS. Therefore, support efforts provided for RIS are primarily aimed at making them fit into the monolingual classroom to conduct lessons as smoothly as possible (Niedrig, 2011, p. 94). Thus, while securing the schooling of RIS, educational programs designed to include them often create structural barriers and forms of institutionalized discrimination that prevent students from profiting from their linguistic knowledge and foster a school climate where RIS are frequently stigmatized, disadvantaged, and excluded (Panagiotopoulou & Knappik, 2022, p. 2).

To counter this "systematic education inequality" (Bonnet & Siemund, 2018, p. 13), educators and researchers have continuously worked on developing

[2] According to the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in Germany, a student has an immigration background if one of the following criteria is met: no German nationality; non-German country of birth; non-German lingua franca in the family or home environment (KMK, 2021, p. 32). The definition of a student with an immigration background shows that not only the place of birth but also the family immigration history is relevant for determining students' immigration background.

[3] According to the Ministry of School and Education in North Rhein-Westphalia (MSB NRW, 2018), a student is considered to be recently immigrated if one of the following criteria is met: a student who is attending a German school for the first time and does not yet have sufficient knowledge of German to follow regular lessons; a student who when changing school level (from primary to lower secondary level or from lower secondary level to upper secondary level) or due to their short stay at their previous school has not yet been able to acquire the necessary German language skills.

inclusive approaches to teaching, trying to raise awareness for linguistic diversity as a relevant aspect of school life, and slowly opening the GSS to multilingual approaches that give all pupils the best possible chance of development and education (Krumm, 2016, p. 49). While the awareness for including students' linguistic diversity seems to establish itself in research and practice regarding subjects taught in German, there is less attention given to how RIS' linguistic repertoires are being considered in the English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom. However, similarly to other classrooms, "[f]oreign language classrooms are increasingly populated by students with diverse language backgrounds" (Bonnet & Siemund, 2018, p. 2), which is why it is also crucial for ELT teachers to be aware that these diverse language backgrounds also influence their students' English language acquisition process and identity development in and outside of the classroom.

Language choice in the ELT classroom has been a major theoretical and practical issue that for "decades has dominated SLA [second language acquisition] research and L2 pedagogy" (Martinez Agudo, 2017, p. 76). While monolingual approaches have been an integral part of the "perceived didactical correctness for so many years and in so many countries" (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009, p. 13), they are being challenged by a more moderate approach towards monolingual ELT teaching in Germany (Martinez Agudo, 2017, p. 76). While "multilingualism as an educational policy is a recent phenomenon" (Byram, 2018, p. 38), it established itself as a central field of discussion in contemporary foreign language teaching (Reimann, 2016, p. 58). Researchers promoting multilingual approaches argue that the "dominant political and ideological pressures to keep 'languages' pure and separate" (García & Wei, 2014, p. 58) reinforce unequal power relationships in language classrooms. With their pedagogical concepts, researchers try to "challenge monolingual ideologies in teaching and learning" (Melo-Pfeifer, 2018, p. 199) and change "social consciousness and [reinforce] positive attitudes towards linguistic and cultural diversity" (Melo-Pfeifer, 2018, p. 199). The fact that language education tends to "strictly separate languages, [but] students and teachers constantly violate this principle" (García & Wei, 2014, p. 52) points to the naturalness of the use of multiple languages, especially in linguistically diverse contexts. As EFL classrooms in Germany accommodate students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, it seems adequate for teachers and teacher trainees to implement multilingual practices in their work. Especially the EFL classroom seems to be the perfect field for considering other languages and to offer opportunities for students to use linguistic resources critically, flexibly, functionally, and purposefully (Elsner & Lohe, 2021, p. 5).

Furthermore, language-sensitive EFL classrooms that consider students' language backgrounds provide a more inviting environment for those who "tend to remain silent and feel isolated in mainstream contexts" (Yoon & Kim, 2012, p. 157).

Regardless of the many benefits of including the diverse linguistic repertoires of students and increasing interest regarding multilingualism and how to incorporate multilingual ELT practices in daily teaching, the focus of the discussion surrounding language choice in ELT classrooms in Germany seems to be when, how, and to what degree the use of German is accepted as an integral part of language teaching and learning (MSB NRW, 2014, p. 50). Official statements (i.e. the *Kernlehrplan*) addressing educators underline that the practice of functional monolingualism should be applied, which means that teachers should conduct their English lessons in the target language but can make use of the FL (understood as German) in specific situations, following the principle of using as much English as possible and as much German as necessary (MSB NRW, 2012, p. 7).[4] Though offering a more moderate approach to monolingualism, such statements only explicitly consider the occasional use of German as an accepted part of ELF teaching and learning, following the principle of functional monolingualism (MSB NRW, 2012, p. 7).[5]

Despite the fact that creating input that the students can understand is an "essential ingredient for second language acquisition" (Nava & Pedrazzini, 2018, p. 31; see also Krashen, 1982, p. 62) and language researchers argue that the family language "is the greatest pedagogical resource that learners bring to foreign language classes, as it lays the foundations for all other languages we might want to learn" (Butzkamm, 2015), the given conditions make it difficult for teachers to engage in multilingual ELT practices that could help counter the inequalities and power relations that influence the inclusion of RIS in the EFL classroom. Therefore, it is not surprising that while multilingualism has been widely promoted in academic discourse, the implementation of such ap-

[4] The original reads as follows: "So viel Englisch wie möglich, so viel Deutsch wie nötig" (MSB NRW, 2012, p. 7).

[5] Functional monolingualism means that the teacher conducts lessons in the target language but resorts to the German to clarify individual technical problems (such as grammatical phenomena) and, in exceptional cases, with a clear distinction from the English lessons usually conducted in the target language (QUA-LiS NRW).

proaches remains scarce, and monolinguistic approaches in the EFL classroom and teacher training still prevail. Therefore, using other languages besides English in the ELT classroom still "represents a common but undesirable practice" (Martinez Agudo, 2017, p. 75).

When looking closely at the discussions surrounding the use of students' FL(s) in ELT classrooms within the German school context, there is little discussion about whether other languages besides English and German should be considered. The FL, on which most discussions center, is the dominant national language in which all students should be fluent. But what about those students who recently immigrated to Germany and whose FL is neither German nor English? What structures does the GSS provide to include those students so that they can participate and learn in the ELT classroom as well as their German-speaking peers?[6] How does teacher education prepare ELT teachers to include linguistically diverse students in their ELT classrooms? What do ELT teachers think about the demanding task of teaching increasingly linguistically diverse students and creating a language learning environment "within four walls and against the clock of perpetually inadequate numbers of instructional contact hours" (Levine, 2011, p. 4) that considers their specific linguistic needs?

When looking at ELT classrooms in Germany, there seems to be a double monolingual ideology stressing "target language use in the FL classroom, occasionally complemented by using the national majority language in certain situations" (Bonnet & Siemund, 2018, p. 13). However, regarding the current trend of demographic change and its consequences for school life, it seems crucial for the GSS and ELT teachers to be prepared to include linguistically diverse students who have recently immigrated to Germany and whose FL is neither German nor English. Investigating and understanding the teachers' perspectives on the inclusion of linguistically diverse students seems crucial to understand how educators, key figures in the implementation of inclusive practices within classrooms (Cummins, 2000, p. 47), position themselves in this discourse and what influences their language choices in the classroom on a daily basis. Considering the complex interplay between the monolingual ideology of the GSS, the decades-long dominance of monolingual approaches

[6] The disadvantages of students who do not speak German fluently is presented by Elsner (2015); the author discusses the connection between success in English and German skills.

in ELT teaching, and the multilingual realities of German schools nowadays, the focus of this article is to answer the following research questions:

I. What are ELT teachers' attitudes to and experiences with different languages in the ELT classroom?

II. What are ELT teachers' thoughts on how institutional structures influence the inclusion of RIS in the ELT classroom?

III. What would help ELT teachers make the ELT classroom a more inclusive space for RIS?

2 Data collection and analysis

The following section will present the research aimed at answering the above mentioned research questions. The focus of the research was set on conducting semi-structured expert interviews with three English teachers working at a *Gesamtschule* in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, from August of 2023 to January of 2024 teaching at least three RIS in their English classes. A qualitative approach was chosen for the research because it is especially suitable for studies that aim for deep and comprehensive insight and understanding of the research context, individual perspectives of the participants, and its connection to larger social processes (Gerlach, 2023, p. 147). The choice of conducting individual expert interviews as the main instrument for data collection was made because, especially in this field of study that focuses on language choice and attitudes in linguistically diverse environments, it is important to gain insight into internal and external factors that influence the behavior of its key figures (Hatoss, 2018, p. 430) and uncover their thoughts and subjective perspectives for which a direct and personal dialogue is necessary (Reinders, 2016, p. 8).

In this case, experts are chosen as the subject of the research because they can, on the one hand, provide researchers with field-internal and specialized expertise, which is not accessible to everyone in the field of interest (Gläser & Laudel, 2004, p. 9), and, on the other hand, possess a unique perspective on the field of research (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 134). Therefore, the goal of the investigation was to uncover and understand one expert's perspective and compare it with the perspective of other experts, as well as to consider how their perspectives are shaped by the sociocultural conditions that create expert knowledge (Meuser & Nagel, 2005, p. 45). ELT teachers specifically were chosen as subjects of this research because it can be assumed that they gained insight into language acquisition processes and were sensitized to language-

related phenomena during their education and training (Bonnet & Siemund, 2018, p. 24). Accessing "their attitudes towards languages, their language ideologies and/or their practiced policies" (Young, 2018, p. 28) through interviews can help researchers understand how the monolingual ideology of the GSS and double monolingual ideology of the ELT classroom influence their language choices in the ELT classroom, make the individual teachers' subjective perspectives intersubjectively comprehensible, and use the insights gained in the research process to provide suggestions for improvements regarding the inclusion of RIS in the ELT classroom.

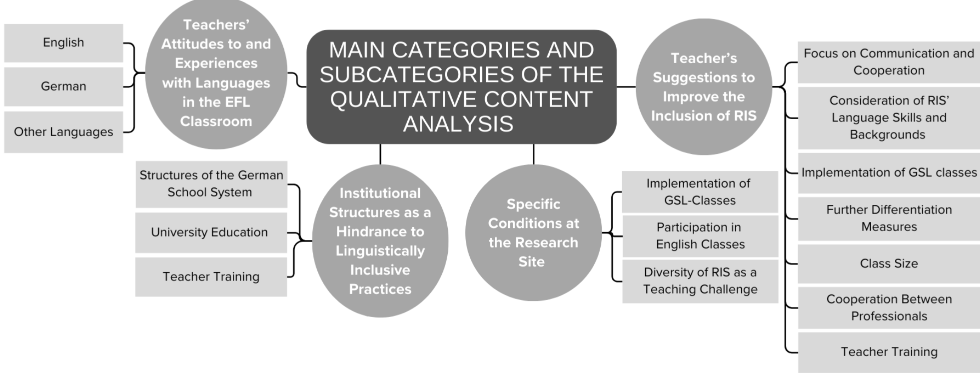
The interview guideline used during the interviews was based on previously conducted classroom observations with the interviewees and specifically tailored to the field of research. The expert interview was conceptualized in a semi-structured way and consisted of open-ended questions relating to the research questions stated above. The first segment of the interview guideline centers on the teachers' experiences with and attitudes to linguistic diversity in the context of ELT. The second segment focuses the teachers' knowledge and opinions on the institutional structures surrounding the inclusion of RIS by addressing the GSS generally, the structures within the research school specifically and how the inclusion of RIS is considered in teacher education. In the third thematic block, the researcher directs the interviewee's focus toward the inclusion of RIS in the teachers' ELT classroom. This thematic block of the interview guideline gives the interviewees a chance to voice recommendations and suggestions that would improve current structures and enable them to better include the RIS in their ELT classrooms.

After interviewing the teachers, a transcription of the audio recording was made. The transcription focused on the semantic content of the interviews as the primary goal of the research is to explore the content of the ELT teachers' utterances and to find significant patterns that relate to their perspective on the inclusion of RIS in the ELT classroom. Here, the semantic content transcription rules according to Kuckartz and colleagues (2007, pp. 27f.) were applied. The subsequent transcript analysis followed the procedural rules of inductive and deductive category formation, according to Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022), to sort relevant information gathered during the interviews into "logical groupings" (Burns, 2010, p. 106) and develop a category system that presents the content of the transcript in a concise and organized manner. The first step of analysis consisted of creating a category system in the form of a table by defining categories based on the research questions and interview

guidelines, thus in a deductive manner.[7] As the formation of categories is understood as a cyclical process, additional categories emerged inductively during the data analysis and were added to the category system. During this process, multiple codings of the same passage was allowed. The search for relevant information within the transcripts to answer the research questions translated the information into "manageable units of analysis" (Jakisch, 2015, p. 150) by systematically extracting and sorting it into the category system. In addition to the main categories, subcategories were defined, and all categories were provided with an anchor example which describes the categories best.[8]

3 Results

The subsequent section will present the results and summarize the key findings of the qualitative content analysis. The procedural rules of inductive and deductive category formation according to Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022) led to the formation of four main categories. The research results will be outlined by discussing each category and its subcategories (see Figure 1) individually and pointing out the particularities and similarities between the interviewees' statements relating to each category.



RIS = recently immigrated students; GSL = German as a second language.

Figure 1: Overview of the main categories and subcategories (own research)

[7] The category system can be found in the Appendix.

[8] As this paper is based on a degree project, no intercoder validation was conducted but I am open to engage in a critical exchange regarding the analysis of the data gathered in this research.

3.1 Teachers' attitudes to and experiences with languages in the ELT classroom

The first main category relates to the teachers' attitudes to and experiences with different languages in the ELT classroom and is divided into the subcategories "English", "German" and "Other Languages". Regarding the importance of English in the ELT classroom, all teachers note that the primary and ideally only classroom language should be English, especially in higher grades. Kim[9] highlights this attitude by saying that good (English) teaching is monolingual English teaching (ll. 16ff.)[10]. While all teachers aim for monolingual English teaching, all mention that its implementation is challenging, especially in lower grades where the students have not yet acquired the necessary language skills. Due to the difficulties the teachers encounter when teaching monolingually, all state that they use German frequently in their English lessons. According to the teachers, German is used to prevent incomprehension, frustration, and restlessness, save time, clarify the meaning of words, introduce and explain grammatical structures, talk about learning strategies and assignments that were not understood after repeated explanations, in instructional and reflection phases, as well as in individual conversations with students. Even though all teachers use German systematically and unsystematically in their English lessons, it is generally regarded as something they try to avoid.

Considering the frequent use of German in English lessons and the fact that RIS attend those lessons and may not have high language skills in either language, the teachers were asked whether they make use of other languages besides English and German in their English lessons. Robin and Kim stated that they encourage their students to keep a trilingual vocabulary list, and Kim adds telling their students to ask for their parents' help when translating as they cannot check whether the translations made by the students are correct (ll. 58–61). It is also mentioned that RIS use translation tools on school iPads to better understand the materials used in the English lessons (Taylor, ll. 346–

[9] To guarantee the interviewees' anonymity, pseudonyms (Kim, Robin, Taylor) were used to give them a personalized voice while being able to differentiate between their statements.

[10] The interviewees' statements are taken from transcripts that are not published in this publication in their entirety for privacy reasons. Many quotes can be found in the Appendix.

350; Kim, ll. 446 452). Still, Kim critically reflects on using German in their English lessons by saying:

> *Und was bedeutet das für die Schüler, die kein Deutsch können? Die kriegen es auch nicht mit. So, und ich habe keine Lösung. Habe ich nicht.* (ll. 348f.)
>
> *And what does this mean for students who don't know German? They don't get it. Well, and I don't have a solution. I don't.* (ll. 348f.)

Robin also repeatedly states that the issue of integrating the languages RIS bring to the ELT classroom is new for them, explaining:

> *[…] dadurch, dass ich halt nur Deutsch und Englisch spreche, bin ich ja überhaupt nicht sensibilisiert auf die anderen Sprachen und dadurch, dass es hier auch an der Schule SO viele verschiedene Sprachen gibt. Es sei denn du lernst alle Sprachen, aber das ist auch utopisch.* (ll. 427–430)
>
> *[...] because I only speak German and English, I'm not at all sensitized to the other languages and because there are SO many different languages here at school. Unless you learn all languages, but that's also utopic.* (ll. 427–430)

Here, Robin acknowledges that on the one hand, due to their linguistic background, they are not sensitized to other languages, but on the other hand, the diversity at school makes it necessary to deal with a multitude of languages. This statement may hint to a feeling of being over-challenged and not well prepared to deal with linguistic diversity in a real school setting. Therefore, it is not surprising that out of all interviewees, only Taylor, who speaks another language fluently, mentions actively using Russian when talking to their Ukrainian RIS (ll. 306ff.).

3.2 Institutional structures as a hindrance to linguistically inclusive practices

The second category, "Institutional Structures as a Hindrance to Linguistically Inclusive Practices", collects interview statements that provide insight into the teachers' thoughts on institutional structures surrounding the inclusion of RIS and is divided into three subcategories. The first subcategory focuses on the "Structures of the German School System" that impact the inclusion of RIS. Due to the complexity of school life, the short time available for ELT teaching, time pressure, the number of tasks to fulfill, and the diversity of the student body, the teachers mention not feeling able to do justice to and sufficiently support the RIS' linguistic needs and to include them into their ELT classrooms successfully. When asked whether they think the RIS have

equal educational opportunities compared to the other students, the interviewees underline that the ways in which RIS are educated are drastically different from how other students are being taught at their school, especially because they miss regular classes due to the German as a Second Language (GSL) classes (ll. 13–17). Another structural aspect mentioned by Taylor and Kim is that neither the school curriculum, ELT school books, or mainstream ELT didactics consider RIS linguistic needs, making it very difficult for teachers to provide them with appropriate material and academic objectives. Kim also points out that German is still the dominant language of communication in the classroom (ll. 62ff.) and that the inflexible and limiting structures of the GSS, such as the separation of students into grades whilst not considering their individual skills in different subjects, do not motivate and help students achieve higher educational goals but reinforce inequities (ll. 94–107), often leaving RIS alone with the problems created by the structures of the GSS. Taylor also voices their concern that RIS do not receive enough individualized support to develop academically in the best possible way (ll. 509–521). The feeling of being unprepared, frustrated, and overwhelmed with the responsibilities of teaching highly diverse students in one classroom under extremely challenging circumstances is shared among all interviewees.

In the second subcategory, "University Education", the teachers recall how the inclusion of RIS was addressed during their studies at university. All interviewees recall having gotten insufficient instruction explicitly addressing how to teach English to linguistically diverse students during their university education. Robin explains that their university seminars in English didactics were monolingually oriented and had little to do with the reality most teachers face (ll. 194–204). Still, both younger teachers, Taylor and Robin, attended obligatory GSL seminars during their master's degree. Taylor remembers the content of the seminars as such:

> *Also wir hatten DaZ-Unterricht natürlich, also das DaZ-Seminar. Da ging es ja darum, wie man wie man Deutsch mehr oder weniger vereinfacht im Unterricht. Aber nicht Englisch. Es wurde auch nicht davon gesprochen, was macht man denn jetzt, wenn man da Schüler sitzen hat, die können kein Deutsch, denen sollst du aber Englisch beibringen. Wie erklärt man sich denn? […] also das Gefühl ins kalte Wasser gefallen zu sein, ich glaube das haben viele Lehrkräfte und das ist glaube ich auch flächendeckend so. Ich denke die systemische Ebene, die da gescheitert ist zu sagen.* (ll. 103–111)
>
> *Of course we had GSL-lessons, the GSL seminar. It was about how to simplify German in the classroom. But not English. We also didn't talk about what to do if you have students sitting there who can't speak German, but you have to teach them English. How do you explain yourself? […] well, the feeling of being*

thrown in at the deep end, I think many teachers have that feeling and I think it's the same across the board. I think it's the systemic level that has failed. (ll. 103–111)

Statements on the role of "Teacher Training" in developing inclusive practices regarding RIS are collected in the third subcategory. Taylor, who is currently attending teacher training, states that in the ELT seminars monolingual ELT teaching is perceived as didactically correct and that disregarding this approach to language choice in the ELT classroom normally leads to lower grades during class visits (ll. 176–180). The lack of consideration in teacher training for RIS who can neither speak German nor English is also commented on by the other teachers who state that during teacher training, monolingual English teaching was explicitly favored. Robin adds that even though teacher training was helpful due to its practical orientation, time issues impede teachers in considering all aspects of student diversity, an aspect which is also mentioned by Taylor (Robin, ll. 196–204; Taylor, ll. 619–624). Regarding further teacher training, all teachers state that they had never been offered further training on the topic of including linguistically diverse students or RIS in their ELT classes. Only Kim mentions having attended further training on inclusion and English didactics and that during those seminars monolingual language teaching was promoted, arguing that it helps all learners equally (ll. 125–141).

3.3 Specific conditions at the research site

Category three collects all examples containing information on the specific conditions at the research site, the teachers' experiences working under these conditions and how they influence the ways in which they can include the RIS into their ELT classroom. The first subcategory, "Implementation of GSL Classes", summarizes the teachers' statements that relate to the implementation of GSL classes at their school. All teachers describe that even though the RIS participate in regular classes, they miss many of those lessons because of GSL classes and that depending on their individual schedules some miss out on more English lessons than others (Taylor ll. 13–17). When commenting on the implementation of the GSL lessons, which take place in a building located approximately five minutes by foot away from the main school building, Robin comments that the students' individual schedules make it difficult to track the RIS' attendance but think that it is reasonable that the students have a separate place where they can acclimate and arrive (ll. 207–219). In contrast, Kim criticizes the spatial separation of the GSL and the main school building, arguing that the transition between buildings and the lack of time to

do so is a burden for the RIS (ll. 198–217). Still, Kim finds it important for RIS to receive GSL classes but does not see how those students are being supported in catching up with the missed content, which can negatively affect their academic development (ll. 38–41).

The second subcategory, “Participation in English Classes”, relates to the teachers’ statements regarding the RIS’ participation in English classes. The teachers mention that frequently missing regular lessons often reduces the students’ participation during the classes in which they are present as they often struggle with keeping up with the contents and are encouraged to continue practicing German and doing other tasks instead of actively participating in regular lessons (Taylor, ll. 14–20). Taylor furthermore mentions that the absence of the RIS in the English classes also hinders their inclusion in the class community and states that the fact that RIS do not receive grades and do not have to attend all regular classes leads to tension within the class community as some students do not understand why RIS are being treated differently (ll. 211–219). The lack of binding agreements and useful structures regarding the inclusion of RIS in their ELT classrooms is furthermore underlined by the fact that no teacher recalls the inclusion of RIS in the ELT classroom being a topic of discussion during meetings of the English department. The teachers also comment that the lack of regulations regarding the RIS at their school makes it difficult to know how to deal with RIS when they attend regular lessons, which often leads to disregarding the RIS’ development.

Another aspect that influences the teachers’ efforts to include the RIS in their ELT classroom is collected under the third subcategory: “Diversity of RIS as a Teaching ‘Challenge’”. All interviewees mentioned that some RIS can cope with missing out on regular classes and have the resources to catch up on what they missed, but that this is not the case for every RIS. Their students’ highly diverse linguistic backgrounds as well as their other aspects regarding their learning abilities is seen as a ‘challenge’ by all teachers, who would welcome adapting the teaching materials to the RIS’ language background but state that there is no time to do so. The lack of time to cater to the RIS’ individual linguistic needs is underlined by Robin, who laments that the RIS’ different skills, talents, and needs are not adequately considered at school, resulting in Robin’s perception that RIS often waste their time in regular classes (ll. 220ff.).

3.4 Teacher's suggestions to improve the inclusion of RIS

Considering all the structural circumstances that complicate the inclusion of RIS in the ELT classroom, the teachers were asked which measures should be taken to better include RIS in their lessons. The suggestions mentioned throughout the interview were summarized under the category "Teacher's Suggestions to Improve the Inclusion of RIS" and divided into several subcategories that present the teachers' recommendations. A suggestion mentioned by all teachers is to plan English lessons focusing on communication and cooperation (Subcategory I) and more consideration of RIS' skills and linguistic backgrounds (Subcategory II). The interviewees argue that implementing, for example, dialogues and tandem learning would improve the classroom atmosphere and enable all students to interact and profit from each other. All teachers also mention that the students' language skills and backgrounds should be better assessed and considered when planning and conducting English lessons to provide them with adequate differentiation measures, by, for example, using the RIS' FL whenever German is used and practicing how to productively deal with language difficulties with RIS (Robin, ll. 31f., 358–369). Relating to subcategory II, Kim suggests that teachers should be either offered time to develop more inclusive teaching materials or provided with ELT textbooks that are more open to and flexible regarding the linguistic backgrounds of all students (l. 428f.). Furthermore, Kim argues that it is necessary to revise the school curriculum to develop a more flexible guideline that considers students' prerequisites (ll. 640–643).

All teachers would also welcome a change in scheduling and implementing GSL classes (Subcategory III). The interviewees state that a standardized and considered approach to implementing support classes for German and English would help to include RIS in regular classes and ensure that they are continuously and adequately supported in their language development. Robin also points out that, even though they see the positive aspects of spatially separating the RIS, the inclusion of the RIS would be facilitated if they had GSL lessons within the main building of their school. Furthermore, Robin argues that it would be useful to plan GSL so that RIS can attend classes for which high German skills are not necessary to participate successfully, such as arts, physical education and English (ll. 145–148).

The interviewees also mention the implementation of further differentiation measures (Subcategory IV). Their suggestions include changing the school structure itself by implementing structures and methods that divide students into different levels according to their language skills rather than age, as well

as enabling teachers to give grades according to individual learning growth. Relating to structural issues, all teachers argue that to establish a personal relationship with students and provide them with individualized and differentiated education, class sizes should be reduced (Subcategory V), and more professionals should be hired (Subcategory VI). Taylor and Robin mentioned team teaching as a way to do justice to the students' individual needs. The cooperation between professionals (Subcategory VII) was expanded on by Kim, who would welcome implementing training days dedicated to exchanging information and practical advice between schools and teachers (ll. 429–443). In line with the idea of sharing relevant information on how to best deal with the realities of school life, Taylor and Robin think that teachers should be offered further teacher training (Subcategory VIII) focusing on teaching RIS to be better prepared to include them into the ELT classroom (Taylor, ll. 390f.; Robin, ll. 392–398).

4 Discussion of the results

The interview results reveal the complexity of school life, in particular when related to the teachers' efforts to include RIS in their ELT classrooms in a system that does not support them in doing so. In this section, the results are interpreted by reconstructing the individual perspectives of the interviewees from a comparative point of view, to answer the research questions guiding this research.

I. What are ELT teachers' attitudes to and experiences with different languages in the ELT classroom?

When it comes to the role of different languages in their ELT classroom, all teachers stress the primacy of English during English lessons and show how their perspective on ELT is influenced by a curriculum that promotes functional monolingualism rather than multilingual ELT. Still, the attitudes to uphold monolingual language practices in the ELT classroom vary depending on the interviewee. Robin has a more moderate attitude towards using German during English lessons, comparing their more relaxed perspective nowadays with their stricter adherence to monolingual English teaching at the beginning of their career. Kim often underlines that they see it as ideal to speak only English but also acknowledge that ELT teaching must be adapted to the students' language skills. Taylor seems to be the teacher with the strictest attitude towards monolingual ELT teaching while also being the only interviewee in teacher training and with a FL other than German.

While all teachers stress the importance of English use in English lessons to varying degrees, they also mention several occasions in which German is used during their English lessons. Though frowning on the use of German in English lessons, they mention situations and reasons for their language choice. The interviewees mentioned using German when giving instructions to carry out activities, during grammar explanations, to speed things up due to time pressures, and to check comprehension, all reasons which are also mentioned in Macaro's study from 2001 (p. 535). Their arguments for using German are in line with current mainstream discourse (see Section 1 above), which indicates that the use of the students' 'first language' (understood as German) is a common practice among ELT teachers and can serve many purposes.

The teachers' statements on the advantages of using German in English lessons, on the one hand, indicate that they acknowledge that using their students FL can be beneficial. On the other hand, it also shows most RIS cannot benefit from this language practice as German is not only not their FL but is mostly still a foreign language to them. The disadvantages created by only using German and not the RIS' FL are further underlined by the teachers' statements showing that these languages, unlike the use of German, are not systematically considered in their English lessons. The lack of consideration for the RIS linguistic backgrounds in the ELT classroom is partly blamed on university education and teacher training. Every teacher recalls the strong normative load put on monolingual language practices in the ELT classroom during their professionalization which stigmatizes the teachers' use of other languages besides English. A study on the influence of (language) norms on the (linguistic) behavior of English teachers by Wilken (2021) shed a light on the tension between the normative demand to recognize diversity as a resource (p. 13) and monolingual English teaching as being one of the most prominent norms during the professionalization of English teachers in Germany (p. 24). Therefore, it is less surprising that in a professional field in which even the use of German is stigmatized, teachers are not encouraged to open the ELT classroom to include other languages.

While all teachers seem to be aware of the diversity of the linguistic backgrounds and difficulties their RIS face when learning English, they do not integrate their FL the same way they integrate German into the ELT classroom, placing them at a disadvantage compared to the students who understand German. Thus, the teachers' language choices and practices seem to uphold structural obstacles that impede a "parity of participation" (Fraser, 1998, p. 10), which leads to exclusion and unequal access to the contents of ELT classes for students who do not speak the dominant school language (in

this case German), ultimately silencing rather than empowering them to actively participate in the ELT lessons. In addition, the teachers' statements on the inclusion of RIS' FL show that the teachers oftentimes tend to see their students' linguistic diversity as a challenge rather than a resource within the ELT classroom and are not able to use their students' linguistic repertoires productively through inclusive practices in their ELT classrooms. This state of exclusion within the few hours available to the RIS as a part of the classroom community underlines how social injustice is created by systems that promote monolingual teaching practices. It also shows, in a more positive light, how important linguistic inclusion is to create an environment that sees the students' diverse linguistic repertoires as an integral part of the ELT classroom and contributes to social justice.

II. What are the ELT teachers' thoughts on how institutional structures influence the inclusion of RIS in the ELT classroom?

The teachers' statements on the instructional structures surrounding the RIS' inclusion in the ELT classroom, on the one hand, show how complex the teaching profession is but, on the other hand, also reveal that these structures do not systematically approach the inclusion of RIS and provide teachers with the necessary resources to include them into their ELT classrooms successfully. The teachers' frustration when it comes to the shortcomings of the GSS are present throughout the interviews and relate to several issues, from the systemic disadvantages of RIS within the GSS to the general frustration of having to work under pressure constantly, and not being able to do justice to the education of their highly diverse students.

When the interviewees were asked to comment on how university education, teacher training, and further offers of teacher training addressed the inclusion of RIS, all interviewees recalled not having dealt with the topic or it to have been addressed very peripherally during their education and career. Even though the younger teachers mentioned attending obligatory GSL seminars during their studies, Taylor commented that while these seminars covered how German can be made accessible for linguistically diverse students, they lacked practical orientation and did not consider the specific situation for ELT. Additionally, no interviewee recalls discussing either linguistic diversity or the inclusion of RIS in the ELT classroom during teacher training; all of them pointed out that their teacher training strongly promoted monolingual ELT. The lack of training on including RIS in the ELT classroom can also be seen in the teachers' statements on further teacher training, as no interviewee

had the opportunity to attend seminars that focused on including RIS in the ELT classroom.

Regarding the structures at the teachers' school, all interviewees commented that RIS often miss regular classes because of their GSL classes. Missing out on regular classes leads to many RIS struggling with keeping up with the contents of the English lessons, often not participating actively during the lessons they are present for, and not finding their place within the classroom community. The lack of uniformity and purposefulness regarding structures influencing the inclusion of the RIS is also visible in the teachers' elaborations.

The structural conditions within the school as well as the general difficulties stemming from the institutional structures of the GSS and teacher education show that little attention is given to systematically including the RIS in the ELT classroom. Especially the fact that teachers completed their education and training at different times but recall a lack of focus on the inclusion of RIS during their career shows how this topic was and still is not being addressed adequately by educational policies and that no significant structural changes are being made that take the presence of RIS in the GSS into consideration during teachers' professionalization processes. Also, the teachers' explicit criticism of the GSS general structures and the structures at their school underlines that even if the teachers were willing to consider their students' linguistic diversity in the ELT classroom, their education and professional environment would not provide them with the necessary skills, sensitivity, and resources to approach the inclusion of their RIS effectively. Therefore, the given situation forces RIS to fit into a system that does not adapt to the changing circumstances of a multilingual society and that does not empower teachers for including linguistically diverse pupils.[11]

III. What would help ELT teachers make the ELT classroom a more inclusive space for RIS students?

When being asked for suggestions on how to improve the current situation regarding the RIS, the teachers came up with different ideas that ranged from

[11] Due to the institutional structures that influence the linguistic inclusion of RIS in the ELT classroom which can function as obstacles to inclusion, it is ultimately the teacher's choice to actively employ multilingual and inclusive approaches in their ELT classrooms (Wilken, 2021, p. 195). Thus, their choices and personal engagement in their daily work are fundamental to establish practices of inclusion (Louloudi, 2024, p. 20).

adopting more communicative and cooperative teaching arrangements, implementing differentiation measures according to the students' linguistic backgrounds, developing and using appropriate teaching materials to adapting official policies and guidelines to the everchanging reality of school life. Other suggestions relate to structures that would improve the inclusion of the RIS at the *Gesamtschule*. Here, the teachers suggest restructuring the implementation of the GSL classes, implementing an inclusive approach that enables RIS to participate in more regular classes, and reconsidering the structure of separating students by age rather than skills.[12] Furthermore, the teachers would welcome smaller classes and more cooperation between professionals to support each student individually and adequately. The suggestions made by the teachers are believed to build personal relationships between the students, improve teacher-student relationships, and lead to mutual support among teachers.

Regarding the education and training of the teaching staff, the teachers see an urgent need for better preparation and information on how to include their RIS in the ELT classroom. For that, they see it as necessary for university education to address the topic specifically, implement a higher number of practical phases, and for current teachers to be provided further teacher training to get information and practical advice on including RIS in their ELT classroom. The teachers' suggestions to improve the inclusion of RIS in the ELT classroom once again underline the different factors influencing how teachers can provide their students with an individualized and adequate education. While some ideas could be implemented more easily by individual teachers, most require fundamental changes to the GSS and teacher education to improve learning for RIS.

5 Conclusion and outlook

The research revealed the discrepancies between the monolingual ideologies and the multilingual realities in the GSS by focusing on ELT teachers' perspectives on including RIS in the ELT classroom at a German *Gesamtschule*. The teachers' perspectives revealed the unique and personal as well as structural levels that influence how RIS are included in the ELT classroom and how a double monolingual ideology that seems to govern the ELT classroom

[12] Further information on the different models for educating RIS including their advantages and disadvantages can be found in Kuhs (2017, pp. 522–526).

prioritizes the use of English and German and leaves little space for the languages RIS bring to the ELT classroom. Therefore, conducting research in this field provided an "important first step in understanding the challenges and opportunities of teaching in a linguistically and culturally diverse setting" (Young, 2018, p. 25) and uncovered how the lack of linguistic inclusion of the RIS puts them in a disadvantaged position, which can have severe personal and academic consequences.

The study also revealed that while the individual teachers vary in their attitudes and opinions on dealing with linguistic diversity and including different languages in the ELT classroom, external factors reinforcing a double monolingual ideology apparently influence the teachers' classroom practices and language choices that uphold the double monolingual ideology in ELT classrooms. Even though they might be open to including other languages in their English lessons, their perception of structural circumstances limits their awareness of RIS' linguistic rights and needs, which complicates the implementation of inclusive language practices. One reason is that monolingual English practices are often upheld and unquestioned in university education and teacher training. During their professionalization the teachers recall being encouraged to use as much English as possible and as much German as necessary and not being formally educated on how to deal productively with students who cannot profit from the use of German. Furthermore, institutional structures and insufficient human and material resources complicate and impede teachers' efforts of successfully including RIS' languages in the ELT classroom.

The results of three interviews with ELT teachers working at the same *Gesamtschule* in Germany gave insight into societal issues regarding the inclusion of RIS and helped understand the reasons and motives of the teachers' language practices. The results also revealed how the double monolingual ideology is rooted in both the macro- and micro-structures of the GSS, which tends to exclude minority languages and reinforce marginalization of those who do not speak the national standard language sufficiently (Steinbach, 2016, p. 286). Regarding the findings of the research, it seems important to address and challenge the "misconceptions and language ideologies upon which teachers base their practices" (Steinbach, 2016, p. 28) as teachers can contribute to maintaining or challenging relations of difference and, therefore, must be aware that their language choices influence their students' inclusion in the ELT classroom.

An important step towards inclusive education for RIS is for teacher education to create a structurally anchored space for critical self-reflection on teaching behaviors and assumptions on language choice, their implications, consequences, and whether they are pedagogically effective (Roberts Auerbach, 1993, p. 12). Making teachers aware of discriminatory classroom practices also entails encouraging them to "discover naturalised practices on the macro- and micro-level of their L2 classroom discourse as well as to engage in a reasoning process about these practices" (Schildhauer, 2023, p. 64). Creating spaces for critically analyzing the structures of social systems can also help (future) teachers uncover how they may be involved in (re-)producing asymmetrical power relations influenced by common 'world views' with invisible ideological roots (Gogolin, 1994, p. 39). To equip current and future teachers to function effectively in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts, it is important to raise their awareness and sensitivity to the "linguistic resources, rights and needs of their pupils" (Mary & Young, 2017, p. 125) and to prepare teachers "to be open to otherness, curious and eager to learn alongside their pupils about language, languages and cultures" (Young, 2018, p. 26).

Enabling teachers to use languages in a planned, conscious, and purposeful way is only possible if school environments are marked by a cooperative atmosphere among all people involved in teaching RIS. Teachers, researchers, university educators, teacher trainers, headteachers, and policymakers all need to develop sensitivity and awareness when it comes to including RIS. Only the involvement of an interdisciplinary dialogue between all professional groups can ensure that the inclusion of RIS is improved from the bottom up as well as from the top down. Identifying and sharing practices "in which languages and materials are used flexibly and effectively" (Hopewell, 2017, p. 87) can accelerate structural change and counter teachers' concerns about including other languages with action-guiding recommendations, materials, projects, and positive real-life examples. Therefore, (official) language policies and education programs need to consider the presence of RIS in the ELT classroom and the GSS generally and provide the necessary financial and human resources so that teachers "are equipped to meet the needs of a more linguistically diverse student population" (Paulsrud et al., 2017, p. 229). Efforts are already being made by the KMK who include the importance of promoting a "plurilingual competence" in more recent reports (2023, p. 6). Still, these new developments and approaches to ELT specifically and dealing with linguistic diversity generally need to be implemented systematically and purposefully into teaching practices, programs, and assessments to integrate all students' linguistic repertoires, fundamentally promoting a systemic change and empowering all students and shifting deficit-

oriented ideologies towards asset-based educational paradigms (Da Silva Iddings, 2018, pp. 522f.).[13]

Due to current estimates predicting a sharp rise in the number of immigrants due to war, oppression, and ecological disasters, the GSS needs to be adapted to the multilingual present and future and not waste valuable resources on short-term solutions that aim for students' quick assimilation or integration without considering their linguistic abilities and needs. This research indicates the current state of teaching practices in the ELT classroom and presents possible steps to improve the situation for RIS. Still, further research in this field must be conducted.[14] To ensure that research does not solely remain part of academic discourse but finds its way into the mainstream classroom and teachers' practices, those involved in the education of teachers need to acknowledge scientific findings on language choice in the ELT classroom and incorporate them into their professional decisions. The consideration of RIS' linguistic needs and rights in all phases of teacher education and the development of a collective and constructive approach towards their inclusion seems fundamental for implementing essential changes, as linguistic inclusion can be a way to contribute to social justice by reevaluating language use in the ELT classroom from a critical perspective (Pennycook, 2021, p. 53ff.). Such changes can empower future and currently practicing teachers to make better-informed decisions regarding the inclusion of RIS in their English classrooms

[13] The issue of how future teachers are invited to engage critically with inequity and systemic differences in the school context during teacher education and promote social justice in their future work is discussed in Louloudi & Schildhauer (2024). In their article the authors point out the importance of critical teacher education, propose five fundamental elements of social justice teaching, and present their incorporation of the topic of social justice in university seminars. This practice-focused research approach shows how teacher education can actively promote criticality and engage with the topic of social justice and can serve as a model for applying similar seminars in teacher education in other contexts.

[14] Further research could involve interviewing ELT teachers working at different types of schools, university professors and teacher trainers. Additionally, interviews with GSL students and teachers, headteachers, and other professionals involved in implementing GSL classes at schools would help in further accessing and assessing how RIS are included in the GSS and understanding the decision-making process determining their education. To do justice to the complexity of linguistic diversity, further research would also include looking at the influence of the language backgrounds of students who have an immigration background but are not considered to be recently immigrated.

instead of feeling left alone in ‘dealing with it’. And even more importantly, implementing changes that would improve linguistic participation is a way to provide equal access to education for all students, give marginalized students a voice and positively impact their academic trajectory, ultimately contributing to social justice and equity within the GSS.

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Appendix: Category System

Main Categories	**Subcategories**	**Anchor Examples**
Attitudes to and Experiences with Languages in the ELT Classroom Statements that relate to the teacher's attitudes to and experiences with different languages in the ELT classroom	**English** Statements that relate to the teacher's attitudes to and experiences with the use of English in the ELT classroom	***Guter Unterricht*** *wäre dann eigentlich oder was die Schüler eigentlich auszeichnen würden, wäre, wenn es möglich wäre,* ***rein in Englisch*** *zu unterrichten.* (Kim, ll. 16ff.)
	German Statements that relate to the teacher's attitudes to and experiences with the use of German in the ELT classroom	*Also ins* ***Deutsche*** *wechsle ich häufig, wenn ich merke, es gibt* ***Unverständnis****, Aufgaben werden nicht verstanden.* (Taylor, ll. 294f.)
	Other Languages Statements that relate to the teacher's attitudes to and experiences with the use of other languages besides English and German in the ELT classroom	*Mittlerweile sehe ich das etwas* ***unproblematischer****, auch die* ***Sprache zu switchen und nicht nur alles einsprachig zu machen****.* ***Je höher die Klasse, desto mehr Einsprachigkeit ist da auf jeden Fall****, aber ansonsten gerne auch mal auf Deutsch so eine Erklärung, oder zulassen, dass sie auf Deutsch reden und ich versuch auf Englisch zu bleiben und die reden das auf Deutsch.* ***Aber ich habe glaub ich noch nie so richtig andere Sprachen außer Deutsch und Englisch im Unterricht irgendwie miteinbezogen*** *[…].* ***Aber ich habe dafür auch keinen Grund, also wüsste ich jetzt nicht, warum ich das nicht gemacht habe oder warum ich das machen sollte. Ich glaub damit habe ich mich noch nicht beschäftigt****.* (Robin, ll. 71–78)

Main Categories	Subcategories	Anchor Examples
Institutional Structures as a Hindrance to Linguistically Inclusive Practices Statements on institutional structures that influence and possibly hinder the inclusion of RIS in Germany	**Structures of the German School System** Statements relating to the German school system and how its structures influence the inclusion of RIS in Germany	*[…] man hat oftmals als Lehrkraft* ***sehr wenig Anleitung****. Also das heißt dann immer ganz oft:* ***„bitte schön und deal with it“****. Und dann muss man irgendwie herausfinden, ja, wie kriegt man das jetzt irgendwie am besten hin.* ***Und es ist halt dann oftmals sehr schwer generell irgendwie [lacht] Unterricht zu machen. Und das [inkludieren neu zugewanderter Schüler*innen] ist so das Erste, was wegfällt.*** (Robin, ll. 295–299)
	University Education Statements on the role of university education and how its structures influence the inclusion of RIS at German schools	*Also ich hatte damals in meiner Ausbildung also in meiner* ***universitären Ausbildung*** *hatte ich ein oder zwei Semester DaZ. Und da war auch* ***nicht die Verbindung zum Englischunterricht****. Also da fehlte das komplett […].* (Robin, ll. 178ff.)
	Teacher Training Statements on the role of teacher training and further teacher training and how its structures influence the inclusion of RIS at German schools	*Also, wir sprechen ja im Englischseminar vom ZFSL dann über* ***Differenzierungsmaßnahmen*** *oder so, aber die sind* ***häufig jetzt nicht auf DaZ-Schüler zugeschnitten****, sondern schon auf Schüler, die hier geboren sind und hier aufwachsen, die einfach Defizite haben. Das heißt, auf DaZ geht man da auch nicht ein. Das ist halt mehr oder weniger so ein* ***Randproblem, wo man weiß, wenn man das angehen will, ist das so aufwendig, dass man es lieber lässt****.* (Taylor, ll. 132–137) ***Nicht, dass ich wüsste****. [bezogen auf Angebote, an Fortbildungen zum Thema DaZ und das Einbeziehen anderer Sprache im Englischunterricht teilzunehmen]* (Robin, l. 190)

Main Categories	Subcategories	Anchor Examples
Specific Conditions at the Research Site Statements containing information on the specific conditions at the teachers' school and their experiences working under these conditions	**Implementation of GSL-Classes** Statements relating to the implementation of GSL-classes at the research school	*Der DaZ-Unterricht wird ja systemisch so gelegt halt, dass es gerade irgendwie passt, aber nich****t Rücksicht genommen darauf, welche Unterrichtsstunden dann verpasst werde****n. […] Wie es gerade vom schulischen hier eher besser passt, aber nicht unmittelbar mit pädagogischen oder irgendwelchen Überlegungen anscheinend dahinter […].* (Kim, ll. 621–626)
	Participation in English Classes Statements relating to the participation of the RIS in the English classes	*Dadurch, dass sie so* ***viel Unterricht verpassen****, ist ja auch die* ***Hemmschwelle viel größer, sich überhaupt zu beteiligen****, wenn sie da sind. Weil sie wissen, dass sie* ***weniger können oder weniger mitbekommen*** *als die anderen und dann teilweise auch aus der letzten Stunde gar nicht wissen, was da gemacht wurde und dann thematisch auch raus sind.* (Taylor, ll. 288–291)
	Diversity of RIS as a Teaching 'Challenge' Statements relating to the diversity within the group of RIS and how it may represent a 'challenge'	*[…] die* ***leistungsstärkste*** *Schülerin von den drei ukrainischen Schülerinnen, die ich da habe, die kommt damit generell* ***eigenständig*** *sehr schnell zurecht. Die* ***anderen zwei****, die haben da eher* ***Schwierigkeiten****. Bei denen versuche ich es dann persönlich noch mal entweder auf* ***Deutsch oder Russisch*** *zu erklären. Genau. Ich habe noch* ***andere DaZ-Schüler*** *bei mir, die* ***nicht aus der Ukraine*** *sind. Bei denen mache ich es dann* ***ausschließlich auf Deutsch****, wenn ich denen das noch mal erklären muss.* (Taylor, ll. 336–341)

Main Categories	Subcategories	Anchor Examples
Teacher's Suggestions to Improve the Inclusion of RIS Statements that present the teacher's suggestions for measures that would help to improve the inclusion of RIS at German schools	**Focus on Communication and Cooperation** Statements that refer to how lesson planning with focus on communication and cooperation can improve the inclusion of RIS	*Also ich glaub ich würde viel davon halten, wenn es so eine Art **Tandemlernen** gäbe. Also man deutsche Schülerinnen und Schüler nimmt und die mit DaZ-Schülerinnen und Schülern zusammensetzt. Wenn wir schon wollen, dass die **soziale Anbindung** haben, sollten die sich jemanden finden, gerne auf freiwilliger Basis, die in Deutsch bessern können und denen dann **helfen**. […] man merkt auch, dass die zugewanderten Schülerinnen und Schüler ein Problem damit haben, dass sie in ihrer eigenen Sprache BLEIBEN. Weil sie nur in ihrer eigenen **Clique** bleiben, und so wäre das zwar **zwanghaft aufgebrochen**, aber sie würden sehr viel schneller in diese **Sprachkenntnisse** eingeführt werden. Und dieses Tandemlernen wird denen auch eine **soziale Anbindung** geben.* (Taylor, ll. 438–447)
	Consideration of RIS' Language Skills and Backgrounds Statements that refer to how a more thorough consideration of the RIS' language skills and backgrounds can improve their inclusion	*[…] ich weiß doch sehr genau, wer in meiner Klasse welche **Sprachfertigkeiten** hat, ich kann auch sofort sagen, welche Schüler weiterhin, obwohl sie vielleicht nicht als DaZ-Schüler anerkannt sind, auch in Deutsch oder in anderen Sprachen Schwierigkeiten haben […].* (Kim, ll. 630–633)
	Implementation of GSL Classes Statements that refer to how a different approach to the implementation of GSL classes can improve the inclusion of RIS	*[…] weil es das **Fach Kunst, Sport oder halt auch Englisch** ist, gut nutzen könnten, um da halt direkt immer **von Anfang an anzuknüpfen**. Manchmal denke ich, es wäre ja schon ganz cool, wenn die **Stundenpläne so abgepasst** sind, **dass die Kinder die Fächer, die frei sind von sprachlicher Barriere, zumindest alle gemeinsam unterrichtet werden** […].* (Robin, ll. 145–148)

Main Categories	Subcategories	Anchor Examples
	Further Differentiation Measures Statements relating to how implementing further differentiation measures can improve the inclusion of RIS	*[…] das wäre jetzt doch eigentlich perfekt, wenn man das so nach **Leveln** macht und **nicht nach Klassenstufe**, sondern nach wirklich **Skills**. […] Welche **Rahmenbedingungen** bräuchte es dafür? Ein sehr **flexibles Fächersystem und viele Räume und Lehrkräfte** vielleicht noch nicht mal mehr, sondern **einfach eine andere Struktur**. […] Vielleicht wäre das die Lösung. (lacht) Keine Ahnung.* (Robin, ll. 382–392)
	Class Size Statements on how smaller classes can improve the inclusion of RIS	*Also ich glaube, jede Art von Inklusion funktioniert besser in **kleineren Gruppen**. […] Das geht also, das verringert auch die Störfaktoren, ja, die Faktoren, sich abzulenken. Und allein das wird schon mal sehr vieles tun, denk ich.* (Taylor, ll. 386–390)
	Cooperation Between Professionals Statements on how cooperation between professionals can improve the inclusion of RIS	*Nicht nur **Lehrer und Lehrerinnen**, sondern auch **Sozialpädagoginnen und Sozialpädagogen.*** (Kim, ll. 426f.) *Also positiv wäre, alle Schulen, […] alle Gesamtschulen, alle Englischlehrer der Gesamtschulen hier bekommen ein oder zwei Tage mindestens im Jahr oder vielleicht im Schulhalbjahr, um **sich zusammenzusetzen, sich auszutauschen**. […] **Ein Austausch von Informationen, von Best Practices** […].* (Kim, ll. 434–439)
	Teacher Training Statements on how teacher training in the field of GSL can improve the inclusion of RIS	*[…] und definitiv mehr, **mehr Ausbildung was DaZ angeht** oder halt auch jetzt auch der **Umgang mit zugezogenen Schüler*innen**, […] **ich persönlich wüsste da jetzt nicht irgendwie was jetzt zu tun ist oder hab wenig Anleitung wie wir es jetzt wirklich auch dann im Klassenraum behandeln sollten**.* (Robin, ll. 392–398)

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Racial Criticism as Part of Language Teacher Identity?

Pre-Service ELT Teachers' Positionings Towards Problematic Teaching Material

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Abstract: The fact that teachers as disseminators of (racist relevant) knowledge (Scharatow, 2011, p. 19) not only *could* but, in fact, *should* make an important contribution to discerning, addressing, problematizing, and ultimately deconstructing and reducing racism is shown by various promising approaches to racial critical work at schools and in the classroom. But do teachers feel ready to act racial critically? It is precisely this question that this article pursues by exploring the evaluative and epistemic positioning practices of pre-service English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers in relation to stereotypical teaching materials and racial criticism. On the supposition that critical perspectives on racism are closely connected to individual identarian convictions, these positioning practices are used to shed light on the pre-service teachers' Language Teacher Identity (LTI), which is an important concept in determining the relevance of study contents to pre-service teachers. The overall framework of the analysis is inspired by Weiser-Zurmühlen's Positioning Analysis model (2021, 2022). Within this framework, Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) is used to analyse these positionings on a content-level. Key results include that the participants position themselves as harsh critics of problematic teaching materials and proponents of implementing racial critical teaching approaches into their (future) classrooms. Additionally, selected case-analyses are conducted to explain how these positionings are occupied, shedding light upon questions of social desirability and entitlement to take positionings. This article concludes by pointing out what the first phase of teacher education can do to include study contents that are likely to influence pre-service teachers' teaching approaches sustainably.

Keywords: racial criticism; Language Teacher Identity; critical pedagogy; anti-racism; Positioning Analysis; Social Justice Education; teacher education

1 Introduction, or: Why take action right now?[1]

Potsdam, November 2023: High-ranking Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD) politicians, far-right-wingers, and investors gather to plan the forced remigration of millions of people based on racist criteria in a "[s]ecret plan against Germany" (Bensmann et al., 2024). Sylt, May 2024: Just a few weeks before the European elections, young people cry racist chants alienating the lyrics of Gigi D'Agostino's "L'Amour Toujours" (Tagesschau, 2024). The results of the European elections by itself: At almost

[1] Research for this article was conducted as part of my master's thesis.

16 percent, the AfD not only gained 5.9 percent compared to the last European elections, but also became the second most popular party in Germany (Europäisches Parlament, 2024). Leipzig, July 2024: A Turkish footballer celebrates his goal in the round of 16 of the European Championship against Austria by displaying “the rightwing extremist ‘wolf salute’” (Connolly, 2024). These events and their extensive discussion in media show that racism is a widespread, increasing phenomenon.

In fact, this assumption is scientifically proven. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights’ (FRA) latest *Being Black in the EU* report[2] (2023) shows that racism is a growing issue in the EU. The report titles: “Almost half of the people of African descent surveyed experienced racial discrimination, an increase from 39 % in 2016 to 45 % in 2022” (FRA, 2023, p. 14). Further, it is found that “racial discrimination has substantially increased across all areas of life” (FRA, 2023, p. 39). One of these areas is that of education. The situation is particularly serious in Germany, where 38 percent of parents or legal guardians disclosed that their children experience offensive or threatening comments at school “because of their ethnic or immigrant background” (FRA, 2023, p. 45).

However, racism does not only occur in these explicit forms in schools. All too often, it operates on implicit levels such as in textbooks (Bönkost, 2022) or the hidden curriculum (Quehl, 2011). Hence, schools take an active part in the maintenance and reproduction of both, explicit and implicit racist knowledge, structures, and practices (Korooshy et al., 2023, p. 33).

And yet, it is a school’s and every teacher’s mandate to inform their students about prejudices and nurture the destruction of racism (Güllü & Gerlach, 2023, p. 33). On an interdisciplinary level, for instance, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs’ (*Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister*, KMK) declaration *Interkulturelle Bildung und Erziehung in der Schule* (2013, p. 2) determines to reduce structural discrimination and

[2] In 2022, the data for the second edition of the *Being Black in the EU* report were gathered by the FRA within the scope of “its third survey on immigrants and descendants of immigrants, collecting comparable data in 15 EU Member States from 16124 respondents” (FRA, 2023, p. 8). A sub-sample focusing on one survey group, the “responses of 6752 immigrants and descendants of immigrants of *African descent* resident in 13 Member States” (FRA, 2023, p. 8; emphasis in original) provide the data basis for this report.

establish equal opportunities as the main tasks of education. More specifically, the core curriculum for English predefines that students are to be supported in their development as socially responsible citizens based on values and democracy education as well as political and cultural education (MSW NRW, 2023, p. 9).

This educational mandate, however, collides with reality in two respects: Firstly, as already stated, teaching materials used in English lessons not only convey but strengthen racist knowledge and structures (Alter et al., 2021; Bönkost, 2022; Klaes, 2021; see Section 2.1). Secondly, in-service English teachers are not aware of stereotypical depictions of People of Colour (PoC) in teaching materials without being explicitly questioned about them (Klaes, 2022). The solution to these paradoxes might appear simple: Why not substitute stereotypical for racial critical[3] teaching materials? According to Güllü and Gerlach (2023, p. 23), however, this is not sufficient. Instead, teachers need to be educated from a racial critical perspective to be able to detect and dismantle racism in all its forms and foster self-reflective and racial critical thinking skills in their students. Again, the solution might appear straightforward: a paradigm shift towards a racial critical teacher education. This, I argue, is too short-sighted for we first need to know if and under which circumstances such a shift is actually meaningful to pre-service teachers. This is based on the following premise: Only if study contents are compatible with the pre-service teachers' identarian convictions, will they have a lasting impact on their (future) teaching approaches (Gerlach, 2023, p. 153). This approach entails finding out first how relevant the topic of racial criticism is to pre-service teachers, and how much initial identity work would, in fact, be necessary as part of such a paradigm shift.

Consequently, this article investigates the Language Teacher Identity (LTI) of pre-service English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers by exploring their evaluative and epistemic positioning practices towards stereotypical teaching materials and racial criticism. While often ignored in national research on the professional development of teachers, LTI is an innovative construct that allows to reconstruct positioning processes of teachers (Gerlach, 2023, p. 144). In other words, investigating pre-service teachers' LTI is a promising first

[3] For a lack of an exact translation of the German compound *Rassismuskritik,* the term will be paraphrased by the expressions 'racial criticism', 'racial critical perspective', and 'critical perspective on racism' throughout this article. The terms 'racial critical', 'racial sensitive' and 'critical/sensitive to racism' are used to paraphrase the corresponding adjectives *rassismuskritisch* and *rassismussensibel*.

step to establish a meaningful teacher education that has the potential to disrupt discriminatory practices as those mentioned above by focusing on promoting social justice – if this matches the pre-service teachers' LTI, that is. In this context, social justice is understood as "parity of participation" (Fraser, 1998, p. 5) – a notion that is only possible if the "participants' independence and 'voice'" (p. 5) as well as "equal opportunity for achieving social esteem" (p. 5) are ensured.

After outlining the basics of racial criticism and its connection to a critical foreign language didactics (2.1), the concept of LTI (2.2) is introduced. In Sections 3.1 and 3.2, the procedure of data collection and data analysis is portrayed, respectively. Following this, the evaluative (4.1) and epistemic (4.2) stance taking activities of pre-service ELT teachers towards both, stereotypical teaching materials and racial criticism as well as how these positionings are occupied (4.3) are analyzed[4] following the methodology of Positioning Analysis. Based on the findings, Section 4.4 considers the positioning object with regard to social desirability and questions of entitlement. The article concludes by providing an outlook (5).

2 Key aspects of racial criticism, critical foreign language didactics, and Language Teacher Identity (LTI)

2.1 Racial criticism and its connection to critical foreign language didactics

Racial criticism understands racism "as both discourse and social practice which construct and perpetuate unequal relations of power through inferiorization, a process in which the Other is rendered inferior to the Self" (Kubota & Lin, 2009, p. 6). In this Othering process, which is historically grown and affects society as a whole, 'race'[5] serves as the distinguishing feature (Fereidooni & El, 2017, p. 15). Nowadays, "racial difference has increasingly been

[4] In terms of self-reflection, a term that is crucial in racial criticism (see Section 2.1), it is necessary to acknowledge that my perspective as a *white* female trainee teacher born and raised in Germany and committed to issues of social justice inevitably influences the analysis of other pre-service ELT teachers' positioning practices towards stereotypical teaching materials and racial criticism. As a member of the *white* majority society, I benefit from *white* privilege, which already implies that I am entangled in racist structures and mindsets, myself.

[5] In the style of Eggers et al. (2017, pp. 12–13), the term 'race' is put in single quotation marks whenever it is used to refer to its social construction. Italicized,

replaced by the notion of cultural difference, a more benign and acceptable signifier than *race*" (Kubota & Lin, 2009, p. 4; emphasis in original). This culturalism, however, has the same function as racism: It is

> "used to differentiate, exclude, or privilege certain groups of people. Therefore, issues of culture can be investigated with the understanding that they are often implicitly and yet profoundly connected to the idea of *race*." (Kubota & Lin, 2009, pp. 4–5; emphasis in original)

The same holds true for the term 'ethnicity'. According to Rattansi (2007), just as culture and 'race', ethnicity "is above all a matter of drawing boundaries around zones of *belonging* and *non-belonging*" (p. 88; emphasis in original). Put differently, each term – 'race', culture, and ethnicity – is used to homogenise, essentialise, and dichotomise a certain group of people based on their phenotypical and/or sociocultural characteristics (Becker, 2023, p. 10).

Further, racial criticism does not recognise racism primarily as an individual but a holistic phenomenon that structures the social reality of every human being (Leiprecht et al., 2011, pp. 10–11). This leads to a central assumption of racial criticism: If racism is a structural feature of every society, there are no spaces free from racism.[6] This implies that one way or another, every individual gained racist knowledge qua their socialisation and, hence, is entangled in racism (Simon & Fereidooni, 2023, pp. 153–154). To deconstruct this knowledge, it is important to continually and critically reflect upon experiences in one's socialisation process, one's privileges, and social positionings (Massumi & Fereidooni, 2017, p. 69). As such, racial criticism is an analytical practice that focuses on three aspects: firstly, the effects of dominance relations, secondly, the conditions (of emergence) of these relations, and thirdly, the consequences for both, individuals and institutions (Korooshy et al., 2023, p. 41).

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race indicates an analytical category. This distinction polarizes academics: According to Kubota and Lin (2009, p. 3), some scholars argue against using *race* as an analytical category for a fear of fueling the misbelief that 'races' exist. On the contrary, not using *race* as an analytical tool would imply that power structures remain invisible (Korooshy et al., 2023, p. 41). Since racial criticism is devoted to uncovering these socially constructed categories and their effects, using these terms in the appropriate spelling is, in fact, essential.

[6] This racial critical assumption marks one of the main differences that sets it apart from the concept of anti-racism which assumes that spaces free from racism do, indeed, exist (Simon & Fereidooni, 2023, p. 154).

One approach of bringing racial criticism into German schools is that of a racial critical educational work (*rassismuskritische Bildungsarbeit*; Quehl, 2011). This approach is about establishing equal opportunities, thematising racism, experiences of (non-)belonging, labelling processes, and deconstructing binary thinking (Quehl, 2011, p. 228). Another characteristic of this approach is the continuous (self-)reflection not only on one's involvement in racial discourse, but also on discriminatory institutional parameters (Quehl, 2011, p. 228). Based on this, alternatives for action should be developed (Scharatow, 2011, p. 17). The aim is to raise the students' awareness for racism in such a way that they themselves are able to recognise racism in its multimodal appearance – be it in pictures, texts, songs, maps, or in the curricula –, problematise these issues, and finally, deconstruct racism (Simon & Fereidooni, 2022, p. 4).

At schools, racism mainly operates on an "ideological-discursive level"[7] (Korooshy et al., 2023, p. 47) which concerns textbooks and teaching materials depicting and solidifying racist knowledge. Both Marmer and Sow (2015) and Güllü and Gerlach (2023) attest that textbooks – irrespective of the subject – reproduce racist knowledge. Receiving these (implicit) racist relevant messages, they become firmly established knowledge to the students. For English textbooks, especially, Gerlach (2020) states that *isms*, as part of the PARSNIP concepts[8] are almost actively avoided. If these topics are addressed in ELT textbooks, however, they must be critically analysed not only in terms of their linguistic complexity, but also in terms of an appropriate, holistic depiction of the topics (Gerlach, 2020, p. 23). Here, one should focus on "supposedly well-intended textbook characters who, following a broad concept of diversity, have multicultural and multisectional characteristics"[9] (Gerlach, 2020, p. 24).

To illustrate the problematic potential of ELT textbooks, a closer look should be taken at an exemplary textbook and its characters.[10] In the unit "Around

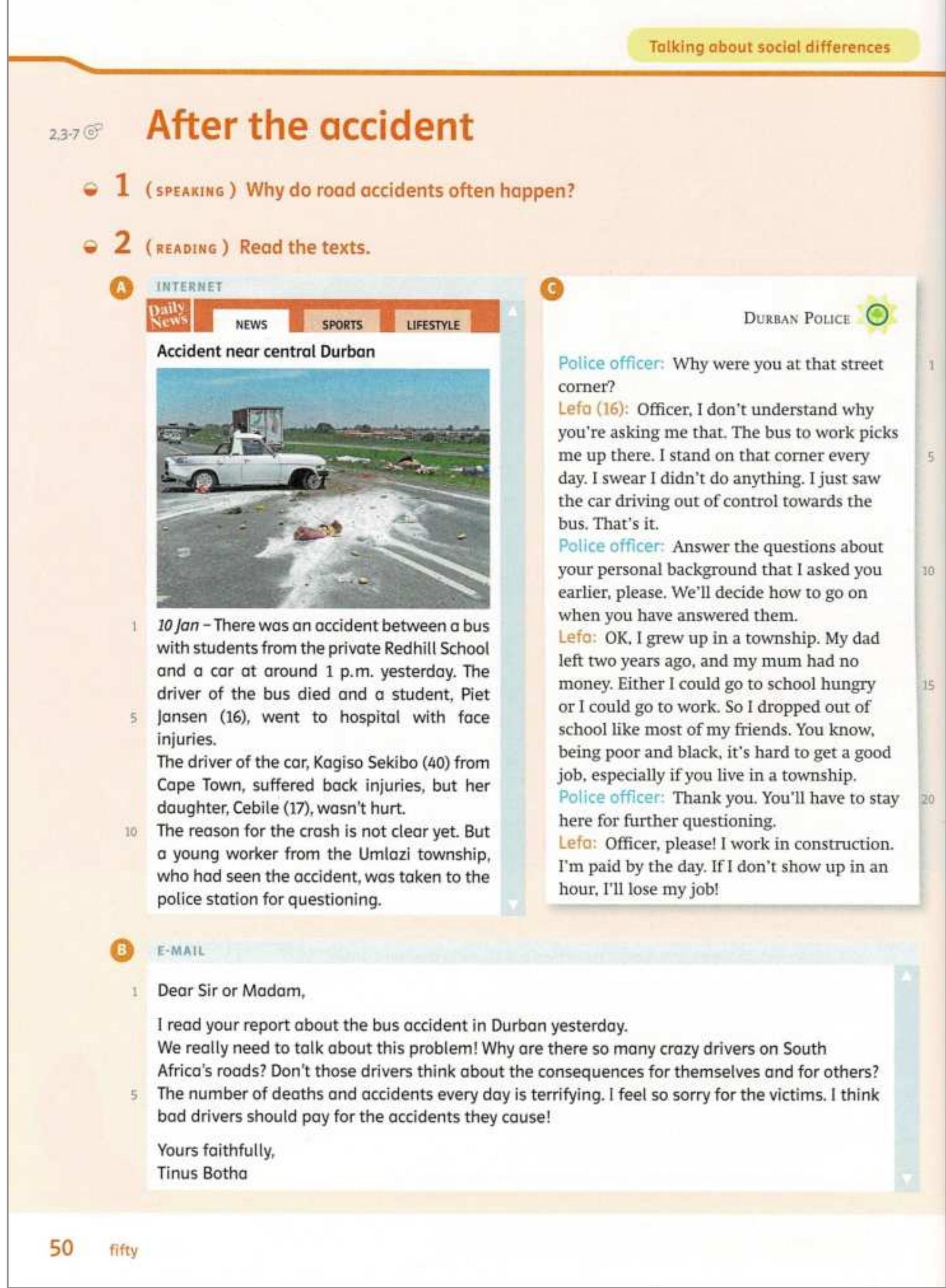
[7] The original reads as follows: "ideologisch-diskursive Ebene".

[8] PARSNIP is an acronym for the terms politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, isms, and pornography – all of which topics that are meaningful to adolescents and hence, demand to be addressed at schools (Gerlach, 2020, p. 23).

[9] The original reads as follows: "vermeintlich gutgemeinte Lehrwerk-Charaktere, die einem breiten Diversitätsbegriff folgend multikulturelle und multisektionale Eigenschaften mitbringen".

[10] This section summarises the results of an analysis which I elaborate on in more detail in Klaes (2021).

South Africa" of the English textbook *Orange Line 5*, designed for grade 9 at comprehensive schools, the students deal with five short texts depicting multiple perspectives of people involved in "an accident between a bus with students from the private Redhill School and a car" (Haß, 2018, p. 50; see Fig. 1).



Talking about social differences

2.3-7

After the accident

1 (SPEAKING) Why do road accidents often happen?

2 (READING) Read the texts.

A INTERNET

Daily News | NEWS | SPORTS | LIFESTYLE

Accident near central Durban

10 Jan – There was an accident between a bus with students from the private Redhill School and a car at around 1 p.m. yesterday. The driver of the bus died and a student, Piet Jansen (16), went to hospital with face injuries.
The driver of the car, Kagiso Sekibo (40) from Cape Town, suffered back injuries, but her daughter, Cebile (17), wasn't hurt.
The reason for the crash is not clear yet. But a young worker from the Umlazi township, who had seen the accident, was taken to the police station for questioning.

C DURBAN POLICE

Police officer: Why were you at that street corner?
Lefa (16): Officer, I don't understand why you're asking me that. The bus to work picks me up there. I stand on that corner every day. I swear I didn't do anything. I just saw the car driving out of control towards the bus. That's it.
Police officer: Answer the questions about your personal background that I asked you earlier, please. We'll decide how to go on when you have answered them.
Lefa: OK, I grew up in a township. My dad left two years ago, and my mum had no money. Either I could go to school hungry or I could go to work. So I dropped out of school like most of my friends. You know, being poor and black, it's hard to get a good job, especially if you live in a township.
Police officer: Thank you. You'll have to stay here for further questioning.
Lefa: Officer, please! I work in construction. I'm paid by the day. If I don't show up in an hour, I'll lose my job!

B E-MAIL

Dear Sir or Madam,

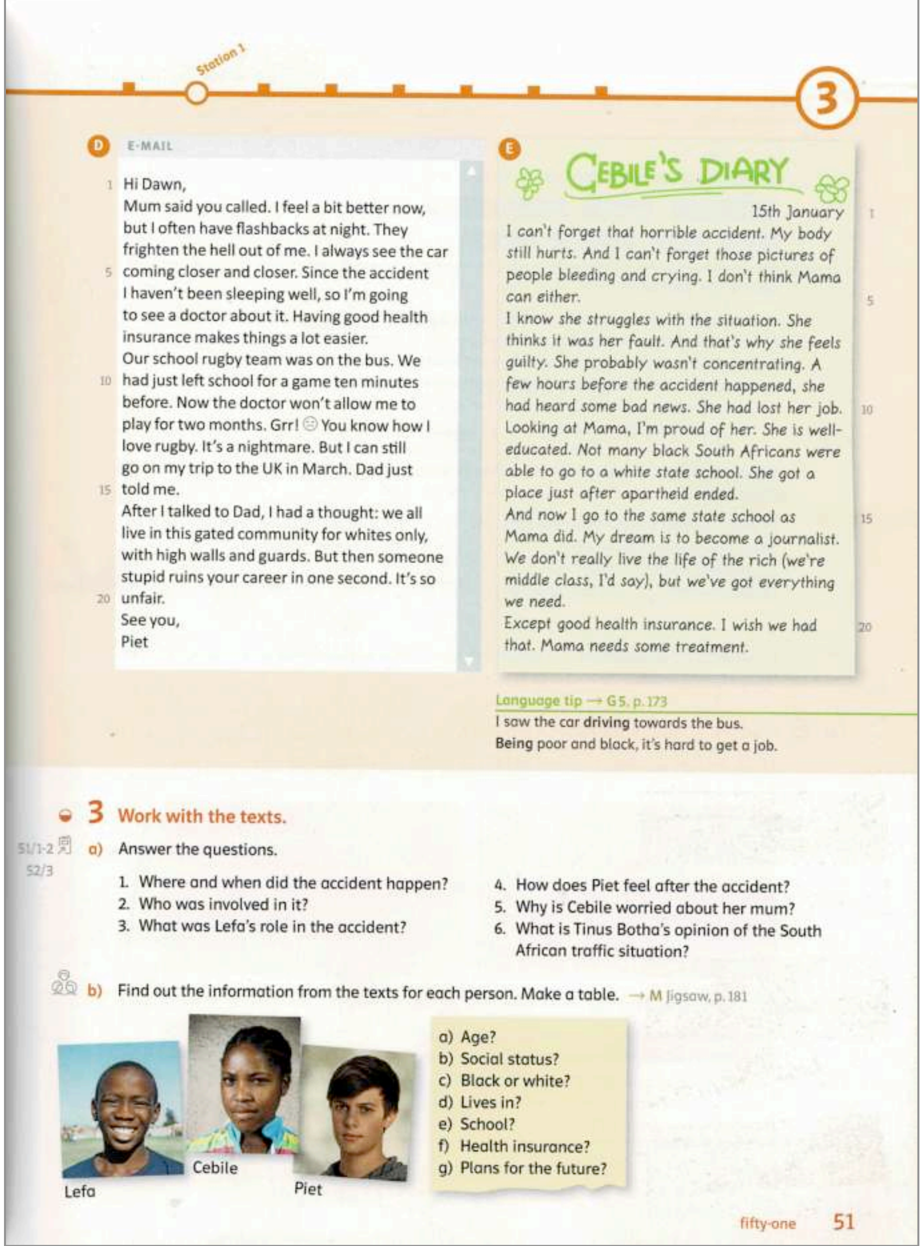
I read your report about the bus accident in Durban yesterday.
We really need to talk about this problem! Why are there so many crazy drivers on South Africa's roads? Don't those drivers think about the consequences for themselves and for others? The number of deaths and accidents every day is terrifying. I feel so sorry for the victims. I think bad drivers should pay for the accidents they cause!

Yours faithfully,
Tinus Botha

50 fifty

Figure 1a: Stimulus 1 – texts under scrutiny (Haß, 2018, pp. 50–51)[11]

[11] In kind agreement with the Klett publishing house, this textbook excerpt is reproduced here on the basis of § 51 UrhG.



Station 1

3

D E-MAIL

Hi Dawn,
Mum said you called. I feel a bit better now, but I often have flashbacks at night. They frighten the hell out of me. I always see the car coming closer and closer. Since the accident I haven't been sleeping well, so I'm going to see a doctor about it. Having good health insurance makes things a lot easier.
Our school rugby team was on the bus. We had just left school for a game ten minutes before. Now the doctor won't allow me to play for two months. Grr! ☹ You know how I love rugby. It's a nightmare. But I can still go on my trip to the UK in March. Dad just told me.
After I talked to Dad, I had a thought: we all live in this gated community for whites only, with high walls and guards. But then someone stupid ruins your career in one second. It's so unfair.
See you,
Piet

E CEBILE'S DIARY

15th January
I can't forget that horrible accident. My body still hurts. And I can't forget those pictures of people bleeding and crying. I don't think Mama can either.
I know she struggles with the situation. She thinks it was her fault. And that's why she feels guilty. She probably wasn't concentrating. A few hours before the accident happened, she had heard some bad news. She had lost her job.
Looking at Mama, I'm proud of her. She is well-educated. Not many black South Africans were able to go to a white state school. She got a place just after apartheid ended.
And now I go to the same state school as Mama did. My dream is to become a journalist. We don't really live the life of the rich (we're middle class, I'd say), but we've got everything we need.
Except good health insurance. I wish we had that. Mama needs some treatment.

Language tip → G5, p. 173
I saw the car **driving** towards the bus.
Being poor and black, it's hard to get a job.

3 Work with the texts.

a) Answer the questions.

1. Where and when did the accident happen?
2. Who was involved in it?
3. What was Lefa's role in the accident?
4. How does Piet feel after the accident?
5. Why is Cebile worried about her mum?
6. What is Tinus Botha's opinion of the South African traffic situation?

b) Find out the information from the texts for each person. Make a table. → M Jigsaw, p. 181

Lefa
Cebile
Piet

a) Age?
b) Social status?
c) Black or white?
d) Lives in?
e) School?
f) Health insurance?
g) Plans for the future?

fifty-one 51

Figure 1b: Stimulus 1 – texts under scrutiny (Haß, 2018, pp. 50–51)[12]

The main characters are Lefa, whom the police suspect to have something to do with the accident, Cebile, who is a passenger of the car involved in the crash, and Piet Jansen, a bus passenger who suffers injuries and has to go to the hospital. Task 3b), supposed to target the students' detailed reading comprehension, asks the students to tabularise information about the characters'

[12] In kind agreement with the Klett publishing house, this textbook excerpt is reproduced here on the basis of § 51 UrhG.

age, social status, skin colour, neighbourhood, school, health insurance, and plans for the future (see Fig. 2).

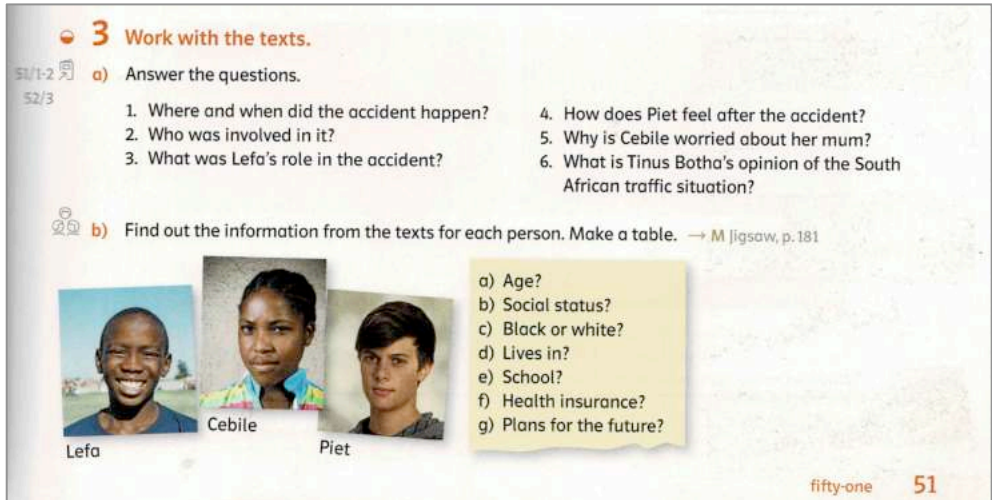


Figure 2: Stimulus 2 – task 3b) (Haß, 2018, p. 51)

The sample solution to this task which I suggest (Fig. 3 on the next page) shows how boldly stereotypes and seemingly insurmountable social differences are applied in the depiction of the car crash. Amongst others, Piet serves the cliché of the *white*[13] boy who is rich and privileged but a victim of the poor, uneducated Black[14] people represented by Lefa (Klaes, 2021). This is a common framing. Fereidooni (2019) states that "Black people in children's books [and textbooks; M.K.] are often portrayed as primitive, exotic, antisocial and as a threat to society" (p. 22). Since the task fails to address and/or deconstruct these stereotypes, racist knowledge remains unquestioned and thus, is reproduced. Following Quehl (2011, p. 235), this example is used to show that racial criticism can enter school discussions only if textbooks and therein implicitly depicted normalities are critically questioned.

[13] In the manner of Eggers et al. (2017), *white* is italicised to indicate its constructed character. It does not refer to the actual color of one's skin but to a socially constructed and shared knowledge about being *white* and thus, not being negatively affected by racism. Further, it indicates the awareness that being *white* inevitably includes profiting from structural as well as individual advantages (Güllü & Gerlach, 2023, p. 24).

[14] The capitalisation of Black, following Eggers et al. (2017), indicates its usage as a political autonym chosen by Black people to signify a shared sphere of experiences. It is not used to refer to one's skin colour.

p. 51, no. 3b) – Sample Solution

	Lefa	Cebile	Piet
Age?	16	17	16
Social status?	low (poor)	middle class	high
Black or white?	Black	Black	white
Lives in?	Umlazi township	Cape Town	gated community for whites only with high walls + guards
School?	dropped out of school	white state school	private Redhill school
Health insurance?	no	no	yes
Plans for the future?	none	becoming a journalist	rugby career (now ruined)

Figure 3: Stimulus 3 – sample solution to task 3b) (own text)

As another approach to teaching, critical foreign language didactics (Gerlach, 2020), originating from *Critical Pedagogy* (Giroux, 2020), is committed to such a critical reflection of teaching material, teaching, schools, and educational institutions as such. It aims at bringing these critical reflections into the classrooms (Gerlach, 2020, pp. 12–13). "Through critical examinations of power and politics that produce and maintain domination and subordination in various dimensions of local and global society" (Kubota & Lin, 2009, p. 12), education becomes a tool to pursue social justice. These critical examinations "engage teachers and students in dialogues on relations of power with regard to race, gender, class, and other social categories" (Kubota & Lin, 2009, p. 12). Assuming that knowledge constructed and shared in the classroom is never neutral but always political, critical foreign language didactics aims at thematising and recognising power relations, reducing prejudices and stereotypes, as well as developing social equity and education for democracy (Gerlach, 2020, p. 8). With their genuine focus on foreignness of languages and cultures in topics such as Apartheid, the British Empire/Colonialism, Nigeria, and multicultural Britain, English lessons specifically come to the fore (Gerlach, 2020, p. 8; Güllü & Gerlach, 2023, p. 28; Zimmermann, 2023). Although these conceptual approaches to teaching are important, they are condemned to remain ineffective if a critical perspective on racism is not part of the LTI of teachers who are supposed to apply these programmes.

2.2 Professional development of teachers: Language Teacher Identity (LTI)

Since "race constitutes an integral part of individual and group identity that shapes the ways people think, believe, and act" (Kubota & Lin, 2009, p. 11), one's identity is closely connected to one's ideas of 'race' and racism. As teachers not only initiate learning processes but fulfil an educational mandate (see Section 1), it is important to unfold what a (Critical) Language Teacher Identity (LTI) is – a concept that is best approached by focusing on its word components:

Identity. While identity as a scientific construct is vaguely defined, there are three central aspects about identity generally shared throughout different research fields: Firstly, identity is a phenomenon that "is multiple, shifting, and in conflict" (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 22). Secondly, identity is context-bound and "crucially related to social, cultural, and political contexts" (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 23). Thirdly, identity "is constructed, maintained, and negotiated to a significant extent through language and discourse" (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 23). As such, identity is understood as a dynamic, processual construct (Schultze, 2018, p. 13).

Teacher Identity. According to Richards (2017), teacher identity "is both individual as well as social in nature. On the one hand, it reflects who the teacher is, the teacher's view of self and how he or she is positioned in relation to other people" (p. 141). This individual part of a teacher identity, influenced by the teacher's biography, covers their role as well as their value system brought into the classroom. On the other hand, a teacher's identity is shifting and constructed for it is "shaped by the social context" (Richards, 2017, p. 141).

Language Teacher Identity. As already discussed in Section 2.1, a study could show that "many aspects of identity – including, though not restricted to, matters of race, gender, sexual orientation – were of the utmost importance in the language classroom" (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 22). Consequently, language teachers act in a social room that is identity-establishing in two respects. On the one hand, this means that the teacher's LTI shapes what happens in the classroom and, hence, has the potential to change one's own as well as the students' behaviour, attitudes, and actions. This way, LTI "is a key source for agency for social change" (Morgan, 2017, pp. 205–206). On the other hand, classroom (inter)actions influence the teacher's LTI, making the relationship between classroom (inter)actions and LTI a reciprocal one. In addition to that,

LTI can be considered a methodological tool, “a foil for both reflecting teachers’ professional self-understanding and the situatedness of the teacher in the institutional context” (Gerlach, 2023, p. 143).

Critical Language Teacher Identity. According to Kubota (2017), “[a] critical teacher identity can be characterized by a firm commitment to social justice” (p. 212). While every teacher has a “certain ideological or political inclination” (Kubota, 2017, p. 210), teachers endorsing critical orientations “tend to have an identity with a distinct ethical commitment, which guides their pedagogical practices” (Kubota, 2017, p. 212).

Since LTI is accessible via reflection but can also be shaped by reflections initiated by acts of positioning within reflexive discourses, it is a promising concept for teacher education (Güllü & Gerlach, 2023, p. 23). Creating opportunities for reflection and dealing with one’s LTI is important as values, norms, and positionings influence what and how teachers teach (Gerlach, 2023, p. 149), and are, in turn, influenced by what happens in the classroom. Thus, LTI should not be neglected when examining the professional development of teachers (Gerlach, 2023, p. 153). Since one’s identity can be expressed in and shaped by acts of positioning, LTI can be examined by analysing precisely these positioning practices established in linguistic discourses (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann, 2004, p. 168).

3 Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

3.1.1 Instrument

To explore the underlying research question *To what extent is a racial critical perspective part of pre-service ELT teachers’ LTI?* within focus group interviews, it was operationalised in the interview guide by focusing on two main aspects:

A): How do pre-service ELT teachers position themselves evaluatively and epistemically towards stereotypical teaching materials (specific focus)?

B): How do pre-service ELT teachers position themselves evaluatively and epistemically towards critical racism (abstract focus)?

Resulting from this, implications for the first phase of teacher education can be derived.

A semi-structured interview guide, structured according to questions A) and B), was used to gather information about the pre-service ELT teachers' LTI within focus group interviews. After posing some warm-up questions that enquired definitions of basic terms and, hence, were meant to ease into the interview and establish a framework of reference shared by the interviewees, the main part of the semi-structured interview guide was split into two sections. For question A), the interviewees were confronted with the teaching materials portrayed in Section 2.1 (Fig. 1–3). Presenting one stimulus at a time, the interviewees were asked to comment on the texts, task, and sample solution, respectively. For question B), the interviewees were enquired about racial criticism in general. Closing questions were used to wind down the interview and give the opportunity for the interviewees to add anything they felt was missing (Burns, 2010, p. 80).

Since this research endeavor is social in nature as it is about individuals and their thoughts, it was ensured that it strictly followed ethic guidelines. Thus, the respondents' right to privacy, their right to refuse to answer, their right to withdraw from the study at any point in time without offering an explanation and having to risk negative consequences, as well as their right to remain anonymous were accounted for and mentioned within the consent form.

3.1.2 Method and participants

It was decided to investigate the research question within focus group interviews, "defined as group discussions which focus on a specific topic or situation" (Galloway, 2019, p. 290). From the participants' perspective, the focus group interview format ensures that the focus is on the negotiation of answers in the group rather than on their individual responses. This can and should take pressure off the individual (Galloway, 2019, p. 290). For two aspects, this is beneficial for the research proposal. Firstly, the "focus group format is based on the collective experience of group brainstorming, that is, participants thinking together, inspiring and challenging each other, and reacting to emerging issues and points" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 144). This means that participants are required to take a stance to a given stimulus and position themselves not only with regard to this stimulus, but also to other participants' opinions. This way, not only meaning is being constructed collaboratively, but also the participants' LTI is being constructed discursively. As such, the focus group

interview format allows to get an insight into identity construction and identification processes. Secondly, the first-mentioned aspects combined with the group format has the potential to make the participants feel more comfortable to talk about sensitive topics than in one-on-one interviews.

While focus group interviews are usually conducted “with groups of six to eight participants” (Burns, 2010, p. 77), sometimes even with “6–12 members” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 144), two focus groups with two participants each were used for this research endeavour. Section 3.2.2 will explain why this group size is still sufficient. As shown in Table 1, all participants are students of ELT, which marks the homogeneous feature in the group composition. Tim[15], whose second subject is Physical Education, and Amy, who studies German alongside ELT, participated in the first focus group interview. Louis, studying Spanish alongside ELT, and Sophia, whose second subject is History, participated in the second focus group interview. Apart from Amy, who aims to become a teacher at comprehensive schools (*Haupt-, Real, and Gesamtschulen*, *HRSGe*) with integrated teacher training for special education (*Integrierte Sonderpädagogik*, *ISP*), all participants are in their Master of Education programmes for grammar schools (*Gymnasien und Gesamtschulen*, *GymGe*) at a university in North Rhine-Westphalia. In late October 2023, the focus group interviews were held and recorded in a face-to-face setting.

Table 1: Composition of the focus group interviews (own research)

Focus group interview	*Date of recording*	*Interview duration*	*Participants*	*Subjects*	*Type of school*
Interview I	October 23, 2023	01:20:21	Tim	ELT, Physical Education	*GymGe*
			Amy	ELT, German	*HRSGe* with *ISP*
Interview II	October 24, 2023	01:19:11	Louis	ELT, Spanish	*GymGe*
			Sophia	ELT, History	*GymGe*

[15] Conforming with research ethics (see Section 3.1.1), the names of the participants are anonymized.

3.2 Data Analysis

3.2.1 Procedure

The interviews were transcribed according to Dresing and Pehl's (2018, pp. 21ff.) extended content-semantic transcription system. Exemplary sequences selected for this article were additionally transcribed according to the conventions of GAT 2 (Selting et al., 2009). Subsequently, the interviews were coded following Mayring's (2022) Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). While the different sections of the interview guide already predetermined the categories emerging from the analysis to a certain degree, the analysis still allowed for more categories to evolve inductively from the data. In total, nine main codes (MCs) with zero to eight sub codes (SCs) derived from the data (see Appendix 1).

3.2.2 Instrument – Positioning Analysis enhanced by QCA

While QCA was used to analyse the pre-service ELT teachers' positioning practices on a content-level, the overall framework of the analysis is provided by Weiser-Zurmühlen's Positioning Analysis model (2021, 2022). Combining Davies and Harré's Positioning Theory (1990) and Du Bois' Stance Taking Theory (2007), Weiser-Zurmühlen (2021, 2022) provides a model that allows to use the concept of positioning as a means to gain empirical insight into the construction of identities based on narratives.

According to Davies and Harré (1990), positioning is understood as "the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines" (p. 48). Within this discursive process, identities are not only constructed but enacted (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann, 2004, p. 168). With their definition of positioning, Davies and Harré (1990) have laid the foundation for Du Bois' stance taking theory (2007), which describes stance taking as

> "a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field" (p. 163).

This understanding already implies that the act of stance taking is "a set of three actions (evaluation, positioning, alignment)" (Du Bois, 2007, p. 169) enacted with the involvement of "three entities (first subject, second subject, stance object)" (Du Bois, 2007, p. 169). Let us first focus on the entities: To

take stance, at least two subjects are needed, which explains why it is sufficient to conduct focus group interviews with just two interview partners (see Section 3.1.2). The subjects refer to what Du Bois (2007) calls the stance object, the “target toward which the stance is being directed” (p. 147). Now, let us shift the focus to the three actions: While an evaluative stance describes “the process whereby a stancetaker orients to an object of stance and characterizes it as having some specific quality or value” (Du Bois, 2007, p. 143), the epistemic stance indicates how knowledgeable a speaker pretends to be (Du Bois, 2007, p. 143). Alignment, in this case, indicates the degree to which a speaker agrees with their interlocutor’s opinions, beliefs, and positionings (Du Bois, 2007, p. 144). A typical stance act proceeds like this: Within a so-called stance lead, subject 1 positions themself evaluatively and/or epistemically towards the stance object. In a stance follow, subject 2 also positions themself evaluatively and/or epistemically towards the stance object, but at the same time, they are already influenced by the first subject’s stance taking process – and thus, positioning – which means that they create (dis-)alignment (Du Bois, 2007, p. 161).

As displayed in Figure 4 on the next page, Weiser-Zurmühlen (2021, 2022) follows these understandings, but expands the stance taking model by the following three aspects:

- Represented by B+, the model indicates that the act of positioning requires at least two interlocutors but may include more than that (Weiser-Zurmühlen, 2021, p. 288).
- The interlocutors position themselves and others not only with local but also with global scope. While local scope pertains to the interaction, global scope alludes to general discourses related to the topic under discussion (Weiser-Zurmühlen, 2021, p. 289).
- The positioning object may be concrete or abstract (Weiser-Zurmühlen, 2021, p. 289).

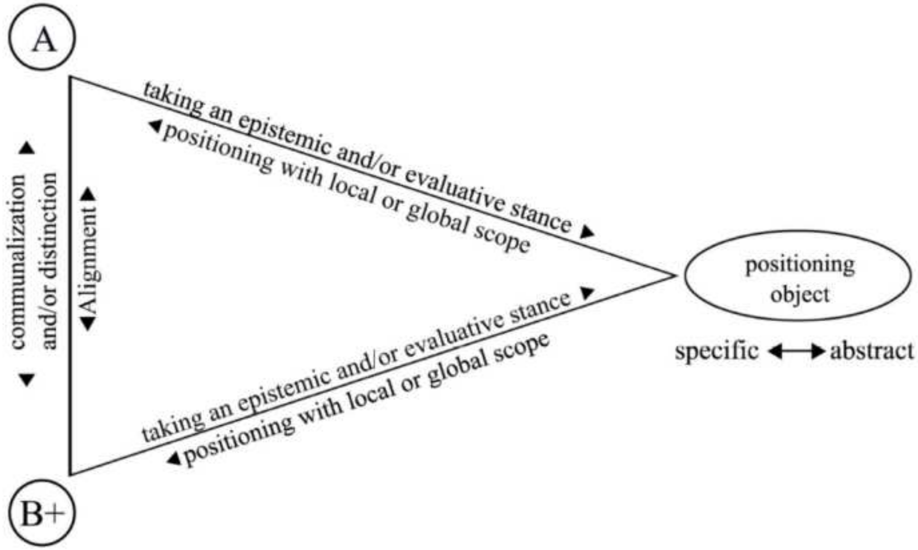


Figure 4: Positioning analysis model according to Weiser-Zurmühlen (2022, p. 7)

Applying the positioning analysis model to my research, the interview partners take both, evaluative and epistemic stances towards stereotypical teaching materials as the specific positioning object and critical racism as the abstract positioning object. Consequently, they position themselves and their partners with local scope, pertaining the interview situation as such, and with global scope, concerning general discourses surrounding racial criticism. While all of this happens in the interactive discourse, the interlocutors also (dis-)align with the other interview member's stances towards both, the specific and abstract positioning object. In this process, the participants share parts of their identity construction.

4 Analysis

In a first step, it will be analysed what kinds of evaluative (Section 4.1) and epistemic stances (Section 4.2) the participants take towards the stereotypical teaching materials (specific positioning object) and racial criticism (abstract positioning object) on a content level. In a second step, the degree of (dis-) alignment will be investigated explaining how positionings are occupied by the stance takers (Section 4.3). A last analysis section will focus on the emerging questions of entitlement and social desirability (Section 4.4).

4.1 What kind of evaluative stances do pre-service ELT teachers occupy towards stereotypical teaching materials and racial criticism?

With regard to sub-question A (see Section 3.1.1), the first stimulus – the texts (see Fig. 1) – is predominantly assessed positively by both focus groups. Mainly, the text format including different perspectives and its linguistic adequacy are positively evaluated. Further, Tim deems the texts to be exciting, realistic, and authentic. He justifies his assessment with the statement:

> *Also dieses Schichtdenken kommt auf jeden Fall sehr gut rüber […]. Also für mich sind/ scheinen die schon relativ relativ authentisch zu sein* (Interview I, passage 72).
>
> *So this thinking in social strata definitely comes across very well [...]. So to me they are/seem to be relatively authentic.*

This indicates that, at this point in focus group interview 1, social differences are recognised but not yet problematised. The participants rather focus on the (linguistic) authenticity of the text, without a specific mention to the stereotypical representation yet – however, they further problematised this in a following sequence.

```
01  A:  also ich muss sagen (.) so (-) auf den Ersten blick hatte ich
        kurz ein bisschen schiss (.) dass das ETwas stigmatisierend sein
        könnte; =
02  I:   [hm hm],
03  A:  =[also ] wenn das so ein bisschen so ist> (.) äh ja keine ahnung
        der (-) junge der von mir aus SCHWARZ ist (--) wird dann
        beFRAGT,
04      Und äh oder (-) hat irgendwie (--) KEINE guten AUssichten auf
        die zUkunft,=und
05      also (.) ich glaube ihr WISST was ich meine;=[ne]=
06  T:                                              [ja voll]
07  A:                                             =[da hatte ich]
        KURZ kurz ein bisschen SORGE,
08      andererseits denke ich dass ja (.) sowas wie beNACHteiligung von
        (---) JA von bestimmten grUppen in der gesellschaft das ist ja
        immer noch gang und GÄBE,
09      von daher wäre es ja eigentlich auch WICHtig das zu °h
        thematiSIEREN,
10  T:  [ja  ]
11  A:  [aber] ich glaube es ist total wichtig da drauf zu Achten dass
        da eben NICHT so (--) stereoTYPEN (-) [NUR noch];=
12  T:                                        [ja      ]
```

```
13  A:  =also (--) ne dass man da NUR so (.) quasi da drangeht da hätte
        ich ein bisschen Angst dass das sonst KOmisch (--) wäre;
14      INSbesondere wenn man eine klasse hat die multikulturell ist;
15  T:  ja
16  A:  fände ich das ein bisschen (.) ähm (---) ja (--) bisschen KURZ
        gedacht;
17  T:  ja (--) voll-
18      ja ich würde mich da auf jeden fall ANschließen,=
        =und ähm genau […]
```

Extract 1: kurz ein bisschen schiss (.) dass das ETwas stigmatisierend sein könnte (taken from Interview I, passages 98–103)

Within an evaluative stance, Amy describes her initial thoughts when seeing task 3b) for the first time. She utters the worry that the material could be stigmatising since a Black character who is portrayed as poor and without any plans for the future is interviewed and disrespected by the police officer. To this stance lead, Tim establishes alignment by using the stance verb: *"ja voll"* (Extract 1, l. 6). Following this, Amy refutes her former argument by considering that the thematization of Black people being the subject to discrimination is not only important, but real. This part, especially, does not only show Amy's multi-perspective angle towards the matter, but also her insecurities when dealing with teaching materials like this. Once again, Tim expresses his alignment by using the stance verb *"ja"* (Extract 1, l. 10). Concluding, Amy highlights the importance to avoid this kind of stereotypical depiction of Black people in multicultural classrooms, especially. To this aspect, Tim first agrees by using the stance verb *"ja (--) voll"* (Extract 1, l. 17) once again. Yet, he also clarifies his alignment to both aspects – the stereotypical and the authentic aspect of the material – within his stance follow (Extract 1, ll. 17–18).

However, he relativizes this issue by adding *"aber halt auch realistisch, real realgetreu"* (Interview I, passage 103). When the third stimulus – the sample solution (see Fig. 3) – was brought in, the two participants' opinions consolidate. Amy, for instance, classifies the tabular categorisation as *"total --problematisch--"* (Interview I, passage 134). Her evaluative stances towards the three stimuli, in particular, disclose an intensification process as she proceeds from assuming that the material could be *"ETwas stigmatisierend"* (Extract 1, l. 1) to explicitly evaluating it as *"**total** --problematisch--"* (Interview I, passage 134; emphasis M.K.).

A similar phenomenon occurs in focus group 2. When evaluating the first stimulus, already, Louis briefly addresses the role allocation, which he believes to be *"irgendwie auch so leicht stereotyp"* (Interview II, passage 50).

As soon as focus group 2 is confronted with the third stimulus, Louis states*:* *“Also ähm das ist irgendwie eine sehr stereotype Darstellung”* (Interview II, passage 75). Just as with the first focus group, this clearly indicates a process of intensification in the evaluative stance taking activities.

Not only is this intensification process visible through the participants’ increasingly sophisticated opinions but also through the clear designation of racism as the underlying issue in the material. Very early on in the second focus group interview, Sophia encapsulates the underlying issue by saying:

> *Also ich frage mich auch so, wo der SINN dahinter liegt, also was man daran erkennen soll. Also wenn ich jetzt zum Beispiel dann aufschreiben würde, okay also Lefa und Cebile, wenn man das so ausspricht, sind jetzt beide black UND haben keine Health Insurance, also WAS sollen denn die Schüler daraus lernen? Also weil Menschen in Südafrika schwarz sind, haben sie dann keine ähm Krankenversicherung? Also das ist ja auch, also ich weiß nicht, ob es die richtigen Schlüsse/ ob es die Schüler die richtigen Schlüsse ZIEHEN lässt.* (Interview II, passage 57)

> *So, I also wonder about the meaning behind it, so what you are supposed to understand from it. So, if I were to write down, for example, okay, so Lefa and Cebile, if you pronounce it like that, are now both black AND do not have any health insurance, so WHAT are the students supposed to learn from that? So, because people in South Africa are black, do they not have any health insurance? So that’s just, I don’t know if it draws the right conclusions/ if it lets the students draw the right conclusions.*

Even though it becomes clear that Sophia is referring to the stigmatizing categorization, understands and describes it, she does not explicitly denominate it, i.e. by explicitly calling the material “racist”. Later in the interview, however, she clearly addresses the issue, which is that *“rassistische Narrative reproduziert werden und aber auch nicht re/ DEkonstruiert am Ende”* (Interview II, passage 109). What we see here is a tentative approach to tackling the problem of stereotypical representations in the material.

These examples show that the participants recognize stereotypical aspects in the teaching material from very early on and increasingly problematize the unquestioned reproduction of racial stereotypes. Although the participants show initial uncertainties in labelling stereotyping and racism, which will be examined in Section 4.2, this intensification process in the evaluative stance taking activities (from *“etwas stigmatisierend”* to *“total problematisch”* and from *“leicht stereotyp”* to *“sehr stereotype Darstellung”*) indicates that stereotypical representations in textbooks are clearly relevant to them. Thus,

they position themselves as harsh critics of the materials under scrutiny. At the same time, it can already be stated that the reinforcement of their opinions indicates that the participants increasingly position themselves as knowledgeable by taking epistemic stances towards the material.

Focusing on sub-question B (see Section 3.1.1), one can say that the pre-service ELT teachers align in terms of the importance of racial criticism and its implementation at schools. When asked to comment on the importance to integrate racial critical perspectives into their own (future) teaching, all of them stated that it is *"[s]ehr wichtig"* (Interview I, passage 311), *"super, super wichtig"* (Interview I, passage 318), *"schon ziemlich [wichtig]"* (Interview II, passage 158), and *"VIEL wichtiger ähm als Sprachübungen zu machen"* (Interview II, passage 159; see Section 4.4). As such, they unambiguously position themselves as advocates of racial criticism. Hence, this indicates that racial criticism constitutes a facet of their LTI. According to Gerlach and Fasching-Varner (2020, p. 222), this kind of motivation and self-efficacy is vital for implementing social justice teaching approaches. However, in these evaluative stance taking activities, a number of uncertainties are mirrored, which have an effect on the epistemic level of stance taking and will be discussed in the next section.

4.2 What kind of epistemic stances do pre-service ELT teachers take towards stereotypical teaching materials and racial criticism?

Since, as the focus group interviews progresses, the positionings become increasingly clear through evaluative stance taking activities, the impression could be gained that the participants position themselves as experts in the subject area. Further, Tim explicitly positions himself as knowledgeable by saying:

> *Ich würde auch sagen, wenn sich jemand wirklich damit befasst und ähm also (..) auskennt also zum Beispiel wie es jetzt vielleicht bei uns würde ich HOFFEN sage ich mal.* (Interview I, passage 271)
>
> *I would also say that if someone is really concerned with it and, um, (..) is well informed, for example, as it is the case for us, I would HOPE I'd say.*

With a statement like this, he explicitly ascribes expertise to deal with racial criticism to both, himself and Amy.

Implicitly, all participants position themselves as knowledgeable when suggesting approaches to teaching the material under scrutiny. For instance, Tim suggests using the material as an introduction to a teaching sequence about

South Africa which would thematize the positive depiction of *white* privileges. Amy recommends initiating reflection processes on the part of the students, for instance by discussing the materials. Further, she would instruct the students on doing research on the reality in South Africa as well as on stories *"die dieses Schema völlig durchbrechen"* (Interview I, passage 385). Another of her approaches is to complement the table in task 3b) by a column asking why the characters are living in a particular neighborhood as well as do or do not have a health insurance and/or plans for the future. Louis would adapt the material by providing as much context as possible, for instance by adding info-boxes on background-information on South Africa, its history and society. Just as Amy, Sophia would ask the students to find authentic materials from South Africa within a research phase. Using this authentic material, causes for Lefa's situation should be addressed:

> *Und dann (..) welche ja SORGEN und welche PROBLEME sind eben/ also stecken dahinter? Also dann (.) zum Beispiel, also gucken wir uns jetzt Lefa zum Beispiel an, also WARUM ist es jetzt gerade für ihn SO schwer?* (Interview II, passage 174)
>
> *And then (..) which CONCERNS and which PROBLEMS are at the bottom of it? So then (.) for example, let's take a look at Lefa, for example, so WHY is it SO particularly difficult for him?*

This way, she assumes that a deconstruction process is initiated. Since these suggestions are in accord with the academic discussion on established teaching approaches (i.e., Becker, 2023, on delivering facts and history of racism; Gerlach, 2020, on contextualization in foreign language teaching and critically discussing the teaching materials), it can be assumed that the participants position themselves as knowledgeable through epistemic stance taking activities.

However, as indicated in Section 4.1, the participants show insecurities at the content level, already. On the one hand, Tim and Amy utter worries with regard to implementing racial criticism into their (future) classrooms. In view of increasing standardisation processes, Tim fears a lack of support by both, teaching staff and school administration, should he decide to use self-designed materials. Amy is not sure as to whether she will actually implement a critical perspective on racism into her teaching for a fear of extra effort in a profession that is engrossing, anyways. Additionally, she doubts that she is brave enough to push through her desire to teach racial critically at any time. She shows her discomfort by saying:

> *Wo ich mich dann halt auch frage wie soll man das dann (...) also wie soll man das zeitlich noch //schaffen//? Dann was du auch angesprochen hattest mit den Lehrkräften, sehe ich ähnlich. Also ich hätte auch Angst, ne? Kommt natürlich voll auf die Schule, auf die Lehrkräfte drauf an, aber wenn ich dann da als junger Hüpfer gerade aus der Uni komme und dann sind da irgendwie fünf Lehrkräfte, die das schon (..) jahrelang machen, ich weiß nicht, ob ich immer den MUT hätte, mich da so durchzusetzen. Oder ob ich nicht dann (...) ja oder ob ich nicht dann manchmal auch ein bisschen Angst hätte so dann irgendwann die Blöde zu sein, die immer gegensteuert. Also vor allen Dingen weil ich ja, wenn ich ja erstmal in die Schule reingehe, gerade was Workload angeht, ich habe ja im Prinzip ÜBERHAUPT keine Ahnung. Wenn ICH jetzt sage „Wir müssen jetzt hier aber immer das Material reflektieren" und da sind schon drei, die fallen bald vom **Stuhl**, (..) also (lachen). Dazu kann/ also das weiß ich ja ++nicht++ dann.* (Interview I, passage 320)

> *And then I also ask myself how you're supposed to do that (...) so how are you supposed to //manage// that in terms of time? Then what you also mentioned with the teachers, I have a similar view. I'd be scared too, right? It all depends on the school, of course, on the teachers, but if I'm a spring chicken coming straight out of university and then there are five teachers who have been doing it for (..) years, I don't know if I'd always have the COURAGE to assert myself. Or whether I wouldn't then (...) yes or whether I wouldn't sometimes be a bit afraid of being the stupid one who always goes against the grain. Especially because, when I start teaching, when it comes to workload, I basically have absolutely no idea. If I now say "But we always have to reflect on the material here" and there are already three of them, they soon fall off their **chairs**, (..) so (laughing). I can/ so I do ++not++ know that then.*

This is a crucial point also addressed in the academic discourse. For instance, Gerlach and Fasching-Varner (2020, p. 227) assume that the teacher training, already, may be a risk for critical foreign language teachers since their expectations and attitudes break with systemic guidelines, long-established structures, and existing contents. This breaking with institutional boundaries is anticipated by the pre-service teachers and leads to considerable uncertainties regarding the implementation of critical approaches even before their teacher training has started. The great danger here is that these "struggles in implementing critical pedagogy may impact their professional identity" (Kubota, 2017, pp. 211–212). This should be prevented at all costs, as the professional identity – as shown up to this point – holds huge potential for Social Justice Education.

On the other hand, these struggles become even more clear when discussing how to teach the material under scrutiny, specifically. Picturing a multicultural class, Tim and Amy struggle

> *damit halt umzugehen, weil man ja quasi darüber redet übers weiße Privileg* (Interview I, passage 103).
>
> *to deal with it, because you're talking about white privilege, so to speak.*

In this context, Tim addresses the risk of whitesplaining:

> *Und ich denke mir dann auch so, wenn ich das thematisiere, könnte sich eine PoC ja in meinem Klassenraum auch denken „Ach geil, nochmal eine weiße Person, die mir jetzt erklärt, was Rassismus ist" so (lachen)* (Interview I, passage 289).
>
> *And then I also imagine that if I bring this up, a PoC in my classroom might think "Oh great, another white person explaining to me what racism is" (laughter)*

These insecurities are also to be seen on a linguistic level. Amongst others, the application of evasive terms is prominent in both focus group interviews. In focus group interview 1, it is Tim who repeatedly uses the term *"Apartheid[-Logik]"* whenever he is referring to racist processes:

> *Ähm und Schwierigkeiten halt einfach, dass dieses (räuspern)/ es wird die Apartheid auf jeden Fall hier überhaupt nicht ähm (.) RICHTIG thematisiert. Vielleicht kam es einmal vor, aber nicht so richtig. Ähm es ist ein/ ja genau. Aber und es werden halt genau diese (.) Prinzipien der Apartheid letztendlich irgendwie reproduziert ohne das zu reflektieren.* (Interview I, passage 186)
>
> *Um and the difficulties are simply that this (clears throat)/ apartheid is definitely not um (.) PROPERLY addressed here. It may have come up once, but not properly. Um, it's a/ yes, exactly. But and it's precisely these (.) principles of apartheid that are ultimately somehow being reproduced without reflecting on them.*

In combination with many short pauses in the speech flow and re-starting sentences, which give the impression of rumination, this conceptual imprecision acts as an indicator of a lack of knowledge that Tim tries to cover by using terms that are familiar, but do not express the same thing.

In the second focus group interview, Louis chooses to use the term ethnicity for 'race'. This is a conscious decision as he states:

> *Ah ich hasse das Wort Rasse auf Deutsch.* (Interview II, passage 120)
>
> *Ah I hate the word 'race' in German.*

Consequently, he decides to use ethnicity:

Ähm sagen wir Ethnizität. (Interview II, passage 123)

Um let's say ethnicity.

In theory, scholars have often referred to the explicit decision to refrain from using the word race as trying to be "politically correct", which seems to negotiate the intentions of Louis here, as well. However, scholars also often refer to the use of the word "ethnicity" instead as "a problematic concept" (Rattansi, 2007, p. 88) because "it is a relational concept that sets one group of people apart from another – a process of constructing differences" (Kubota & Lin, 2009, p. 4; see Section 2.1).

In general, making use of these evasive terms can be ascribed to two potential reasons: For one thing, it can be assumed that the participants are uncertain about the distinct application of the 'right' terms in the 'right' context. For another thing, it may be that the participants (un)consciously avoid using the terms 'race' and racism for a fear of saying the wrong thing. This fear is reasonable as talking about racism is a highly sensitive matter and nobody wants to run the risk of being branded a racist – wrongly labelled or not. Either way, the usage of evasive terms combined with long pauses are markers for uncertainties with regard to explicitly addressing racism. While Tim and Amy already broached these struggles on a content-level, these markers, too, disclose that the pre-service teachers are less knowledgeable than they position themselves in other passages.

4.3 How do pre-service ELT teachers take these positionings and negotiate their LTI?

Investigating how these positionings are occupied, the focus is on the interpersonal alignment of the interview partners. It is striking that there is no case of misalignment regarding the positioning objects relevant to this study (evaluating the teaching materials as well as the importance of racial criticism). In fact, the participants always align with each other – even after some disagreement. Adducing the example of Extract 1 above, Amy provides an alignment offer by saying *"also (.) ich glaube ihr WISST was ich meine; =[ne]="* (Extract 1, l. 5). As already briefly touched upon, Tim takes this alignment offer through the stance marker *"ja [voll]"* (Extract 1, l. 6). Following this, he expresses his alignment with Amy through further stance markers (Extract 1, ll. 10, 12, 15, 17) as well as stance verbs: *"ja (--) voll– ja ich würde mich da auf jeden fall ANschließen"* (Extract 1, ll. 17–18).

Louis and Sophia, in contrast, rarely use stance verbs and/or stance markers. While they never interrupt each other to indicate alignment by using stance markers, they explicitly state their alignment through phrases that clearly indicate agreement. Their discussion about whether or not critical racism is important to in-service ELT teachers provides an example:

01 L: ich glaube das ist eine TYPsache?
02 ich glaube (.) wahrscheinlich gibt es lehrkräfte die so ein bisschen ähm (...) wie wie nennt man das -
03 dienst nach protoKOLL (.) mäßig oder Unterricht nach protokOll machen,=
04 =im sinne von ähm (-) ich meine man kennt ja dieses stereotyp oder diese stereotype person lEhrkraft auch die nur noch mit einem BUCH arbeitet;=
=<<all>die sagt> okay jetzt mach mal aufgabe eins bis fünf und wir sprechen in einer stUnde nochMAL,
[Auslassung 13 Sekunden]
05 so von meinen persönlichen erfahrungen von DEN SAchen die ICH mitbekommen Habe,
06 ähm (-) ich da sind schon viele bei die da ziemlich großen wert drauf legen;=
=aber ich glaube das hat in dem fall auch wirklich was mit polItischer EINstellung zu tun;
07 GERade wenn es um sOwas geht,
08 also ähm (..) ich habe im praxissemester mit ner spAnischlehrerin zusammen das thema migraTION durchgesprochen,
09 und die hat pe!NI!belst darauf geachtet dass sie authEntisches material hat <<len>das leute nicht irgendwie stereoTYP darstellt>,
10 und ich meine zu so EINstiegssequenzen brAUcht man sowas manchmal auch,=
=<<all>und das hat sie auch geSAGT>,
[Auslassung 40 Sekunden]
11 und da hat die sich tatsächlich !WIR!klich mÜhe gegeben dass sie ähm (.) aktuELLE und auTHENtische ähm materialien bekommt,
12 also aus so beispielhaft ähm (..) hat sie aus spanischen tageszeitungen aus dem internet ähm ARTIkel zum thema FLUCHT von leuten aus der ukraINE sich herausgesucht und die dann im unterricht besprochen und thematisiert,
13 ähm was ja auch (...) ich sage mal nicht so selbstverständlich ist man kann sich auch einfach irgendwas keine ahnung aus so ner nem spanischbuch eine seite scAnnen,

```
             ähm und das ist so der EINdruck <<len>den ich bei einigen da
             hatte>;
14           in solchen KONtexten-
```

Extract 2: da sind schon viele bei die da ziemlich großen wert drauf legen (taken from Interview II, passages 141–148)

When asked to assess the importance to integrate racial criticism to in-service teachers, Louis takes the stance lead and states that he tends to think that some teachers are critical of the materials they are using (Extract 2, ll. 1–7). He backs his argumentation with examples gained in his *Praxissemester* (Extract 2, ll. 8–15). Sophia, in a stance follow, refuses this assumption (Extract 3, l. 17). Referring back to her *Praxissemester*, herself, her experience could hardly be more different (Extract 3, ll. 17–20):

```
15     S:    ich glaube bei mir genau das GEGENteil,
16           also ich habe das gefühl -
17           also jetzt aus einer erfahrung aus MEInem praxissemester,
18           dass die WENigsten (lachen) irgendwie noch mal drüber schauen
             was sie unterRICHTEN,
19           und das halt einfach ein sicheres MEdium ist;
20           also in gewisser weise kann ich es auch verSTE:hen weil es ja
             lehrkräfte halt schon entLASTET so das buch benutzen zu
             können,
21           aber (.) ähm (-) ja ich weiß nicht also bei den meisten hatte
             ich schon das gefühl dass es eher ein ABarbeiten des buches
             ist,
22           also gerade weil dann ja auch immer die grammatikaufgaben
             immer sehr schön ähm mit ANgereiht sind so ähm dass es alles
             am ende sozusagen AUFgeht sodass alle themen irgendwie drin
             wAren,
23           ähm (...) ja also ich weiß nicht -
24           ich hatte eher das gefühl dass bei JÜNgeren lehrern also bei
             ReferenDAREN also jetzt nicht ALter sondern eher so
             berufserfahrung dass ähm die grundsätzlich irgendwie ein
             bisschen vorsichtiger waren mit dem material was sie gezeigt
             haben;
25           aber bei den lehrkräften die ICH so sehen konnte im unterricht
             hatte ich nicht das gefühl -
```

Extract 3: dass die WENigsten (lachen) irgendwie noch mal drüber schauen was sie unterRICHTEN (taken from Interview II, passage 149)

Extract 2 and 3 clearly show a case of distinction, in which different layers of (mis)alignment about what current teaching practice looks like take effect. While Louis and Sophia take distinct positionings towards the abstract positioning object "(the current implementation of) racial criticism", they relate to different dimensions of the positioning object. Referring to a Spanish

teacher, who *“hat pe!NI!belst darauf geachtet dass sie authEntisches material hat <<len>das leute nicht irgendwie stereoTYP darstellt>”* (Extract 2, l. 9), Louis narrows the positioning object down to the implementation of critical racism in foreign language teaching. Sophia, in turn, relates to the broader dimension of the positioning object inasmuch as she comments on teachers in general and their ascribed usage of the textbook. Doing this, she equates the use of the textbook with the assumption that the teaching is not critical of racism. Yet, she shows empathy for this unreflective, textbook-based approach to teaching she has experienced (Extract 3, ll. 21–22).

Even though the perception of the positioning object differs slightly, they share alignment in the sense that the two interviewees position (large parts of) in-service teachers as those to whom the implementation of critical racism does not matter (see Section 4.4).

Following this first distinct negotiation of implications from practical experiences, Louis explains his reasons for arguing that it is possible that teachers critically reflect upon their teaching (material). As he already argued in his stance lead (Extract 2, l. 1), he claims that it simply depends on the type of teacher (Extract 4, ll. 30–39). Further, drawing parallels with dedication that already shows during university, he implicitly explicates that racial critical teaching is actually to be classified as an additional commitment (Extract 4, ll. 29–37).

26	L:	in welcher SCHUle warst du wenn ich fragen darf; [Auslassung 436 Sekunden]
27	L:	ich glaube das ist also wirklich sehr TYpenbasiert;
28		ich kann/ ich glaube das ist auch so ein bisschen wie versteht man den beruf der LEHRperson,
29		es gibt ja (..) also habe ich das gefühl sogar im studium schon diese typen menschen die sagen okay ich mache drei jahre bachelor zwei jahre master und dann gehe ich ins referendariat und ARbeite,
30		ähm und dann gibt es ja irgendwie leute die noch tausend sachen nebenbei machen und sich irgendwie hier und da engagieren und sich noch eine vertretungsstelle suchen oder °h noch mal ein praktikum extra machen oder einen (.) ZWEIten auslandsaufenthalt planen oder was auch immer,
31		ähm (.) die (..) glaube ich (.) das gAnze als nen nen nen BILdungsweg sehen und nicht als nen ne form von reiner professionalisIErung,
32	I:	hm hm,
33	L:	und ich kann mir vorstellen dass es halt (.) ähnlich ist im sinne von okay entweder du frühstückst halt da deinen unterricht ab,

34		°h oder du probierst halt wirklich ähm (...) zu bilden nicht nur (.) zu den STANdardsachen;
35		also nicht nur gramMAtik und sprAche,
36		sondern auch (.) ähm (..) kulturelle aspekte wie <<all>das ist ja so gesehen auch quasi ein kultureller aspekt> historischer aspekte,
37		ähm (-) um auch vielleicht den schüler*innen so krItisches DENken mitzugeben;
38		also sollte man ja eigentlich ich glaube das ist sogar im lehrplan verankert;
39		aber (..) ist ja auch gar nicht SO einfach immer (.) sowas zu vermitteln solche also so eine ART von kompetenz,
40	I:	hm hm,
41		oKAY-

Extract 4: *ich glaube das ist also wirklich sehr TYpenbasiert* (taken from Interview II, passages 150–155)

As a consequence thereof, Sophia states: *"ich finde es sehr überZEUgend was du gesagt hast"* (Extract 5, l. 42), reflects upon her thinking process, and explains why she agrees to Louis' line of argument – his stance lead. This turning point in Sophia's way of thinking marks the very moment in which alignment is created and positioning is negotiated.

42	S:	ich finde es sehr überZEUgend was du gesagt hast;=
43	L:	[lacht)]
44	S:	=also ich dachte [mein] (.) mein erster gedanke war so NEIN ich glaube nicht dass die meisten das tun,
45		aber doch ich glaube ich also ich stimme dir da zu;
46		ich denke AUCH es ist wahrscheinlich sehr tYpenabhängig;=
47		=also ich dachte einfach nur (..) aus der erfahr also SELBST als schülerin von frÜher,
48		habe ich so gut wie IMmer nur mit dem buch arbeiten mÜssen,
49		ähm (..) und DANN habe ich auch DAS halt gesehen in meinem praxissemEster,
50		und irgendwie aus den erfahrungen habe ich dann schnell irgendwie dann auf viele ANdere geschlOssen,=
51		=aber ich denke auch wenn ich so ähm (.) mir das in den Unikursen zum beispiel angucke wie engagIErt viele sind,
52		ähm (.) denke ich auch dass es SEHR Unterschiedlich wahrscheinlich am ende ist,
53		und ich könnte es auch gar nicht so sagen wer das tut und wer das NICHT tut,=

Extract 5: *ich finde es sehr überZEUgend was du gesagt hast* (taken from Interview II, passage 156)

While these cases of explicit alignment are rare, the content of their statements clarifies that Louis and Sophia are generally of the same opinion. In either case, these examples show how meaning – and LTI – is continually negotiated through the stance taking activities described above.

While, of course, there is a possibility that the participants actually align with each other and truly share the same opinion, the question of social desirability has to be considered, which will be discussed in the next section.

4.4 Considering the positioning object: topic sensitivity, social desirability, and entitlement

During the two focus group interviews, it repeatedly became clear that social desirability is a factor that is likely to have had influence on the interviewees' responses. The first critical point where social desirability needs to be addressed has been discussed in Section 4.1 and concerns the fact that all participants unhesitatingly approved of including racial criticism in their lesson planning and teaching. For one thing, it is possible that the pre-service teachers felt the need to say that they would integrate racial criticism into their (future) classrooms as they assume this to be the answer that is socially accepted and expected (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 146). For another thing, "pre-service teachers often attempt to represent an explicitly correct, progressive, and evolved view" (Fasching-Varner, 2012, p. 1), which sets them apart from seemingly unprogressive, conservative in-service teachers. While, on a superficial content level, the pre-service ELT teachers take clear evaluative stances towards racial criticism inasmuch as they are of the opinion that it is absolutely important to integrate critical perspectives on racism into their (future) teaching, it is not known whether or not this is their true positioning.

A second incident is the one mentioned in the previous section. It is striking that no case of (continued) misalignment could be found throughout the two focus group interviews. Even after some misalignment such as the one discussed in the previous section, all participants formed alignment in the end. Yet again, it is possible that the participants truly align with each other in every case. And yet again, the issue of social desirability must not be overlooked. Particularly when discussing racism, closely connected to sensitive and moral questions, it is likely that the participants choose to give answers they suspect the interview partner and/or moderator want(s) to hear (Misoch, 2019, p. 19). Talking about sensitive and moral topics, it is more difficult to disagree with an interlocutor's opinion since it may seem that there is just one morally and socially acceptable answer.

This is aggravated by a second factor that Tim implicitly mentions when talking about the danger of whitesplaining (Section 4.2). The point Tim raises opens up another layer to the Positioning Analysis model, namely the question of entitlement to talk about a positioning object and/or to evaluate it. Adapting this to the classroom discourse, Tim does not only reveal the fear of saying the wrong thing as a *white* person that presumably is not in the position to talk about racism. He also raises the question of entitlement to teach racism in ELT as he is biased – and may be limited in his perspective – due to his *white* gaze (Güllü & Gerlach, 2023; see Fig. 5).

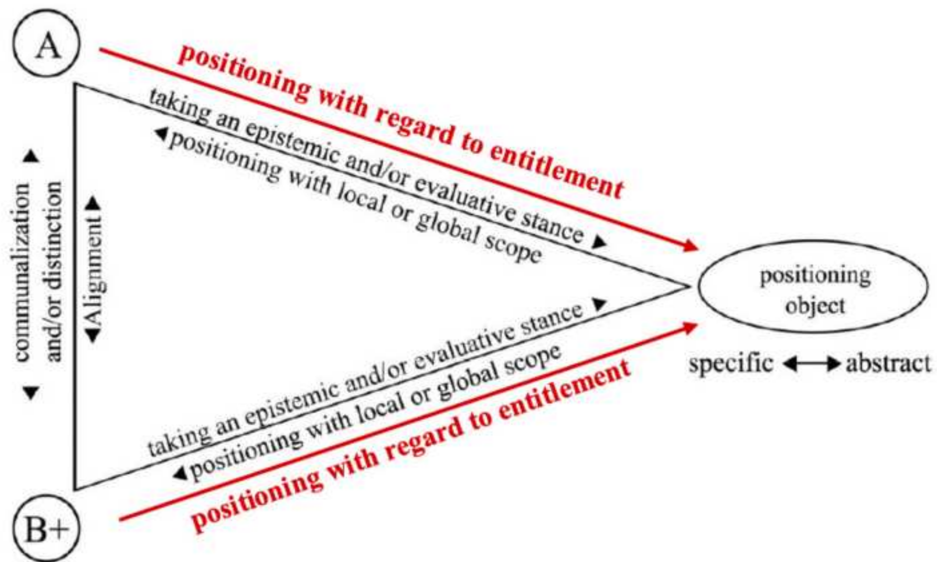


Figure 5: Extended version of the positioning analysis model (Weiser-Zurmühlen, 2022, p. 7; modifications M.K.)

5 Conclusion and outlook: How to take action right now?

Reviewing the results of this contribution, one could argue that there are two main takeaways on what needs to be considered: On the one hand, this study could show that racial criticism appears to be a part of the(se) pre-service ELT teachers' LTI. This became particularly clear through their evaluative stance taking activities towards stereotypical teaching materials and racial criticism. For one thing, all participants positioned themselves as harsh critics of the stigmatizing depiction of Black people in the stimuli under scrutiny. For another thing, they positioned themselves as strong advocates of taking racial critical approaches into account when planning and giving (future) lessons as well as designing and using teaching materials.

However, the study also emphasized that these results have to be treated with caution due to the aspect of social desirability and/or entitlement. On the other

hand, the study uncovered insecurities of the participants. While explicitly addressing insecurities regarding the implementation of racial critical approaches into their (future) teaching due to the *white* gaze, implicit epistemic stance taking practices revealed that the(se) pre-service ELT teachers have insecurities regarding the distinct usage of terms related to racism, as well. Since "the fear of doing something 'wrong'"[16] (Bönkost, 2020) and the discomfort that comes with talking about racism (Louloudi & Schildhauer, 2024) harbor the risk of stagnation in their process of becoming critical language teachers who have the intrinsic motivation to act as "change agents" (Gerlach & Fasching-Varner, 2020, p. 218), these insecurities – also with regard to the question of entitlement to talk about certain, particularly sensitive topics – need to be counteracted.

Although existing approaches on how to teach from a critical perspective on racism can provide support in this regard, the results confirm that it is useful to establish a continuum of critical practice, starting from teacher education. This kind of teacher education focuses on racial criticism and Social Justice Education more extensively. Precisely because general questions of social justice – and racial criticism in particular – constitute a facet of the pre-service ELT teachers' identarian convictions, it is likely that study contents addressing these facets will be successfully implemented in their future teaching approaches. The teacher education should initiate and/or support the "ongoing self-reflective, self-critical learning process"[17] (Bönkost, 2020, n.p.) about (critical perspectives on) racism in order to create meaningful learning opportunities for pre-service teachers and to overcome uncertainties in the long term. The consideration of the following six points, which result from the needs of pre-service teachers that emerged in the focus group interviews, could pave the way for such teacher education:

- Acquisition of theoretical knowledge of racism
- Training on critical awareness
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills concerning how to deal with racism
- Acquisition of (racial sensitive) didactical knowledge

[16] The original reads as follows: "die Befürchtung, etwas 'falsch' zu machen".

[17] The original reads as follows: "andauernden selbstreflexiven, selbstkritischen Lernprozess".

- Recognition of intersectionality
- Consideration as well as reflection on and of LTI

A teacher education that comprehensively educates pre-service teachers with respect to (critical perspectives on) racism and their ability to reflect upon both, multi-perspective entanglements in this discourse as well as their LTI, can sensitize pre-service teachers for not unconsciously reproducing racism (Massumi & Fereidooni, 2017, p. 67). In addition, this kind of teacher education can lay the foundation of a teacher education that tries to prepare for high-quality, inclusive lessons in which discrimination is recognized, deconstructed and countered. This is one approach of trying to ensure that all pupils can live and learn in a safe space and become change agents themselves (Becker, 2023, p. 12).

The four examples mentioned at the beginning combined with the "shocking and shameful" (O'Flaherty, 2023, p. 1) findings of the *Being Black in the EU* report – understood as "a wakeup call for action on equality and inclusion" (O'Flaherty, 2023, p. 1) – emphasize the importance of educating and emancipating critical citizens (Gerlach, 2020, pp. 8–9). This article has demonstrated that pre-service ELT teachers are willing to initiate these development processes in their students. However, it was equally shown that in order to be able to initiate these processes in a meaningful way, teachers need to be supported and empowered within the first phase of their teacher education.

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Global Citizenship Education and ELT?

A Survey of Pre-Service English Teachers' Views

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Abstract: In attempting to address the possibilities of challenging the confounding crises that currently plague the world, this article re-engages with global citizenship education as an educational framework. In particular, this paper examines the relation between global citizenship education and teacher education by interviewing pre-service English teachers. Using qualitative content analysis, the interviews reveal that pre-service teachers as experts-in-the-making show great enthusiasm towards global citizenship education in the context of English Language Teaching. Particularly the promotion of the global community as well as fostering their future students' capabilities to engage with an increasingly globalized world were shared goals among the interviewees. A lack of allotted time and resources due to restrictive curricula, flaws in teacher education, as well as availability of teaching materials were mentioned as challenges that may arise when implementing global citizenship education in the context of English Language Teaching. Comparing the interviewees' conceptions of global citizenship education to the dichotomy between soft and critical understandings of global citizenship education revealed that the pre-service teachers generally lean towards a soft understanding, which highlights the importance of critical reflexivity as a key competency to be promoted during teacher training and education.

Keywords: pre-service teachers; global citizenship education; English Language Teaching

1 Introduction – global citizenship education and the global polycrisis

Recent years have been marked by several converging crises occurring on the global stage: socio-politically, many countries have shifted towards increasingly authoritarian and right-wing forms of political leadership; ecologically, there is widespread inaction in the face of the escalating climate catastrophe; economically, countries are still grappling with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic as trade relations between the US- and China-led blocs continue to worsen; militarily, previously non-violent or low-intensity conflicts are increasingly turning to armed conflicts as exemplified by the Russo-Ukrainian war or the recent escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian war in the aftermath of the Hamas attack on the 7th October 2023. British historian Adam Tooze refers to this convergence of confounding crises as the polycrisis. During a polycrisis, various problems may be unrelated, but their interaction creates a situation that is even more overwhelming than the combined impact of each shock – the whole is more than the sum of its parts (Tooze, 2022).

The circumstances above not only negatively affect global social justice issues, but they threaten the wellbeing of humanity as a whole. These global events emphasize the significance of equipping students with an awareness of global sensitivities and responsibilities and the ability to fight for social justice on a global scale. In this context, scholars have called for a return to and reexamination of global citizenship education (GCE) in order to challenge global injustice, growing inequality, and environmental issues (Aboagye & Dlamini, 2021a, pp. 5–6).

GCE is a highly contested field with different understandings of globalization and citizenship ranging from affirmative to critical (cf. Andreotti, 2006). There are many overlaps between GCE and educational concepts and approaches such as peace education, human rights education and sustainability education (cf. Wintersteiner et al., 2014, pp. 28–29). The same can be said about GCE in relation to this paper's subject of interest – English Language Teaching (ELT). While not explicitly mentioned as being part of the curriculum of English as a school subject in Germany, there is considerable overlap between the aims, interests, and perspectives outlined in the relevant curricula as well as those at the heart of GCE.

Torres underscores the crucial role of the education and training of teachers in realizing GCE goals (Torres, 2020, p. xvii). Despite increased scholarly interest in GCE, its connection and relation to teacher training and education as well as pre-service teachers' understandings of GCE remains underexplored. Recognizing and addressing pre-service teachers' conceptions of GCE is vital, as it not only shapes their pedagogical approaches but also influences the effective implementation of GCE principles in the classroom (see also Klaes's contribution on Language Teacher Identity, pp. 78–117 in this issue). Following Torres' appeal, this paper examines how pre-service teachers conceive of and evaluate GCE both as an educational framework in relation to ELT as well as in terms of potential challenges that may arise when practicing GCE. This paper is based on a study project conducted during the Praxissemester in 2023 (Koppel, 2023), which also examined the connection between GCE and Social Sciences as a subject. Due to its thematic focus, this paper will mostly outline findings which are relevant to ELT.

These research questions will guide the analysis of the semi-structured expert interviews conducted with three prospective English and Social Sciences teachers. All three participants have recently concluded their Praxissemester, an important part of their already advanced teacher education which allowed them to gain hands-on experience as teachers. The interviews will be analyzed

through inductive category formation, a method of qualitative content analysis following Mayring (2014).

Following the introduction, the paper presents a literature review of recent relevant studies on GCE, defining key terms and concepts (Section 2). This section also covers existing research on GCE, highlighting the paper's contribution to the field. Next, the methodological approach for the interviews and the qualitative content analysis are explained (Section 3). The results are then discussed by detailing the developed categories and subcategories (Section 4). Drawing on the broader available literature on GCE, the paper offers both an analysis and discussion of the results (Section 5) as well as a concluding outlook (Section 6).

2 Global citizenship education – precursors and current research

Including empirical studies as well as theoretical discussions, the existing body of research and literature on GCE has grown so large that gaining and maintaining a comprehensive understanding of the various discussions on the topic has turned into a formidable academic challenge. Keeping this in mind, this paper provides a broad overview of GCE in relation to relevant topics at hand, specifically pre-service teachers' understandings and attitudes, teacher training and education, as well as GCE in relation to ELT.

To begin with, Goren and Yemini's systematic metastudy of 90 peer-reviewed empirical papers on GCE published between 2005 and 2015 identified several gaps between theory and practice. While scholars eagerly use the term GCE, policymakers and educators reference it reluctantly and rarely engage in critical discussions. Theoretical literature emphasizes GCE's relation to supranational topics like peace education, but it is often adapted to local learners' needs. The authors critique much of the research for lacking a theoretical framework and barely engaging with the GCE concept (Goren & Yemini, 2017, p. 180). Following Goren and Yemini's critique of existing literature on GCE as lacking both in regard to their theoretical framework as well as their conceptual clarity, this paper includes an outline of GCE as well as its development and references the definition and conceptualization of GCE as established by UNESCO (Deutsche UNESCO-Kommission, n.d.; UNESCO, 2014).

2.1 The development of global citizenship education

Although not the focus of their paper, Goren and Yemini point out in their literature review that there is no agreed-upon definition of GCE, instead suggesting that its definition is inherently contested (Goren & Yemini, 2017, p. 170). Peters, Britton, and Blee agree and assert that "there can be no one dominant notion of GCE as notions of 'global,' 'citizenship,' and 'education' are all contested and open to further argument and revision" (Peters et al., 2008, p. 11). Indeed, the sheer amount of different scholarly approaches and fields of studies concerned with GCE and related concepts have made it thus far difficult to find consensus on a definition of GCE (Aboagye & Dlamini, 2021b, p. 25).

GCE's eclectic character and the difficulty of conclusively defining the concept can be partly traced back to its precursors – World Studies and Global Education (Hicks, 2003; Holden, 2000). World Studies emerged in the 1960s, focusing on the promotion of an international understanding by providing students with the necessary skills and knowledge. Rather than encouraging students to engage with the rest of the world, it emphasized learning and understanding issues such as oppression, conflict, and the environment in their global dimension. Similarly, Global Education emphasizes content such as the process of globalization, central universalist philosophical concepts, and awareness of cultural differences and commonalities. It targets skills such as critical thinking and values responsibility, open-mindedness, community engagement, and respect (Aboagye & Dlamini, 2021b, pp. 29–30). The evolution of GCE through its predecessors proved to be more non-linear as shown by Richardson's model of the five imaginaries of GCE. Ranging from the imperial to the ecological imaginary, this model stresses that GCE evolved and continues to evolve with various overlaps between the different imaginaries (cf. Richardson, 2008).

While it is evident that certain themes, such as cosmopolitanism or global thinking, are not new and existed before the advent of GCE, the renewed interest and discourse on these themes are more directly tied to GCE as an educational framework. The (re)emergence of GCE can be explained by the institutional support of the concept in recent agendas of international organizations, chiefly UNESCO (2014, 2016a). Although only recently directly influencing and inspiring UNESCO's policies, comparing the values associated with GCE with those found in important founding texts of UNESCO reveals many similarities in the points of interest between the two, such as achieving peace, protecting human rights, and fighting inequality (Akkari & Maleq,

2020, p. 4). The inclusion of GCE in the 2015 Incheon Declaration was a major milestone, now being explicitly included in UNESCO's 2030 agenda of promoting quality education around the world as one of the sustainable development goals. Specifically, target 4.7 mentions the promotion of GCE, among other things, such as education for sustainable development and appreciation of cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 19).

While the declaration was praised for its ambitions, scholars question the feasibility of achieving these goals by 2030 and critique its surface-level reference to deeply contested concepts such as citizenship or human rights (Akkari & Maleq, 2020, pp. 5–6). Another point of criticism that has been made of the UNESCO's definition is that it lacks a clear conception of what GCE even entails, leaving non-state and state actors in education to fill in these gaps themselves. This results in actors taking GCE in reference to UNESCO's policies in widely differing directions, with both critical and affirmative visions being enacted (Scheunpflug, 2022, p. 416). UNESCO has laid out several imprecise target indicators for fulfilling the SDG 4.7 target, which reflects this lack of focus (Akkari & Maleq, 2020, p. 6; UNESCO, 2016b, p. 79).

Although a singular UNESCO definition of GCE is often referenced, several formulations of this definition exist, all of which nonetheless exhibit the aforementioned flaws. For example, UNESCO defined GCE in a 2014 publication as the following:

> "Global Citizenship Education aims to empower learners to engage and assume active roles, both locally and globally, to face and resolve global challenges and ultimately to become proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world." (UNESCO, 2014, p. 15)

Despite the aforementioned flaws, this conception of GCE is the point of reference for this study, for two reasons: First, the definition's ambiguity prompted the interviewees to fill in conceptual gaps, thereby revealing their personal understanding of GCE as well as envisioned potentials and problems. In this regard, the lack of focus criticized above acts as a catalyst rather than a hindrance. Secondly, referencing this conception of GCE aligns the research findings more effectively with the broader scientific discourse, as UNESCO's definition has become a significant point of reference, frequently cited by both critical and supportive scholars.

2.2 Teacher education and teachers' attitudes in relation to global citizenship education

Taking the rather limited body of research on the engagement of in-service and pre-service teachers with GCE into account, Goren and Yemini suggest that these studies point towards a "pattern of disillusionment" when pre-service teachers enter the education system proper (2017, pp. 178–179). Both Appleyard and McLean (2011) as well as Carr and colleagues (2014) state that pre-service teachers, though concerned about the lack of resources including teaching materials, often enter the field with great enthusiasm for GCE, viewing it as an important educational approach. Rapoport (2010) and Schweisfurth (2006) add that in-service teachers are generally less optimistic than their pre-service counterparts and emphasize difficulties and barriers to teaching GCE.

These perceived barriers, rather than being tied to the availability of resources, are often cultural or contextual in nature, ranging from a school's particular environment to students' backgrounds. However, this is not to say that the availability of teaching resources and materials have no bearing on alleviating the cultural and contextual barriers teachers face. For example, Niens and others' (2013) study on teachers in Northern Ireland suggests that teachers who feel ill-equipped tend to avoid sensitive issues. One sensitive issue mentioned in multiple studies in explanation of teachers' aversions to teach GCE is that of nationalism or patriotism: Myers' (2008) study illustrates that teachers tend to avoid GCE or opt for a more narrow and depoliticized understanding of GCE because they fear being perceived as unpatriotic or overtly critical. Goren and Yemini argue that this reluctance might be in parts explained by GCE being associated with internationalist and universalist values which contradict "the traditional role of schools and teachers in developing feelings of national pride and identification among students" (Goren & Yemini, 2017, pp. 178–179). Niens and colleagues (2013) argue that this aversion as well as the teachers' lack of access to adequate teaching materials and resources might partially explain the rather vague understanding of GCE students possess.

2.3 Linking global citizenship education and English Language Teaching

As Lütge and colleagues put it in the introduction of their edited volume *Global Citizenship in Foreign Language Education*, GCE in the context of foreign language education and by extension ELT is a “comparatively recent development” (Lütge et al., 2023, p. 3), marked by the “interdisciplinarity inherent to GCE” (p. 4). As such, scholars coming from a range of different disciplines and fields of study engage with questions on the ties between GCE and (foreign) language education both in terms of theory and practice. This part of the paper aims to give a comprehensive overview of selected scholarly contributions in this still developing field by referencing both international contributions as well as those made within the German ELT context, in which this paper is situated.

Hosack (2011) argues in his account that ELT practices can be tied to GCE by addressing global issues and challenges, for example, climate change (pp. 129–130). However, Hosack stresses that ELT’s primary contribution lies not in the engagement of learners with specific topics – in this case global issues – but in introducing young learners to cultures as well as ways of living and thinking that differ from their own (Hosack, 2011, p. 132). In this sense, GCE can also be understood as intercultural citizenship education stressing the importance of intercultural competencies as a major affinity between GCE and foreign language teaching of any kind (cf. Hosack, 2011, pp. 132–134). Finally, Hosack argues that communicative approaches to teaching in the foreign language classroom also serve to enable students to engage in dialogue and discourse with each other and, potentially, with people across the globe. The second major contribution of foreign language teaching – and by extension ELT – to GCE is in aiding students in their capacity to engage in public discourse not only limited to the speakers of their primary language (Hosack, 2011, pp. 134–135; see also Starkey, 2023).

Mastellotto (2023) provides an approach to teaching global citizenship in ELT with picture books while, again, stressing the importance of addressing global issues, fostering intercultural communication as well as “cultivating democratic consciousness and encouraging democratic participation” (Mastellotto, 2023, pp. 233–234). The genuinely new contribution to the field offered by Mastellotto’s account is in demonstrating that GCE is not only something reserved for ELT in the context of secondary education, but can also be enacted in the context of foreign language learning within primary education (cf. Mastellotto, 2023, pp. 217–218, 226–233).

German ELT scholar Kramsch's (2023) account of foreign language education in the post-COVID-19 era stands out as a particularly impressive piece of scholarship and provides much needed substance by not only linking foreign language education and GCE, but also by advancing and tying the German ELT to the international discourse on ELT. Kramsch's analyses of different scholarly approaches in the field of applied linguistics range, among others, from Byram's (2021) model of intercultural communicative competencies to Pennycook's (2018) posthumanist approach to the study of language and are tied together and synthesized into a total of five questions which provide a roadmap for the reconceptualization of foreign language education in which language use is envisioned as a metaphorical crossing of different borders (Kramsch, 2023, pp. 25–31). While generally critical of the UNESCO's "lofty, idealistic goal" (Kramsch, 2023, p. 24) of 'true' global citizenship, Kramsch's roadmap for the future of foreign language education in the post-COVID-19 era nonetheless provides useful theoretical considerations and conceptual orientation for future contributions of scholars working on the intersection of ELT and GCE.

Two contributions of note made by German ELT scholars are those of Rauschert (2023) as well as Lütge and Merse (2023). Rauschert situates GCE practices within service learning and foreign language education. Using the Global Peace Path project, an initiative involving writing poetry promoting peace, as a practical example, Rauschert demonstrates the potential of combining service learning and foreign language education within the context of GCE (Rauschert, 2023, pp. 113–118) as means to develop students' intercultural as well as democratic competences.

Lütge and Merse (2023) examine the role of digitalization in GCE and its implications for foreign language teaching. They assert that the digital world has shifted from a tool to an integral environment for learning and teaching, offering both opportunities and challenges (Lütge & Merse, 2023, pp. 226–227). Lütge and Merse argue that digital citizenship redefines traditional concepts of citizenship by focusing on digital actions and self-construction. By reviewing key trends in foreign language education (cf. Lütge & Merse, 2023, pp. 239–240), the authors highlight how educators can rethink "global citizenship *through* the digital" (p. 245; original emphasis), emphasizing the importance of activism and creative participation in digital cultures as essential components of preparing future global citizens.

Another voice within the German ELT discourse on GCE is Ricardo Römhild who has published extensively on the intersection of GCE and ELT. His work

focuses not only on tying the discussion of GCE in the context of ELT to related discourses and topics such as human rights and peace education (Matz & Römhild, 2024; Römhild, 2023a), but also on exploring ways to implement GCE into ELT practice, for example, through cultural learning (Römhild & Meer, 2023) or film pedagogy (Römhild, 2023b).

Summarizing this section, much of the ELT discourse on GCE covered here is concerned with attempting to situate GCE and its aims within ELT on a conceptual level by, for example, emphasizing shared normative foundations or by identifying topics which are of interest and relevance to both GCE and ELT. Another focus is connected to the latter in that a lot of scholars are concerned with offering practical examples of how the implementation or enactment of GCE, for example, through service learning or film pedagogy, is possible or becomes more plausible. More critical contributions, as represented by the account of Claire Kramsch (2023) covered in this section, are rarely engaged in these more practical accounts on GCE in the context of ELT and seem to constitute a minority position within the field of German ELT in particular. A key takeaway from this review of recent literature on GCE in the context of ELT for this study is that both critical and practical considerations need to be examined as well as put into a dialogue with each other when engaging with GCE.

3 Research design and methodology

This paper's aim is to gain insight into the understanding that pre-service teachers have of GCE as well as the challenges and opportunities they foresee when putting GCE into practice. Because of this, the interview guide was designed keeping Bogner's elaborations on expert interviews in mind: The interview participants – being pre-service teachers still undergoing their teacher education – were conceived of as experts-in-the-making, providing various kinds of knowledge and insights based on still-developing expertise (cf. Bogner et al., 2018, pp. 657–658). The semi-structured interviews conducted can be characterized as both exploratory and interpretative since they aim to prompt the participants to elaborate on their perspectives of GCE (cf. Bogner et al., 2018, p. 660).

This study moves beyond traditional and narrowly defined understandings of experts and expertise by framing participants both as experts-in-the-making and as authorities in their own lived experiences (cf. Bogner & Menz, 2009, pp. 40–41). While this approach diverges from conventional practices in expert interviews, it serves two key purposes. First, it foregrounds participants'

lived experiences and accumulated knowledge. Second, it enables a clearer understanding of both the results and ongoing processes of professional development when participants (attempt to) speak as experts. The effectiveness of this approach in empowering participants to adopt the role of experts was varied, as suggested by the dynamics during the interviews. In some instances, interviewer and interviewee shared an understanding of themselves as co-experts-in-the-making, while in other moments, this mutual understanding unravelled, leading to hesitation on the part of the interviewee. This hesitation can be attributed either to the interviewer projecting too much authority or to the interviewee experiencing uncertainty when attempting to assert expertise based on their knowledge and experiences (cf. Bogner et al., 2018, pp. 50–60).

The three participants were mainly chosen on the basis of two criteria: For one, they are prospective teachers of the subjects of English and Social Sciences. This is due to this paper's focus being in parts on the conceptual overlaps of GCE with the traditional conceptions of these subjects as taught in school. Secondly, they had just undergone or were just undergoing their practical semester. This ensures that participants have had the opportunity to gain hands-on experiences teaching both of their subjects. These experiences – often acting as a common basis – also facilitate a shared understanding and a less hierarchical communicative situation during the interview. The interviews were conducted in a quiet and neutral environment with their duration ranging from roughly 30 to 45 minutes (see Table 1). The interviews were held in English.

Table 1: Supplementary information on the conducted interviews (own research)

Nr.	*Participant (Pseudonym)*	*Date of Interview*	*Length of Interview*
1	Lewis	4th July 2023	38:04
2	Nora	4th July 2023	47:25
3	John	10th July 2023	33:17

The interview guide was designed in reference to methodological considerations on expert interviews (Bogner et al., 2018). Most of the guide's questions aim to prompt the participants to elaborate on their view of GCE, including the dimensions they associate with GCE and how they envision it in relation to their respective subjects. Other questions prompt participants to offer contextual information, e.g., where they have heard of GCE before. The interview guide also contains three prompts: a definition of GCE by the German Commission for UNESCO (Deutsche UNESCO-Kommission, n.d.) as well as

short excerpts from the curricula of English and Social Sciences (MSW NRW, 2014a, 2014b) with considerable conceptual overlap to themes and aspects of GCE. The former was included as a point of reference for participants to discuss and evaluate the definition's conception of GCE. The definition was presented in a neutral way to avoid framing it as authoritative and definitive, but rather as one possible conception of GCE. The latter prompts were also included as points of reference, this time to guide the interviewees' judgment of GCE in relation to their subjects in order to make their statements more comparable to one another.

Using transcriptions of these interviews as data, a qualitative content analysis following Mayring's inductive category formation approach was conducted (cf. Mayring, 2014). This approach provides a clear framework for rule-based systematic analysis of the data at hand while being open enough for the qualitative interpretation of the data at hand. This approach's focus on the inductive formation of categories emphasizes the close examination of the subjective constructions – such as the interviewees' views on GCE – contained in the data (Mayring & Fenzl, 2019, pp. 633–634). The following chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the parts of the extensive coding frame that were deemed most relevant to GCE in relation to ELT.

4 Results

4.1 Aspects and dimensions of global citizenship education

The interviewed participants understand GCE as including the teaching of cosmopolitan competencies which focuses on promoting and enabling students to participate in the global community by promoting multiculturalist attitudes and cultural exchange.

These cosmopolitan competencies include students being able to take action in the sense of problem-solving (Lewis: ll. 269–274), socio-political involvement (Nora: ll. 53–54) – and communicating in a globalized world (Lewis: ll. 139–143). These skills hinge on students' capability for global thinking, i.e., being able to take a global rather than national perspective on issues:

> *We just need to analyze where this problem originated from. And I think in very often [sic!] cases, it originated in a different community, in a different part of the world and affects other parts of the world at the same time. So, if we look at these issues, we need to see where the origin is from this problem and what effects that has on the world.* (Lewis: ll. 119–122)

This capacity for global thinking requires students being equipped with enough knowledge about global issues and processes such as climate change or colonialism to serve them as orientation. Students being able to properly participate in the global community necessitates these abilities. The exchange between cultures was identified as one of the ways in which global community building takes place. Following the participants' statements, teaching GCE not only means highlighting the exchange already happening between cultures as a by-product of globalization but also actively promoting tolerance and acceptance. This suggests that the participants' perspectives on language learning and teaching puts an emphasis on interculturality. In this context, (national) cultures are understood in the holistic sense – exchange between different cultures in the culinary arts is understood to be happening as a sort of cross pollination between the different national cuisines (cf. John: ll. 42–44).

Participants also suggested that GCE serves as a means to encourage students to identify as citizens of the global community, rather than solely as citizens of Germany:

> *I think to achieve a sense of global community, you have to understand where these people that you invite into your global village are coming from, the kind of history they have, why they may act in a certain way that is maybe different from yours. And so, this intercultural understanding is really important.* (John: ll. 143–146)

Without this feeling of belonging or self-identification, most will not participate in the global community. This points towards nationalist attitudes and worldviews among students being perceived as a major hindrance when teaching GCE.

The participants' conceptions of these aspects of GCE align closely with the German Commission for UNESCO's definition that was provided as a prompt during the interviews: Central to the participants' understanding of GCE are both the cosmopolitan competencies outlined above as well as the promotion of a globalized culture and community. This alignment between the participants' conceptions of GCE and the provided UNESCO definition is also reflected by the fact that the participants had little to no explicit criticism of the provided definition of GCE.

4.2 Evaluating global citizenship education

Participants generally saw strong ties between GCE and their teaching subjects. This goes for both the curricular demands of English and Social Sciences and their foci and aims on a more fundamental level. For example, one of the requirements found in the curriculum of English are the so-called intercultural communicative competencies, which participants related closely to some of GCE's aspects, such as its focus on intercultural understanding and communication:

> *So, if we look at intercultural communicative competencies, I mean, interculturality is already a word in it. So, it suggests that we look at different cultures and we look at global cultures, you know, and we look at the effects that cultural artifacts have or still have and try to analyze them and try to understand how we can communicate in a respectful way.* (Lewis: ll. 134–138)

Participants mentioned some aspects in which their conception of GCE does not align with those of English and Social Sciences. For the former, participants mentioned that there was not enough time and space allotted within the English curriculum to deal with issues of interest in the GCE framework.

Despite mentioning minor points of incongruence, the participants generally held a favorable view of GCE being taught in an interdisciplinary or cross-curricular manner. One participant even suggested a particular method of implementing topics related to GCE in an interdisciplinary manner:

> *And I think especially Social Science, it is really relevant. And in English, I think again, especially for the old, you could connect projects. So, I think if as we do teach, as we teach both Social Science and English, I think you could connect projects. So, if you do a certain topic like half a year earlier, you could sort of then translate this and focus on an English-speaking country for example and then use this as an example for a topic that you had focused on for Germany and, you know, raise it to a global scale.* (Nora: ll. 131–136)

Despite a general enthusiasm, participants mentioned being hesitant to actually practicing cross-curricular teaching, mainly due to a lack of training and experience in doing so as well as anticipated didactic difficulties that may arise when teaching certain complex topics associated with GCE in a foreign language.

In terms of challenges associated with the implementation of GCE, participants identified a number of problems when they considered GCE in a practical context. These issues range from their prospective students' lack of interest to the German educational system being deemed outdated.

Participants mentioned that it might be challenging to work with students who refuse core tenets of GCE because of their nationally oriented worldviews or to engage students who are disinterested in GCE. One participant, in particular, was concerned with the complexity they thought was inherent to GCE as an educational framework and the difficulties that arise due to this complexity and the fact that students have to engage with these topics in a language foreign to them:

> *And also, again, for English, if the students do not know the topic yet or do not have a good foundation from another subject, I think it might be too difficult subject to start in another language.* (Nora: ll. 265–267)

Other issues mentioned by participants are situated on the institutional level. The German educational system was assessed as being stuck with an outdated orientation, remaining within a perspective on the national level:

> *I think it is important, but it is undervalued. I still think the German educational system is very national and it is very focused on national interests and not so much on global interests. […] I think it is a political decision and probably also some historical reasoning behind that. Kind of this saying it has always been this way, so it remains this way. And I think changing the educational system is a big step in country.* (Lewis: ll. 84–85, 91–93)

Besides this overarching issue, participants also raised a potential lack of support and enthusiasm of their future colleagues as a concern because GCE is ineffective when only taught by a single teacher:

> *And you have to do a lot of convincing, maybe because I do not think it makes a lot of sense to just teach GCE individually, but as a whole school, right. To think that more in a systemic way than just in an individualistic way in my classroom. So, I need to get my colleagues on board with this concept.* (Lewis: ll. 210–213)

Another issue mentioned in this context is the high barrier of entry of teaching GCE due to the lack of reliable sources of information, teaching materials, as well as practical knowledge and expertise:

> *Well, it would be nice to receive information about the topic, because that's a problem that I've seen with a lot of teachers: they do not have time to research*

> *on their own. […] You know, the problem with that is that if information is provided to you by some organization, you always kind of need to research the organization where they come from, what political goals they might have in mind.* (John: ll. 219–224)

This lack of both time and knowledge were not solely identified as personal faults of the participants but were criticized as being rooted in flaws inherent in the German educational system.

5 Discussion

5.1 Soft or critical conceptions of global citizenship education?

In her 2006 publication, “Soft versus Critical Global Citizenship Education”, Andreotti presented a general overview of both soft and critical understandings of GCE elaborating on differences in the basic assumptions of these two conceptions. Soft GCE focuses on universal interconnectedness, aiming for development and harmony through predefined ideals and awareness campaigns. In contrast, critical GCE acknowledges unequal power relations and advocates for addressing injustices, fostering reflexivity, dialogue, and ethical engagement with diversity. It empowers individuals to critically reflect on their cultures and imagine different futures, addressing complexity and power dynamics (Andreotti, 2006, pp. 46–47; see also Table 2 on the next page).

Comparing the results previously outlined to the characteristics that Andreotti proposes, presents a complex and multifaceted image of the participants’ conceptions of GCE: Keeping in mind Andreotti’s distinction between soft and critical GCE, the understanding of global interdependence implicit in the participants’ conceptions of GCE aligns more closely with soft GCE. While the participants discussed issues such as climate change and colonialism by placing them into a global context – i.e., how causes and effects of these issues have played out and continue to play out on a global scale, was a significant point emphasized by all participants –, they largely omitted the power asymmetries and forms of structural and systemic inequality which characterize globalization processes as well as the relations between countries of the Global North and the Global South.

This omission of power asymmetries would also explain why participants eschewed issues of (illegitimate) cultural appropriation when discussing cultural exchange. This can in parts be explained, because cultural exchange was discussed in reference to national cuisines and culinary traditions (cf. John: ll. 42–44), as opposed to instances – such as the appropriation and desecration

of important religious or spiritual customs – in which (illegitimate) cultural exchange is commonly discussed more critically.

Table 2: Selection of contrasting criteria of soft versus critical GCE adapted from Andreotti (2006, pp. 46–47)

	Soft GCE	*Critical GCE*
Understanding of interdependence	We are all equally interconnected, we all want the same thing, we can all do the same thing.	Asymmetrical globalization, unequal power relations, Northern and Southern elites imposing their own assumptions as universal.
Aims ("What for")	So that everyone achieves development, harmony, tolerance, and equality.	So that injustices are addressed, more equal grounds for dialogue are created, and people can have more autonomy to define their own development.
Principle for change	Universalism (non-negotiable vision of how everyone should live, what everyone should want or should be).	Reflexivity, dialogue, contingency and an ethical relation to difference (radical alterity).
Goal of GCE	Empower individuals to act (or become active citizens) according to what has been defined for them as a good life or ideal world.	Empower individuals to reflect critically on the legacies and processes of their cultures, to imagine different futures and to take responsibility for decisions and actions.
Strategies for GCE	Raising awareness of global issues and promoting campaigns.	Promoting engagement with global issues and perspectives and an ethical relationship to difference, addressing complexity and power relations.

Participants identified values such as tolerance and equality as being universal and a prerequisite to intercultural understanding as a central aim of GCE. This is largely in line with the basic principle for change and aims of soft GCE, while issues concerning global injustice were either not mentioned or not discussed critically.

The goals and strategies of GCE, as outlined by the participants, do not fall neatly into either the categories of soft or critical GCE. As for the former, the interviewees emphasized individuals' capabilities to take action (*"taking an active role in society"*; Nora: ll. 53–54) and their ability to reflect critically on globalization. However, the participants did not discuss their own or their

future students' involvement and entanglement within the context of global structures of inequality as part of GCE. Speaking of the latter, the participants highlighted both awareness of global issues and engagement understood as problem-solving as part of their understanding of GCE (*"maybe they can already try to work on some solutions and present them to each other"*; Lewis: ll. 273–274).

It is important to note here that a 'soft' understanding of GCE is not necessarily seen as wrong, as it is appropriate in some situations. However, if left unexamined, GCE runs the risk of reproducing the same structures that it purports to challenge. One of the ways in which this can be avoided is through critical literacy. Critical literacy in this sense entails continuous engagement in reflection. Both teachers and students need to be able to reflect on and deconstruct their implicit assumptions and socio-political entanglement (cf. Andreotti, 2006, p. 49; for a more thorough account of critical literacy see also Luke, 2018). Within the German ELT context specifically, critical literacy is only just gaining momentum as part of a more critical approach to foreign language teaching and education (cf. Gerlach, 2020a; Louloudi et al., 2021) with the discussion even moving towards reconceptualizing teacher education towards a critical literacies framework (cf. Gerlach & Fasching-Varner, 2020, pp. 224–228).

5.2 Connections of global citizenship education and English Language Teaching

The participants saw strong ties between GCE and their subjects, which mirrors the assessment of scholars working on (foreign) language education and political education. To contextualize the results addressing the second research question, a more detailed elaboration will be provided on how scholars specifically situate GCE in relation to ELT, in particular in Germany.

The participants considered one of the goals of the English curriculum – the so-called intercultural communicative competences – to align with GCE's aim to facilitate intercultural understanding (*"[…] it suggests that we look at different cultures and we look at global cultures […]"*; Lewis: ll. 135–136). This matches both Hugh Starkey's (2023) as well as Hosack's (2011) assessment as both consider (foreign) language learning as a way to encourage intercultural communication. Language learning fosters the students' citizenship skills necessary for partaking in a democratic society as it requires students to listen, communicate, and discuss (Starkey, 2023, pp. 72–73). Considering these synergies between language learning and the aims of GCE

might change Nora's mind, who believed there was not enough time or space for the inclusion of these skills when teaching English (*"[…] and I think especially for topic like taking responsibility to do this properly, um, there isn't enough time and space in English."*; Nora: ll. 214–215).

Liz Jackson places a great deal of importance on reflecting on the historical role of English within colonialization. Language learning is often entangled with certain assumptions of the language to be learned. For example, within the colonial imaginary, English as a Western language was equated with progress and values. This entanglement must be considered when teaching GCE, as learning foreign languages is often paired with learning about foreign cultures. Critically reflecting on this is necessary to avoid reproducing stereotypes or perpetuating notions of certain cultures being inferior or superior (Jackson, 2023, pp. 55–57).

Connecting the discussion of the results to the current state of German ELT research, one can certainly identify connections as well as disparities between the results of this study as well as the existing body of research on ELT in relation to GCE. First, the results clearly mirror the strong leaning of the German ELT discourse to interculturality (as opposed to, e.g., transculturality or criticality) and the lack of deconstruction of holistic notions of national cultures (Römhild & Matz, 2021). Second, the participants' remarks are indicative of the deeply-rooted monolingual habitus of the German ELT community (see the contributions by Hopfendorf, pp. 15–41, as well as Pimentel Lechthoff, pp. 42–77 in this issue; see also Wilken, 2021), which rather acknowledges that the target language constitutes and remains a barrier to negotiating complex topics than recognizing the role which the students' full linguistic repertoires could play in that endeavor (see also Gerlach, 2020b, pp. 20–21).

Participants also noted that GCE – in line with understandings of interculturality common in language education – tends to go hand in hand with a superficial engagement with cultures different from one's own (e.g., *"[…] [GCE] suggests that we look at different cultures and we look at global cultures, you know, and we look at the effects that cultural artifacts have or still have and try to analyze them and try to understand how we can communicate in a respectful way."*; Lewis: ll. 135–138). By engaging with critical discourse on interculturality and the intercultural (e.g., Kramsch, 2011), future ELT discourse on GCE could advance towards a more critical understanding of cultural engagement in service of identifying, analyzing and taking action against existing biases and structures of inequality. Doing so would be beneficial because it would be in service of a major point of intersection between

the normative aims of (critical) language education and GCE, and thus it would also open a pathway for introducing a more critical global engagement to ELT. This would be akin to what participants referred to as global community building and what Yoon (2016) makes out to be part of the central dimensions of critical global literacies (pp. 46–52). Finally, introducing these critical notions to how GCE is and can be implemented into ELT practice will have to address existing structural barriers (e.g., the prescription of certain understandings of cultural engagement through curricula) which confine some of the critical potential outlined here. Here, as participants also noted (e.g., Lewis: ll. 73–88), teacher education might be able to play an avant-gardist role in opening up the discourse towards a more critical understanding of language education and teaching (König & Louloudi, 2024; Louloudi & Schildhauer, 2023, 2024).

6 Conclusion

As outlined in the introduction, this paper focuses on how pre-service teachers perceive GCE in greater detail. In doing so, it is part of a renewed effort to promote GCE initiated by scholars who see a growing threat by the intertwining crises that the world currently experiences. In particular, this paper investigates GCE in consideration of the subjects of English and Social Sciences and within the context of teacher education.

In their discussion of GCE in relation to ELT, the participants emphasized cosmopolitan competencies, such as problem-solving, socio-political engagement, and intercultural communication, highlighting the importance of orientational knowledge on global issues like climate change to foster global thinking. Cultural exchange and the values of tolerance and acceptance were seen as key to engaging respectfully with the global community, though this often requires students to identify beyond national boundaries. When discussing affinities between GCE and ELT, the promotion of intercultural understanding was identified as a major point of intersection between the two (cf. Starkey, 2023). However, language educators also need to be aware of the learners' implicit (cultural) assumptions in the form of biases and stereotypes as language learning also entails cultural learning (see also Volkmann, 2010). In this context, the role of English within the colonial imaginary as the language of progress and civilization cannot be ignored when teaching global citizenship so as not to reproduce stereotypes and beliefs of cultural superiority or inferiority (cf. Pennycook, 2017). Other challenges and barriers participants discussed include possible tensions between GCE's cosmopolitanism and the (traditionally) national or even nationalist orientation of schooling

(see also Myers, 2008; Niens et al., 2013) and students' lack of interest in or rejection of what the participants understood as the core values of GCE. Finally, participants also discussed a lack of support of GCE in the context of ELT on the various strata of the institutional level, including potentially disinterested or uncooperative colleagues in schools, Germany's educational system being deemed as outdated, seemingly limiting curricula, as well as GCE not being outright included into the core curriculum of teacher education and training.

While not explicitly mentioned by the interviewees, adopting a more critical understanding of both language and cultural learning as well as engagement is essential when attempting to integrate ELT and GCE. Doing so is necessary to prevent the reproduction of existing structures of inequality and power asymmetries in educational settings, which can arise from narrow, uncritical, and instrumental interpretations of GCE. The discussion of the results here has also shown that adopting a critical literacies perspective to GCE in the context of ELT proves highly fruitful and becomes necessary when attempting to move away from said narrow conceptions of GCE.

Further exploring this point of intersection is a promising avenue for future research – particularly the ELT discourse which focuses on the practical implications of integrating GCE into ELT practice could profit from a more engaged discourse with contributions from scholars such as Claire Kramsch (2023). Finally, teacher education, as noted by the participants, holds particular promise in fostering these critical shifts, creating avenues for ELT to contribute more effectively to the foundational normative aims of both GCE and ELT (König & Louloudi, 2024; Louloudi & Schildhauer, 2023). Subsequent research could benefit from exploring the potential of more closely connecting critical literacy approaches, ELT, as well as GCE – particularly in relation to teacher training and education – in greater depth.

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“I could say it’s not in the curriculum, which is really true”

Investigating ELT Teachers’ Perspectives on Teaching Gender in Germany

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Abstract: Within the context of schooling as a central institution of gender socialization, the English language classroom presents a critical opportunity for addressing and challenging narrow conceptions of gender. While curricular updates in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), Germany, have codified gender as a topic within the core curricula for English, teachers, as the central actors in the implementation of teaching practice, and their perspectives on gender teaching remain underexplored. This study therefore investigates ELT teachers' perspectives on gender teaching. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, the study comprises semi-structured interviews with three ELT teachers at a secondary school in North-Rhine Westphalia that were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. All participants stressed the importance of gender teaching in ELT, yet showed varying perspectives on gender and their role in teaching gender. The participants also showed different levels of critical reflection of teaching materials, ranging from the supplementation of one-sided gender representations to the uncritical use of textbooks. The participants all acknowledged the importance of gender teaching in the English language classroom but showed varying perspectives on their own role within gender teaching. The findings of the study point to a need for increased attention to in-service teacher support and the need for fostering a critical consciousness regarding the use of teaching materials.

Keywords: English Language Teaching; gender; teacher perspectives; in-service teachers; expert interviews; qualitative content analysis

1 Introduction

Gender is a ubiquitous part of our social life; gender as a societal category is heavily determined by societal norm construction and reproduction and is thus deeply socio-political. This becomes evident when looking at the data from the 2015 study conducted by the Deutsche Jugendinstitut in connection with Krell and Oldemeier (2015) that investigated the life situations of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans* as well as non-binary youths and young adults in Germany. The study showed a significant discrepancy between the age of the participants' inner and outer coming out, both in regard to sexual orientation and gender identity. Seeking to explain this striking finding, one must inevitably consider the additional finding that LGBTQI* youths faced fears of disapproval within their core social groups of family and friends, but also within school contexts, anticipating rejection, belittlement and verbal abuse (Krell & Oldemeier, 2015, p. 13).

While LGBTQI* students fear negative reactions within school contexts, schooling further plays a central role in the reproduction of gender. Rieske (2011) finds that girls and boys show a rather similar distribution of interests and competences when they enter kindergarten (p. 15) but develop a vastly different and gender-dichotomized distribution of interests and competences until the end of secondary school (p. 34). The construction of gender within school settings thus bears a central relevance to explaining this development as gender construction and the normalization of gender relations take place within interaction (Budde, 2006, p. 45) and students are subjected to a plethora of different processes of doing gender within school contexts (Budde, 2006, p. 48). Additionally, the dramatization of gender within schools often involves reference to a gender dichotomy (Budde, 2006, p. 49; Schildhauer, 2023, pp. 70–72), thereby either reinforcing established gender stereotypes or even introducing them (Budde, 2006, pp. 50–51).

These findings clearly illustrate the challenge of accounting for gender within school contexts: First, educational practice must focus on challenging narrow conceptions of gender-related identities in order to create a welcoming atmosphere for students of non-heteronormative gender and sexual identities (see also the contribution of Schillings, pp. 230–256 in this issue), and second, educational practice must facilitate self-reflection on the (re-)production of gender stereotypes in school contexts and in explicitly gender-focused teaching. This task is not just relevant to the institutional setting of the school in general, but also implies the need for informed teaching practice. Here, the English language classroom provides a central opportunity to facilitate gender reflection processes (König, 2018; König et al., 2015, 2016; Merse, 2021; Volkmann, 2007) as teaching gender is connected to inter- and transcultural learning, an orientation to students' life realities, the development of discursive abilities, and teaching literature.

While the topic of gender has only recently been added to the North-Rhine Westphalian curricula for English Language Teaching, the theoretical disciplines of Gender Studies and Queer Studies, and more recently English Language Education research provide a benchmark on what critically informed gender teaching practice may look like. Despite the expansion of understanding of gender-related teaching, gender is nevertheless an underrepresented topic and consideration within ELT teaching practice (Merse, 2021). With the inclusion of gender into the curricula, ELT in North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW) has undoubtedly taken an important step towards integrating gender into the English language classroom; however, the implementation of gender teaching ultimately lies within the hands of the teachers. The nature of the

implementation of gender-related topics in ELT is thus contingent on teachers' subjective understandings, values, perceptions and beliefs regarding gender and gender teaching and their individual conception of teaching practice.

This paper therefore investigates teachers' perspectives on teaching gender within ELT in order to understand their underlying subjective orientations and to highlight their voice as main actors in shaping gender discourse in the classroom. The study therefore focussed on qualitative ethnographic research by conducting qualitative interviews with English teachers at a secondary school in NRW, Germany, to explore the central research question:

How do teachers in Germany think, they deal with the topic of gender in English Language Teaching?

To this end, the paper will first provide an overview of relevant theoretical understandings and empirical research within the field of gender teaching in ELT. This is followed by a brief explication of the research methodology, the method of data collection and data analysis. The findings of the interview study will then be presented and discussed.

2 Gender in education and ELT

2.1 Gender conceptions in queer and gender studies

As the basis for the investigation of teacher perspectives on gender, some key understandings of the concept need to be briefly explicated. Gender as a category of social difference became a prominent aspect of the feminist movements of the 1960s (Degele, 2008, p. 10). These feminist movements led to the development of both Gender Studies and Queer Studies as independent schools of thought that, however, are closely related as they both deal with the destabilisation of social, cultural, and political structures that determine the dominant cultural consensus of what men and women are or should be (Degele, 2008, pp. 12–13) as well as the nature of the "relationship between variation and inequality, so between difference and hierarchy" (Degele, 2008, p. 13). The difference between these schools of thought lies in the nature of their lens: Gender Studies scrutinizes the impact of gender roles and identities in relation to societal structures. Queer Studies, in contrast, seeks to challenge and deconstruct normative frameworks of gender and sexuality, while criticizing binary categorizations and stressing fluidity. Despite this differentiation, both Gender Studies and Queer Studies build on three fundamental theoretical perspectives as Degele (2008) describes: gender as a social construct, the construction of gender through interaction, and the reproduction of gender

as a cultural category through discourse. This paper will draw on these theoretical perspectives to outline different dimensions of gender (Degele, 2008, pp. 16–19).

The theoretical perspective of “structure-oriented social criticism”[1] identifies gender as a central marker of difference within structures of inequality and is inherently interested in the critique and dismantling of these inequal structures; however, the focus lies on the oppression of women (Degele, 2008, pp. 16–17; König, 2018, pp. 89–90). This theoretical perspective aims to criticize societal inequality by differentiating between gender and sex. König (2018) follows Simone de Beauvoir and defines sex as the “biological, anatomic gender” (p. 89)[2] while gender is tied much more closely to interaction, i.e. “social gender” (p. 89)[3] that is created by reference to “societal expectations and references” (p. 89)[4]. Gender thus becomes a more transient concept that is constructed in interaction rather than being a fixed concept.

The second theoretical perspective of “interactionist constructivism”[5] highlights the social construction of gender by *doing* gender (König, 2018; see West & Zimmermann, 1987). The notion of *doing* gender denotes that societal expectations and references associated with gender need to be constructed within specific “social situations and stagings” (König, 2018, p. 103)[6]. Gender is thus “not an essential individual characteristic [but rather] something that is constantly done in interaction with others” (p. 104)[7]. Furthermore, the

[1] Own translation of the original German term “strukturorientierte Gesellschaftskritik” (König, 2018, p. 89).

[2] Own translation of the original German description “biologisches, anatomisches Geschlecht” (König, 2018, p. 89).

[3] Own translation of the original German description “soziales Geschlecht” (König, 2018, p. 89).

[4] Own translation of the original German description “gesellschaftliche Erwartungen und Zuschreibungen” (König, 2018, p. 89).

[5] Own translation of the original German term “interaktionistischer Konstruktivismus” (König, 2018, p. 103).

[6] Own translation of the original German description “spezifische soziale Situationen und Inszenierungen” (König, 2018, p. 103).

[7] Own translation of the original German description “nicht als essentielle individuelle Eigenschaft beschrieben, sondern als etwas, das ständig und in Interaktionen mit anderen getan wird” (König, 2018, p. 104).

constant production and reception of gender makes gender a fundamental social category that is ascribed to individuals (König, 2018, p. 105) and thus leads to the creation of gender roles that underlie the expectations within social situations (König, 2018, p. 105).

Lastly, the "discourse-theoretical deconstructivism"[8] focuses on the entanglement of gender, language, and discourse (König, 2018, p. 113). Here, gender constitutes a governing principle within processes of subjectivization and associated disenfranchisement which must be criticized (Degele, 2008, pp. 18–19; König, 2018, pp. 112–113).

2.2 Gender in educational contexts

These theoretical understandings are relevant for gender within educational contexts in general, but also specifically for ELT. Educational contexts slot into a larger list of relevant contexts for the formation of gender conception for children and adolescents, wherein school, in particular, constitutes a central space of socialisation in children's formative years as they spend a significant time within educational contexts (Flaake, 2006, p. 29). König et al. (2016, p. 20) further identify the centrality of this period for the development of gender conceptions as youths develop gender and sexual identities. The empirical findings on gender-related socialisation and educational contexts as identified by Rieske (2011) have already been explicated, but König et al. (2016) go further and frame school as "both an agent of socialisation and an agent of education" (p. 20). Schooling must therefore also deal (self-)reflectively with the topic of gender so that a "focus on one-sided perspectives"[9] (Flaake, 2006, p. 28) through the reproduction of gender stereotypes and expectations does not occur.

2.3 ELT and gender reflection

Here, ELT provides a unique opportunity to facilitate gender education. König et al. (2015, pp. 3–4) argue that the development of a basic ethical understanding that is characterized by respect, justice, tolerance, and the striving towards gender equity is an essential goal of institutionalized schooling in

[8] Own translation of the original German term "diskurstheoretischer Dekonstuktivismus" (König, 2018, p. 113).

[9] Own translation of the original German term "Vereinseitigung der Perspektiven" (Flaake, 2006, p 28).

Germany. At the same time, the topic of gender is often highly politicized, meaning that certain terms, ideas or topics are emotionally or normatively charged within a certain language context and divergence from hegemonic gender norms may therefore lead to denigration (König et al., 2015, p. 4). The immanently personal nature of gender can create a fear of contact or defensive attitudes because of the associated denigration based on predominant gender norms of a cultural context (König et al., 2015, p. 4). In this context, ELT can act as a third space outside of one's own normatively charged cultural sphere by transferring gender negotiation processes into a foreign language context. These gender negotiation processes within a different cultural context can further be tied to the students' own personal experiences as gender bears a central relevance to the living reality of students (König et al., 2015, p. 4). ELT practice with a focus on gender can further contribute to the development of a "specific gender-discourse competence"[10] (König et al., 2015, p. 5), that provides students with both the fundamental vocabulary and the communicative competence to deal with practices of gender enactment, gender norms and stereotypes, and social mechanisms (König et al., 2015, p. 5). Additionally, explicitly focusing on the connection of language and gender allows students "to identify the societal relevance and impact of language" (König et al., 2015, p. 5)[11] to foster the students' language awareness.

Teaching practice is therefore relevant to gender reflection as teachers are central actors not just for the reproduction of gender stereotypes but also for equipping students with a critical lens on gender stereotypes and for the creation of positive attitudes towards diverse gender identities. Looking at the introductory findings of Krell and Oldemeier (2015, p. 31) again, they propose taking certain steps to create a more inclusive school space by making realistic role models or role expectations visible, including diverse representations of gender identity and sexual orientation within teaching materials, and creating a hospitable environment for LGBTQI* students. Moreover, teachers are central players in influencing gender attitudes within their schools as these attitudes are determined by the *Schulkultur*, which can be influenced by individual teachers (Budde, 2006, p. 51). Teachers are further central actors as the facilitation of gender reflection requires adequate lesson planning. Regarding the use of materials, König (2018, p. 76) and Alter et al.

[10] Own translation of the original German term "spezifische Genderdiskursfähigkeit".

[11] Own translation of the German description "sich der gesellschaftlichen Bedeutung und Wirkung von Sprache bewusst zu werden" (König et al., 2015, p. 5).

(2021) find that current schoolbooks display a lack of diverse representations. In general, the inclusion of gender into German school curricula has not been mirrored by teaching materials (König, 2018, p. 75). König (2018, p. 161), however, identifies literary texts as a valid alternative to the use of schoolbooks, as they find that all literary texts can be used for teaching about gender. Additionally, teachers can create better learning opportunities by working with students' preconceptions and experiences as a starting point (Timmermanns, 2008, p. 64) while also seeking to expand students' initial understanding of gender to include both identity and attraction (Timmermanns, 2008, p. 65). This would also entail to refrain from categorical sanctioning of negative statements, such as the rejection of topics that relate to homosexuality and instead using these as an impetus for critical reflection and discussion of gender-related issues (Timmermanns, 2008, p. 63).

These requirements on teaching practice and the central role of teachers point to the need for adequate teacher training for positive gender teaching practices. In order to teach about gender and to enable gender reflection, teachers themselves need to be self-reflective, open to re-evaluating their own conceptions of what is normal and ready to face their fears and resistances regarding gender teaching (König et al., 2015, p. 7). Additionally, teachers often draw on fossilized subjective theories when acting in stress situations, so it is important teachers have an objectified knowledge about gender to be able to navigate spontaneous classroom discourses on gender (Rendtorff, 2015, pp. 43–44). This objectified knowledge is further important as recent trends within school gender equality discourses point to anti-feminist positions taking hold (Rendtorff, 2015, p. 41). Gender equality now often revolves around male perspectives and is seen as a threat to boys' learning processes at school (Rendtorff, 2015, p. 41). Teachers therefore need to be able to push back against such reactionary attitudes (Rendtorff, 2015, p. 41).

2.4 Existing research on teachers' perspectives on gender in ELT

Looking at existing research on teachers' perspectives on gender within ELT in Germany, it seems that teachers have so far been underexamined. While German ELT research has given rise to different conceptions of how gender could be integrated into the classroom, Carolyn Blume (2021) notes that

> "it appears that incorporating issues of gender remains a novelty in German teacher education, with an even greater paucity of empirical studies regarding the impact at either the teacher preparation or classroom level" (p. 194).

Among the brevity of research in Germany, a recent action research study by Granger and Gerlach (2024) investigated the introduction of feminist issues into the ELT classroom and concluded that a “majority of learners welcome an exploration of feminist matters in the ELT classrooms” (p. 954). While this would point to an openness and interest of the students, the question remains of how teachers view the inclusion of issues of gender or feminism, and how their attitudes and knowledges shape their understandings of their gender teaching.

Given the identified paucity of empirical investigation of teachers’ perspectives on their practice, it is fruitful to turn to research outside of the German ELT context where scholars have investigated the attitudes of pre-service ELT teachers, teachers of ELT at higher education institutions, and in-service ELT teachers’ perspectives on gender teaching. Banegas et al. (2020) conducted a study within teacher education in Argentina that points to a connection between the inclusion of gender teaching approaches in teacher education and student-teachers seeing the inclusion of gender issues as important and as an issue of social justice that is connected to citizenship.

Looking at in-service teachers, Tarrayo and colleagues (2021) conducted an interview study with higher education instructors in the Philippines on the incorporation of gender perspectives into ELT practice. The study found that higher education instructors connect the inclusion of gender perspectives into ELT to critical thinking skills, the creation of “an inclusive and supportive learning environment” (Tarrayo et al., 2021, p. 1634) and the formation of critical language awareness, while viewing student rejection of the topic, the increased effort needed to incorporate gender perspectives into practice, curricular and resource constraints, and conservative or religious beliefs as challenges to the implementation of gender perspectives into ELT practice.

Within the Polish context, Pakuła et al. (2015) employed focus-group interviews with ELT teachers to explore teachers’ perspectives regarding gender topics in ELT. The study concludes that teacher ascribe a general importance to gender issues but show varying understandings of how this should translate into teaching practice. Some teachers perceive gender stereotypes as a resource for grammar learning while other see the subversion of gender roles as beneficial to learning grammar. Similarly, some teachers see students as incapable of critical reflection and thus exclude gender topics from their teaching while other stress their students’ agency in connecting to issues and challenging texts. However, all teachers see maturity as an important factor for the inclusion of gender perspectives and see gender as a topic for older

learners. All teachers perceive institutional and socio-political impediments for dealing with topics that lie outside of or challenge hegemonic norms or values.

In Thailand, Ulla and Paiz (2023) investigated ELT teachers' perspectives on queer pedagogy. The study's findings point to a feeling of lacking knowledge regarding queer pedagogy, a "lack of teaching strategies that would 'queer' [the participants'] language classrooms" (Ulla & Paiz, 2023, p. 9), and a feeling that the textbooks do not provide diverse representations. Moreover, the study also pointed to a general interest in integrating queer issues into the ELT classroom, even if the teachers do not specifically refer to their practice as queer pedagogy. It should, however, be noted that only 6 out of 23 possible participants were open to participating in the study, which could indicate more reserved attitudes among the cohort.

Finally, studies investigating teacher perspectives on gender and teaching materials, such as those by Vu and Pham (2022) and Sunderland et al. (2001), have highlighted a lack of teacher awareness regarding gender bias in textbooks. Vu and Pham find that the participants in Vietnam were oblivious to "the hidden curricula of gender" (Vu & Pham, 2022, p. 1) and were thus uncritical of gendered materials. Furthermore, Vu and Pham posit that the participants' "teaching design and interaction were found to be affected by their own bias – consciously and unconsciously" (2022, p. 1). Similarly, Sunderland and others (2001) found that the participants of the cross-national study showed a "gender blindness" (p. 252) regarding issues of gender and disregarded "traditional biases" (p. 252) within teaching materials.

These studies identify key themes in relation to teachers' understandings, values, perceptions and beliefs regarding gender teaching: Firstly, the diversity of teachers' attitudes toward gender, as seen in the studies by Pakuła et al. (2015) and Tarrayo et al. (2021), points to the need for a better understanding of how individual beliefs shape pedagogical practice as teachers may have varying views on its relevance or on suitable approaches, potentially leading to inconsistent practices across classrooms. This is especially relevant as these studies investigated non-German contexts, making it difficult to apply these findings to German ELT teachers. Moreover, while studies from the Philippines (Tarrayo et al., 2021) and Thailand (Ulla & Paiz, 2023) identify institutional and curricular constraints, such as rigid curricula, lack of resources, and teacher discomfort with gender topics, these findings may not be directly applicable to the German context as the institutional contexts vary.

3 Research methodology

Recent research has pointed to diverse understandings of gender in school contexts and has been unable to explain how these translate into ELT practice. Furthermore, international research identifies institutional and curricular influences on teachers' gender teaching in ELT, yet it remains unexplored how ELT teachers in Germany navigate these contexts. Research within the German ELT contexts has instead identified the rise of reactionary attitudes on gender equity discourses and a lagging transition towards the inclusion of gender issues within teaching materials. This led me to investigate in-service teachers' perspectives on teaching gender within ELT in order to explore how teachers understand their own practices as related to gender. This study therefore investigated the research question:

How do in-service teachers think, they deal with the topic of gender in ELT?

To investigate this research question, the study employed qualitative interviews as the main data collection method. This method seemed particularly fitting to the study's research question as "practitioners often have an extensive implicit knowledge about their practices with specific issues or target groups, which can be made explicit" (Flick, 2018, p. 206). The qualitative interview involves open-ended "theory-driven, hypothesis-directed questions" (Flick, 2018, p. 227) that a participant "[may answer] on the basis of the knowledge that [they have] immediately at hand" (Flick, 2018, p. 227) and thus specifically allows "for reconstructing subjective theories" (Flick, 2018, p. 226).

The interviews were conducted[12] at a secondary school in NRW, Germany. Gaining access to the field did not constitute a challenge for me as the research project was situated within the context of the mandatory school placement within the teacher education framework of NRW, the *Praxissemester*. The participants were chosen, firstly, based on their willingness to discuss the politicized topic of gender, and secondly, to represent the English department's demographic constitution in terms of age distribution and perceived gender. I initially perceived the school culture to be rather conservative and anticipated possible intervention by the school administration or difficulty finding participants willing to share their ideas on the topic of gender within

[12] The interviews were conducted in English. However, the participants were instructed that they could always switch to German or any other languages that they spoke to express their thoughts.

their English teaching. Despite these concerns, the English teachers I came into contact with at the school were willing to take part in the interviews and did not voice any reservations regarding the topic. Nonetheless, I judged the participants' willingness to talk about the topic of gender to be related to the relationship I had built with them as I had already accompanied each of the participants several times and therefore refrained from asking teachers that I had not come into direct contact with to partake in the interviews.

Participant Dirk[13] was the youngest and only male participant and stated that they had spent about 10 years at the school after also completing their teacher training there. Participant Sandra was approaching the last third of their teaching career and Participant Claudia stated that they only had two years remaining until their retirement. The interviews were conducted in the summer of 2023.

The data collected within the interviews was transcribed and analysed using qualitative content analysis (QCA). QCA constitutes a "highly systematic" (Schreier, 2014, p. 172) qualitative-interpretative approach to text analysis that seeks to make implicit meaning constructions explicit (Mayring & Fenzl, 2019, p. 633). To achieve this, QCA follows a fixed procedure of assigning individual passages to categories and thus building a coding frame. The process of building a coding frame is "strictly governed by rules" (Mayring & Fenzl, 2019, p. 633)[14] and requires, firstly, that main categories relate only to one element of meaning, secondly, that main categories are mutually exclusive, and lastly, that the analysis confronts all relevant aspects of meaning (Schreier, 2014, p. 175). The categorization and building of the coding frame can be both "concept-driven and data-driven" (Schreier, 2014, p. 171). For the analysis of the interviews, this study used QCA to build a coding frame on the basis of categories and sub-categories developed both deductively from the theoretical and empirical literature, and inductively from the data generated by the interviews. On the basis of this reduction of material, the individual passages are interpreted through paraphrasing and generalisation, contextualisation, and the application of theory-derived concepts to the data (Mayring & Fenzl, 2019, pp. 637–638).

[13] The names of all participants were anonymized for this article.

[14] Own translation of the original German description "streng regelgeleitet" (Mayring & Fenzl, 2019, p. 633).

4 Results

The interviews showed that the participants had varying understandings of the definition of gender, its relevance for their teaching practice and its actual implementation in the classroom. Based on the analysis of the interview data, a coding frame was created that aligns with the following reduced overview.

Table 1: Reduced Coding Frame

Main Code	*Categories*
Defining gender	Gender as ‘biologically given to people’ Gender as ‘how they want to live’ Personal distance to gender biases
Teaching about gender	‘It’s not in the curriculum’ Primacy of the textbook Trying to have one political item that is also connected to women ‘Textbooks tend to be more open’
Attitudes towards teaching about gender	Gender as a topic in society ‘Students that are part of that community’ ‘You just speak about people’ Creating diversity of thought ‘It is the most personal thing that we could ever teach’
Challenges	Personal attitudes Controversial discussions Staying up to date
Teacher training	‘It was simply not there on a daily basis’ Including gender in future teacher training

4.1 Theme I: Defining gender

During the interviews, the participants showed varying perspectives on gender, ranging from a reduction to only the biological dimension of gender to seeing gender as a social concept connected with social expectations. When asked how they would define gender, Claudia stated that for them gender is *“in the first place, something biologically given to people”* (P1: 62). Here, Claudia clearly references the primacy of the biological aspect of gender, but also alludes to the possibility of gender being different from biological sex. Additionally, Claudia states that *“I have students of both sexes, plus, plus, plus, plus”* (P1: 40), *“we have cases here at school that students of several*

ages, different ages, can't cope with their biological gender" (P1: 46–47) and that *"they were planning to change their gender, their sex"* (P1: 52–53) and thus also appears to reference the social construction of gender in which other gender identities are possible while simultaneously distancing themselves from this idea. Here, Claudia seems to further centre a biological essentialist perspective that sees male and female as the standard, by distancing themselves from the constructivist ideas of the social embeddedness of gender.

Sandra's definition of gender also involves reference to the biological interpretation of gender, but they use this to define gender more broadly:

> *It is not just sex. […] [I]t has got to do with many aspects connected to orientation, living together in terms of being or feeling more connected or totally connected or whatever to a specific sex.* (P2: 65–70)

Here, Sandra connects gender to *"living something freely"* (P2: 58), thereby pointing to a gender definition that sees gender as something performative and thus referencing the idea of gender expression. Sandra further references both the idea of sexual orientation and gender identity as different concepts that are, however, also included in their understanding of gender (P2: 52–53, 55).

Dirk also addresses the biological interpretation of gender while including various other elements within their definition as well. During the interview, Dirk was asked about their opinion regarding the inclusion of gender into the English curricula and responded with a counter question: *"Let me ask what is meant by gender in this case. So just the fact that there are different types of gender and that gender as a topic is more relevant or is it just about the sex?"* (P3: 34–35). In their question it becomes apparent that Dirk differentiates between the concepts of sex and gender. Dirk also seems to point to the existence of different gender identities that lie outside of the traditional gender dichotomy by referencing *"a different perspective of somebody else if it is the other sex or if it is maybe somebody with a totally different perspective on that"* (P3: 42–43). Dirk thus points to the entanglement of the biological dimension of sex and the social dimension of gender while using "perspectives" to reference diverse gender identities. Within the interview, Dirk additionally references the idea that gender is performative by connecting gender identity to peoples' behaviour (P3: 51–53) and noting that gender is about *"how they want others to see themselves and how they want to live"* (P3: 54). Dirk thus shows an understanding of gender that aligns closely to constructivist ideas of gender performance (König, 2018, pp. 103–105).

Claudia and Sandra also note that certain expectations are based on gender. While Sandra notes the limiting effect that gender expectations and bias may have on adolescents, Claudia reflects on bias within her own biography. During the interview, Claudia notes that *"more than 40 years ago, the plans were laid out quite determined by parents and teachers"* (P1: 11–12) and adds that *"it was obligatory for me to start English"* (P1: 13). Claudia does, however, not connect their own experience explicitly to gendered expectations. When faced with a textual prompt[15], Claudia, however, notes the connection of societal expectations and gender:

> *Since this definition goes beyond the biological dimension, I could agree, if I understand it correctly, that there is a cultural and social dimension and that individuals are faced with social expectations and norms and stereotypes based on their gender. Absolutely. How could I disagree coming from the 1960s, being educated in the 60s and 70s? Education and social expectations were, I might even say, exclusively based on gender. Everything beyond these gender expectations was considered unnormal.* (P1: 65–71)

Claudia additionally also does not see a connection between the societal expectations and norms on gender and their own teaching practice. When asked how they see gender represented in their teaching, Claudia states, *"I think it doesn't play a role in my teaching"* (P1: 74). However, later in the interview, Claudia reflects on their own gender bias and their teaching:

> *I know that there is or there are moments when, and also this bias thing, there are moments when giving marks for any kind of, I don't know, test, exam or whatever, there are moments where I would at least say that my bias, how could I say that I'm not biased, is confirmed when I see the results of test papers in English. Particularly, when I see that the girls are better in English than the boys. Which I think is scientifically confirmed and proven, but I see that there is a lot of truth in that here in my (pause). I see that every day. I've just corrected my last class test and again the girls are better than the boys. I think that. I cannot say that this has nothing to do with being biased.* (P1: 160–168)

Claudia here notes that in her experiences, girls perform better in English exam formats than boys and states that they believe this to be scientifically proven. However, Claudia believes that this could be attributed, at least in part, to their own gender bias. This would point towards Claudia's perspective

[15] The prompt involved a short text that provided a constructivist definition of gender and referenced that stereotypes and social expectations can be based on gender.

shifting throughout the interview, at first not connecting gender to the structural impediments in their own biography and the hinderance to their own agency in determining their future, then noting the importance of gender as a social category during their youth but rejecting the idea that gender bears a relevance to their own teaching, to finally conclude that the divergence in test scores between girls and boys could be a result of their own bias. This raises the question in what way the rejection of social gender and the distancing from non-hegemonic gender identities are part of their own interactionist identity construction or a result of the politicization of gender.

4.2 Theme II: Teaching about gender

In addition to varying understandings of gender, the participants also showed varying perspectives on the implementation of gender teaching. During the interview, Claudia stated that they had not dealt with gender in their teaching, citing their belief that the curriculum does not necessitate the inclusion of gender within ELT: *"I haven't done this. It has not been a topic in my lessons so far. Of course, as an excuse I could say it's not in the curriculum, which is really true"* (P1: 81–82). In contrast, Dirk seems unfamiliar with the wording of the curriculum regarding gender (P3: 34) but the stated goals for their teaching align with the requirements of the curriculum, among which Dirk references teaching focuses of *"rethinking"* (P3: 91) and of facilitating discussions about stereotypes (P3: 91–93). Similarly, Sandra does not directly refer to the curriculum but connects their teaching to *"maintaining a different way of thinking"* (P2: 45), *"critical reflection"* (P2: 190), and *"reflecting [students'] ways or some peoples' ways and maybe also their ways of thinking"* (P2: 191–192). These goals closely align with the exact wording used in the Kernlehrplan NRW (MSW NRW, 2014, p. 41). In summary, while Claudia denied that teaching gender is a curricular requirement, Dirk shows an uncertainty about the role or interpretation of gender within the curriculum and Sandra states teaching goals that align with curricular requirements but without reference to the curriculum. The participants' understanding of the curricular requirements would point to a partial irrelevance of the curriculum to their teaching practice.

Regarding their choice of materials to teach gender, the participants all note that the textbook is of central relevance for their teaching. For Claudia, their teaching is centred around existing materials and the textbook. When asked about the role of gender in their English teaching, they seem to cite this as the reason why gender bears no relevance within their teaching practice: *"I try to teach in accordance with my materials, with our schoolbooks, which still only*

make differences between two sexes and two genders" (P1: 75–76). While Claudia states that gender plays no role within their teaching, they do not reflect on this gendered representation within the textbook and instead seem to see it as the standard. Dirk seems to show a similar approach to teaching materials and states that their material choices revolve around the book and existing materials that they have: *"If I'm pleased with the material I have, then I mean, why not? It's usable. You have somebody that thought about putting it into a book, so I believe it is usable."* (P3: 129–132) The choice of material does not seem to include the critical reflection of the material for Dirk; instead they view materials as usable as they were specifically designed by a schoolbook publisher for the purpose of being used within the English language classroom and are thus viable to be used. Dirk also describes a feeling of being *"bound to a textbook"* (P3: 57) that could suggest that institutional factors may have an effect on the role of the textbook in teachers' material choices.

Sandra takes a more critical perspective on the textbook and states that they look to add different perspectives to existing materials:

> *And if I do so, maybe that's a connection now to where gender sometimes comes in, for example, if you work on the American Dream, it's basically men's speeches about the world and what it was like or is like going back to the past. If you have a Kennedy speech, maybe you have a Barack Obama speech and somewhat in between you have a whatever speech, Bush or Trump or whoever. And then of course I also try to have one political item that's also connected to women. I for example chose Obama, Michelle Obama talking to students, giving a speech as one example.* (P2: 150–156)

Sandra notes that some materials may be problematic from a gender perspective as they involve only male perspectives. Sandra thus seeks to use additional materials so that at least one female perspective is dealt with. Sandra's statements point to the primacy of a traditional gender dichotomy as a standard upon which gender teaching is oriented and Sandra does not explicitly mention that they would also seek to include diverse gender identities within their material. The sentiment of a lack of diverse representations within English textbooks is also shared by Claudia, who states that the textbooks *"still make differences only between two sexes and two gender"* (P1: 76–77). Yet the teachers seem to show two differing approaches to gendered representations within the textbook: Firstly, an approach of gender-blindness (cf. Sunderland et al., 2001) in which the teachers take gendered representation within the material as given, and secondly, an approach of critical questioning and modification in which existing material is supported with additional materials to counteract biases in representation.

Sandra, however, also states that they have perceived changes in the textbooks' gender representations. They believe that the textbook in general *"tends to be more open or opening up in some ways"* (P2: 86), stating two different perceived changes. Firstly, while Sandra notes the necessity to add female perspectives to male-dominated textbook materials, they also note that more female perspectives are being included (P2: 159–160). Secondly, Sandra also believes that the representation of *"gender-specific or […] sex-specific items"* within the textbook is changing, referencing that gender roles are now sometimes inverted (P2: 89–97) and, thus, differ from an orthodox distribution of skills and interests in favour of more egalitarian ascriptions.

4.3 Theme III: Attitudes towards teaching about gender

The attitudes shown by the participants vary to some degree; however, all participants see teaching gender as important while showing different reasoning for this sentiment. Claudia states that they have *"slowly become aware of the fact that [gender] is a topic in our society and also in this microcosm of this school"* (P1: 37–38) and from this rising relevance to the student body, Claudia seems to derive the need for teachers at the school to be open to the topic of gender. Dirk similarly appears to regard gender as an important issue because they state that *"at our school, we have a handful of students that are part of that community because they are affected by thoughts about gender"* (P3: 157–159). Dirk thus derives the need for dealing with gender from the personal relevance of gender to the students at their school. Additionally, Claudia also references the personal nature of gender as a reason for its importance and they state that

> *school is a microcosm which is so important for these, for the kids from their younger ages until they are teenagers or adolescents. So, in this very important time of growing up, school has to do something with this* (P1: 104–106).

Here, Claudia notes the importance of the *"microcosm"* of the school for students. This could be interpreted as a consciousness of the importance of school as an "agent of socialisation" (König et al., 2016, p. 20) and the central role of school within children's and adolescents' formative years (Flaake, 2006, p. 29). However, Claudia does not explicitly connect this to gender. Claudia further seems to reference a shift within political discourse that has resulted in an increased political presence of gender-related topics, from which Claudia seems to derive an importance of teaching gender.

Sandra sees teaching about gender as *"an important step forward to really maintain a different way of thinking"* (P2: 45). Gender teaching is thus beneficial to diversity of thought and possibly the acceptance of different perspectives and identities. Sandra seems to also see gender teaching as a possible method of overcoming gender as a category of difference: *"I think one day, one shouldn't talk about gender and gendering and that it is no longer really necessary. You just speak about people"* (P2: 73–75). Sandra's perspective on the importance of gender teaching could thus be interpreted as seeing gender as a tool to create an inclusive space in which a variety of ideas and identities are viable and in which gender is ultimately not used as a marker of social difference. Sandra further states that they are sometimes confronted with *"anachronistic points of view"* (P2: 131). These statements could point towards a conception of positive societal development in regard to gender and could show that they regard teaching gender as part of and contribution to a larger societal development that allows for the empowerment of women and LGBTQI* individuals. Considering Sandra's perspective of possibly seeing gender teaching as a method of empowerment, the importance of teaching gender for Sandra could thus be derived from its contribution to the discursive battle with the goal of shifting the discourse. Yet, while Sandra stresses the importance of gender teaching for the empowerment of women, they also mirror one of the anti-feminist positions identified by Rendtorff (2015, p. 40) as they state that they believe that today girls are sometimes afforded more chances than boys (P2: 116–118).

Dirk's perspective goes into a similar direction as they believe teaching about gender should work towards creating acceptance of difference and noting the curricular anchoring of gender as positive because, as they state, *"you are forced to take in a different perspective"* (P3: 39–40). Here, Dirk's statement has some similarity with Sandra's idea of creating a diversity of thought.

Despite all participants noting the importance of teaching gender, Claudia appears to show personal reservations about teaching gender. During the interview, Claudia talks about a case in which a student transitioned, stating that they had trouble dealing with this situation and framing this as something that they needed to process while also accepting the student's decision to transition: *"this is not my business to understand, but and also of course I accept, but to, to take it for granted that suddenly the girl had changed into a boy"* (P1: 50–60). Claudia's description seems to indicate a conflict between their personal attitudes regarding gender and gender identity conceptions of their students. This distancing of gender from themselves becomes even more apparent when considering Claudia's statements on gender within their English

teaching. When asked about the role of gender in their teaching, Claudia states, *"I think it doesn't play a role in my teaching"* (P1: 74). Claudia further explains this reservation:

> *As I said, an important topic, but we have to deal with it very, very carefully because our clients are young kids, adolescents and it is so personal, it is something so very, very personal. It is the most personal thing that we could ever teach. What should we teach about it?! It is no subject, but it is a very, very, very personal and I might even say an intimate thing.* (P1: 81–88)

As a reason for their reservation, Claudia cites the personal nature of gender and their fear of invading the privacy or intimacy of their students by dealing with gender in their teaching. Considering these statements, Claudia states that they generally perceive teaching gender as very important, yet reject dealing with gender in their own teaching, citing the danger of invading students' intimacy and exemplifying a conflict between their own gender conceptions and those of their students.

4.4 Theme IV: Challenges

For Claudia, the reservations regarding gender teaching also translate into a perceived challenge, for example, when it comes to negotiating their own narrower gender conception with their students' diverse gender identities or navigating the perceived intimate sphere of gender with their students. The personal nature of gender is also perceived as a challenge by Dirk. While Dirk does not appear to perceive dealing with the topic of gender as an invasion of students' intimacy, they state that focusing on gender could lead to *"a very controversial discussion"* (P3: 124–125). The challenge that appears to be perceived here could thus be a result of the emotionality derived from the personal nature of gender issues or the need to deal with problematic statements that arise from the personal experiences and knowledges of the students. These discussions could be additionally challenging as Dirk seems to perceive discourses on gender to be complex and dynamic: *"it is such a wide field and an ongoing developing field that you really have to be up to date"* (P3: 163–164). For Dirk, this need of staying up to date is seemingly derived from the danger of potentially offending or insulting students (P3: 166–177). This again alludes to the perceived challenge of the personal nature of gender because not being *"up to date"* could mean insulting someone, implying a highly emotional nature of gender discourse and personal views. This could connect to the idea that gender is highly politicized and thus leads to heightened awareness and sensitivity in discussions, as individuals must navigate

the normatively charged gender discourses; however, Dirk does not explicitly portray the English language classroom as a space that alleviates this heightened awareness and sensitivity (König et al., 2015, pp. 3–4).

This need for staying *“up to date”* is also relevant for Dirk because they appear to perceive situations of giving advice to students who are struggling with gender-related issues as a challenge. Dirk states:

> *[…] also when you somehow have the belief that maybe a student is unsure maybe about gender or I don’t know, has maybe changed, to talk with him or her about that and maybe to, I don’t know, offer help or discuss with him or her about that. Yeah, I think it’s a very sensitive topic and you really have to be careful. Also, in what you can advise or not advise. I mean we are teaching experts, but we are not psychologists or therapists or something like that and also not well educated or maybe even not at all educated on this topic, so it’s basically our responsibility to be updated or to keep us updated.* (P3: 167–174)

Dirk thus perceives the need to help students struggling with gender-related issues while also not feeling adequately qualified. For Dirk, teachers appear to be conceived as experts for teaching practice who, however, also need to navigate situations where they need to take on certain aspects of the role of a psychologist or a therapist without being trained to do so.

4.5 Theme V: Teacher training

The participants also reflected on their teacher training experience in connection to gender teaching. Claudia states that gender did not play a role within their teacher training, relating this to the socio-political context:

> *It is maybe against the background of my upbringing, of my education, of my school years and of course I’m really coming from the German province, I’m not coming from a big city, very conservative education in every respect and so it has never been a topic.* (P1: 93–96)

While Claudia states that they did not deal with gender in their teacher training, they believe that this should now be included. Claudia appears to connect this to their previously mentioned perspective on the importance of gender teaching, noting that gender *“has now become a topic because today there are young people, kids, teenagers, adolescents which reflect a lot more about sex and gender than my generation has done”* (P1: 102–104). The inclusion of gender into teacher training thus seems to be justified by the importance of gender to the current student body.

Dirk also states that gender was not part of their teacher training, stating that *"the whole topic about gender wasn't topical at that time and therefore it simply wasn't part of it"* (P3: 204–205) and that *"it was simply not there on a daily basis"* (P3: 205–206). Dirk then cites *"the whole Me-Too-Movement"* (P3: 207) as a central impetus for the rising relevance of gender within ELT. Additionally, Dirk states that they believe gender should be included in teacher training:

> *[…] we will be faced with more aspects and issues and problems and difficulties in the future so therefore, I think the whole field of, I don't know, communication and maybe also gender and current developments in society should also be a part of the curriculum at the universities for teachers.* (P3: 222–226)

Dirk's reasoning thus appears to stem from a perception of societal relevance of gender and a rising relevance of gender discourses in the future for which teachers need to be prepared.

When Sandra reflects on their teacher training, they note that they focused on gender within a literary studies context, but that gender was not part of the didactic elements of their teacher training (P2: 238–239). Sandra, however, appears to believe that this has prepared them for teaching gender *"to some degree"* (P2: 245), as it helped them *"in the way of thinking about starting to teach texts in general but it's more like overall abilities"* (P2: 245–246). Sandra does not explicitly mention how teacher training should be conducted differently.

5 Discussion

This study aimed to explore teachers' perspectives on teaching gender in the ELT classroom. The findings revealed a wide spectrum of understandings of gender, ranging from biological essentialism to more socially constructed perspectives, varying levels of material reflection as well as varying perceptions regarding gender teaching and related challenges. In the following section, these findings are interpreted in the context of previous research on gender in ELT.

5.1 How teachers understand gender

Looking at the participants' conceptions of gender, the results suggest that the participants have varying understandings of gender. Claudia relied heavily on an equation of gender with biology; however, Claudia also showed a consciousness of the social nature of gender but distanced themselves from non-

hegemonic gender conceptions. In contrast, Sandra and Dirk stress the social relevance of gender as Sandra connects gender to identity and orientation and Dirk sees gender as something performative that is connected to people's behavior. This aligns with the findings of Pakuła et al. (2015) and Tarrayo et al. (2021) that teachers' perspectives on gender are largely heterogenous. While Dirk and Sandra both appear to understand gender in a more progressive sense, though still not homogenously, Claudia's reduction of gender to biological factors mirrors orthodox gender conceptions. This diversity of gender conceptions also seems to be present with regard to gender expectations and bias. While Dirk and Sandra connect gender to gendered expectations and Sandra notes the limiting effects of expectations, Claudia largely negates that she could be biased. Within the interview, Claudia, however, seems to reflect on whether their teaching may not have been biased, but ultimately argues for a naturality of differences and thus negates the idea of gender bias in their teaching. This could be seen as what Sunderland et al. (2001) refer to as "gender blindness" (p. 252) and "traditional biases" (p. 252) that allow for the negation of constructivist perspectives on gender. Alternatively, this could also be interpreted as an act of distancing themselves from the politicized topic of gender (cf. König et al., 2015) by denying the influence of gender expectations on Claudia's own teaching.

5.2 How teachers reflect teaching materials

The teachers' varying approaches to reflecting the use of teaching materials aligns in part with Sunderland et al.'s (2001) finding that ELT teachers may show a gender blindness in regard to teaching materials and Vu and Pham's (2022) understanding that ELT teachers are unaware of a hidden gender curriculum in textbooks. It must, however, be noted that this does not ring true for all participants as Sandra appears to be aware of gender representations within her teaching materials and thus looks to supplement existing materials that are predominantly male with female perspectives. Tying in with Alter et al.'s (2021) and König's (2018) notion that gender representations in German ELT textbooks do not show a diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations, it seems that Sandra has, in part, also come to the same conclusion and has reacted to this with a supplementation of the teaching materials. While Claudia also states that gender representations within the textbook represent a male-female dichotomy, it is unclear if they also exemplify a gender blindness (Sunderland et al., 2001), have naturalised this gender representation and are thus unaware of it or if they are aware of it and refrain from challenging these representations as they align with their own positions and

beliefs regarding gender. The role that the participants seem to ascribe to the curriculum could support a notion of teachers' reflection of gendered materials being contingent on their own positionality regarding gender topics, as identified by Pakuła et al. (2015) and Tarrayo et al. (2021). As Dirk appears to believe that a reflection of materials is not necessary as the materials were intentionally designed by someone and that he is bound to use the textbook, this could also point to institutional factors – specifically, the trust in publishing companies, time constraints, and pressure from the school – as contributors to a lack of reflection on materials. This would mirror Tarrayo et al.'s (2021) findings that institutional factors limit the implementation of queer pedagogies.

5.3 How teachers position themselves to gender teaching in ELT

The participants share sentiments on the importance of gender teaching, stressing its necessity and citing both the societal, political, and private relevance to the students. Yet the stressed importance does not seem to necessitate that the participants see teaching gender as one of their tasks and the participants seem to show varying approaches to integrating gender teaching into their practice. The case of Claudia is striking as they state the importance of teaching gender but seem to distance themselves from all gender-related issues and their integration into their ELT teaching practice. This could perhaps be understood by considering the participants' perspective on the challenges associated with gender teaching. Dirk notes the personal nature of gender, and it seems that they believe that this translates into a teaching challenge as it requires linguistic accuracy, constant learning and the ability to handle a potentially emotionally charged classroom environment. Claudia perceives the personal nature of gender not as a challenge for teaching practice but as an impediment to deal with gender in a classroom setting as for them this would constitute an invasion of the students' intimacy. The translation of ascription of importance to actual teaching practice again seems to rely on teachers' personal attitudes towards gender. These findings on the participants' attitudes on gender teaching seem to partially contradict Pakuła et al. (2015): In the study by Pakuła et al. (2015), the participants can generally be grouped into two attitude groups – the teachers that see gender and stereotypes as a resource and are not interested in including critical perspectives on gender and gender issues into their classroom, and the teachers that stress the importance of gender and look to challenge hegemonic gender norms in their teaching. The participants of this study seem to resist a similar categorization

as they either see gender as an important issue that should be dealt with critically within ELT, or they see gender as a non-category that bears no relevance to their teaching. Moreover, while teachers in the study by Pakuła et al. (2015) seem to negate their students' agency and involvement, the participants of this study appear to see the agency of their students, and do not necessarily identify gender topics as topics that require maturity as the participants seem to believe that the students are already inherently invested in these topics. This perception of interest in gender issues by the students would also align with Granger and Gerlach's (2024) finding that students are generally interested in issues of feminism. However, despite a general consensus among the participants that teaching gender is important and necessary and that the students are generally interested in gender topics, the implementation of gender issues into teaching seems to be contingent on the participants' own perspectives on gender, as Tarrayo et al. (2021) also argue.

5.4 Teacher training and gender teaching

As all participants note that gender teaching played no role within their teacher training, an evaluation of current teacher training processes is not viable. The participants' insecurities regarding gender teaching could, however, warrant an increased interest into in-service teacher training to help bridge the gap between teaching practice and didactic research.

5.5 Implications of the findings

Having interpreted the findings in light of existing research, it is now essential to consider the implications of these results for teacher education, the wider field of ELT, and teaching practice. Given the findings of this study, it seems that the academic understandings of how to facilitate gender teaching have so far not reached the classrooms of teachers that have completed their teacher training before the implementation of gender into the NRW ELT curricula. Teacher training here, of course, plays a central role in giving future teachers the toolsets that are necessary for successful gender teaching. Yet, teacher training in Germany is positioned at the beginning of teachers' teaching careers with no long-term teacher training processes. ELT must therefore find new avenues of dissemination of academic understandings of gender teaching to reach in-service teachers, especially those that are not inherently interested in gender topics and would not seek to explore gender teaching approaches on their own. The study has also identified that the participants believe that they strongly rely on their textbook as a teaching resource and do not necessarily reflect on the textbook materials in connection with gender or reflect

on their own naturalized assumptions regarding gender. ELT and teacher training should therefore seek to explore how to instill teachers with a critical awareness regarding their teaching materials and their own teaching practice. It should, however, be noted that this process is not exclusively dependent on teachers themselves as they are always embedded into specific institutional contexts and institutional factors may also inhibit such critical reflection processes.

6 Conclusion

This study aimed at investigating the research question: *How do in-service teachers think they deal with the topic of gender in ELT?* The study explored teachers' perspectives on gender teaching in the ELT classroom, revealing a wide spectrum of perspectives. The findings showed that participants had varied understandings of gender, ranging from biological essentialism to more socially constructed viewpoints. This diversity extended to the participants' views on gender biases in teaching materials and the necessity of reflecting on them, with the participants actively supplementing male-dominant teaching materials with female perspectives, trusting the textbook without further reflection, or either accepting or being unaware of gender biases. Though all participants acknowledged the importance of gender teaching, their approaches varied, with one participant refraining from teaching gender due to their personal beliefs, while another participant saw the personal nature of gender as a challenge due to volatility of classroom discussions. These variations suggest that teachers' understandings of gender strongly influence how or if they integrate it into their teaching. The study has also found that none of the participants believe that they had received formal training on teaching gender in their teacher education.

The study has highlighted several key implications for teacher education and the field of ELT. First, academic discourses on gender still point to an inadequate representation of gender matters in in-service teaching, specifically relating to teachers that were trained before the inclusion of the term in the official curriculum guidelines of the state (MSW NRW, 2014). Teacher education plays a crucial role in equipping future educators with the tools for gender-sensitive teaching, but there are no long-term training programs in place. Therefore, new methods are needed to disseminate academic research on gender to practicing teachers, particularly those who may not (yet) have an inherent interest in the topic, as teachers without an interest in gender issues will not proactively seek additional professional development that focuses on gender topics in ELT. Additionally, the study reveals that teachers

often rely heavily on textbooks without critically reflecting on the gender representations they contain or without examining their own assumptions. ELT and teacher training programs should focus on fostering critical awareness of teaching materials and personal biases. However, this responsibility does not rest solely on teachers, as institutional factors, such as school policies and time constraints, can hinder their ability to engage in critical reflection. Consequently, both teacher training and institutional support need to be addressed to ensure the successful integration of gender teaching in ELT classrooms. These implications may help us make ELT practice in Germany more just by contributing to allowing students to understand and negotiate gender discourses. This could allow us to, as Sandra puts it, take *"an important step forward to really maintain a different way of thinking."*

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The Catcher in the Rye Meets *Life is Strange*

A Dialogical Exploration of Narrative Structures and Social Justice in Student Realities

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Abstract: This article explores how J.D. Salinger's literary classic *The Catcher in the Rye*, published in 1951, can be effectively integrated into the English language classroom by pairing it with the narrative adventure game *Life is Strange*, released in 2015 by Dontnod. The two works are combined to discuss narrative and perspective in storytelling to spark meaningful discussions about sensitive topics such as struggles as a young adult, mental health, grief, bullying, gender, and sexual identity. The article is based on the premise that the classic heavily influenced the game and that the game could be considered as a modern adaptation of it. Still, the game also challenges the novel by including female protagonists and addressing issues such as bullying and sexual identity in a more contemporary and inclusive manner. The article further presents a practical teaching approach and argues that combining both media allows students to engage with authentic literature, build empathy, and reflect on social changes over time. Furthermore, the contribution points out the potential of this approach for learners to deconstruct canon literature by exploring and juxtaposing its themes, the effects of different media of narration, and perspectives in the evolving world of digital and traditional literature, as well as in society as a whole.

Keywords: canon literature; born-digital literature; narrative; mental health in education; gender; sexual identities; LGBTQ+; adolescence; Social Justice Education

1 Introduction

J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* was published in 1951 and is still regarded as one of the most popular novels of the 20th century. It has remained in print, sold more than 60 million copies globally, and has been translated into over thirty languages (cf. Graham, 2007, p. xi). It seems like the novel has retained its relevance and continues to appeal to readers across generations. The Guardian further ranks it among the 100 best novels and describes it as "one of the most controversial and best-loved American novels of the 20th century" (McCrum, 2015). Despite its status as a 20th-century classic, it has also been one of the most frequently banned books in America due to its strong language and sexual content. Although some readers have condemned the novel since its release, it remains included in school curricula, solidifying its status as canonical literature (cf. Surkamp & Nünning, 2024, p. 44).

However, some scholars, including Surkamp and Nünning, suggest diversifying school reading lists with novels that offer broader representations and

new perspectives to leave the bias in school reading materials behind, including Salinger's classic (Surkamp & Nünning, 2024, p. 45; see also König, 2018, pp. 168–169; Volkmann, 2023, pp. 97–98). While I agree with this perspective, I propose leveraging *The Catcher in the Rye*'s popularity to engage in critical discussions in class by combining it with contemporary digital literature, because the novel's influence even extends to modern media, as seen in the narrative adventure game series *Life is Strange*, first released in 2015.

The protagonist in the game is an 18-year-old girl named Max Caulfield, which is a playful reference to Salinger's famous protagonist, Holden Caulfield, in *The Catcher in the Rye*. The characters not only share the same last name but also experience similar moral dilemmas as they navigate adulthood. Both stories tackle significant and sensitive topics, as both young adults have experienced the death of someone close to them. Holden lost his younger brother, Allie, to leukemia, while Max lost her best friend, Chloe, whom a fellow classmate shot. These experiences deeply affect the characters and shape the overall stories. They depict the struggles young adults face in understanding their identity, dealing with sexuality, and coping with the impacts of bullying.

Even though both coming-of-age stories cover similar themes and topics, they differ in their medium, mode of storytelling, and their overall plot. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden is not only the protagonist but also the narrator, whereas *Life is Strange* is played and narrated from a third-person perspective. The game has a narrative-driven structure, following an overall plot line of five episodes and designed as a branching narrative, allowing players to engage with the story. As the character Max, players navigate various environments, such as her high school or the fictional town Arcadia Bay, and interact with other characters, such as her peers, teachers or parents, while investigating the mystery of a missing friend. The player's task is to make decisions for Max, as many moments in the game require the player to make important choices for her, from choosing options in dialogue or determining actions she should take. With Max's ability to rewind time, players can further undo previously made decisions and explore different choices and outcomes to alter the narrative. Major choices lead to consequences that affect the game's story and characters.

My proposal aims to develop a teaching sequence using both the novel and the game to actively explore social justice topics in English Language Teaching (ELT) and to engage students in a relevant and exciting way. First, the

game presents a modern take on the coming-of-age story genre, including aspects of students' realities today, such as cyberbullying, more openly discussed sexual identities, and mental health issues. However, since the game reflects a more contemporary view on these issues, it highlights aspects of social justice that remain unsolved, an ongoing challenge that I will explore in more detail later in this article. Therefore, this article aims to encourage learners to develop their own narratives and stories, highlighting this ongoing work needed for social justice. By comparing the game to the novel, for example, students can analyze societal changes, similarities, and their connections to different characters, ultimately identifying necessary steps for a more just future.

Second, the video game is particularly interesting in the English language classroom because it is a text born in the digital realm. It allows students to activate the existing digital literacy skills which they have developed in their everyday lives and helps them navigate and explore literacies crucial for the 21st century to prepare them for the demands of today's world (Becker et al., 2024). As argued by Becker et al.,

> "[b]lending traditional face-to-face lessons and online learning scenarios can be another step in empowering teachers and learners to create authentic learning spaces that mirror students' daily life, which oscillates between digital and analogue spaces" (Becker et al., 2024, p. 19).

Consequently, this approach may not only prompt discussions about the novel's continued relevance in today's world, but also offers a way to make learning more engaging and interactive.

To begin with, I will present the advantages of combining the novel and the digital game in the English language classroom. I will demonstrate how born-digital literature can prepare students for the demands of the digital world and how it relates more closely to their everyday experiences. Then, I will compare the narrative structures of the novel and the game to show how these differences can enhance teaching. I will also provide examples of how we can connect the novel and the game in a way that encourages a dialogical approach to learning. In the next chapter, I will dive into the core topics of social justice relevant to students' lives today and start by focusing on mental health, highlighting similar struggles depicted in both works. Then, I will have a closer look at gender and sexuality, demonstrating how juxtaposing these two media can help learners analyze the gender representations in the novel while challenging them with the more inclusive portrayals found in *Life is Strange*. This is followed by a brief exploration of the concept of "critical discomfort",

illustrating how these sensitive topics can be addressed in ELT. Lastly, I will offer a practical teaching approach for introducing these works in a classroom setting, providing specific ideas for educators to use.

2 Why combine the novel and the digital game?

2.1 Potentials of born-digital literature

Becker et al. (2024) argue that although digital media play a central role in daily life, printed texts still dominate English language education. The scholars, therefore, advocate incorporating born-digital texts into the ELT classroom and giving equal importance to consuming and producing digital texts alongside printed ones to align with students' already existing digital literacy experiences (Becker et al., 2024, p. 1). The authors specifically promote the concept of "born-digital" texts, as anything encountered in the digital realm represents a distinct kind of "text." They define two key features: Firstly, born-digital texts have fluid boundaries regarding their authorship, as they are continuously (re)shaped by the collaboration of many individuals rather than just a few. Secondly, they are characteristically multimodal, combining, for example, texts, music, or video elements. This, however, requires the ability to decipher these interconnected modes in the process of meaning-making (for a more detailed overview, refer to Becker et al., 2024, pp. 10–14).

Ludwig et al. (2024a) further argue that born-digital texts should not replace printed texts. They, for instance, demonstrated in their study, how integrating digital media tools can benefit students' comprehension and motivation to engage with printed texts (Ludwig et al., 2024a). Ludwig further suggests that incorporating digital media into ELT can create more authentic, collaborative, and creative reading experiences, ultimately supporting learners to become more autonomous readers (Ludwig, 2021). Therefore, the overall goal in the English language classroom regarding digital narratives, as argued by Lütge et al., is that "both digital and traditional literature work alongside one another and complement one other" (Lütge et al., 2019, p. 537), which is also the overall direction of this article.

Becker argues that integrating video games can be particularly beneficial for teaching because they are already a crucial part of students' realities and can motivate learners to communicate and develop cultural competencies (Becker, 2021, pp. 10–11). Lütge et al. (2021) add that video games enable learners to take on the roles of the characters, shifting their roles from passive

readers to active participants in the narrative (Lütke et al., 2021, p. 245). Especially the use of game-enhanced learning, such as commercial entertainment-focused games like *Life is Strange*, can be highly beneficial because these games are designed for a target language audience and naturally contain authentic cultural artifacts, providing learners with "real" foreign language communication (Becker, 2021, p. 22). Video games can, therefore, be highly beneficial for developing foreign language skills and improving digital literacy (Becker, 2021, p. 36).

Based on these aspects, the game will be regarded as a cultural artifact, much like the novel. A direct comparison between the literary classic and the game will be used to motivate and encourage meaningful communication in the target language. The specific ways in which the game and the novel can be brought into dialogue, particularly concerning their storytelling modes, will be explored in the following chapter.

2.2 *Life is Strange* and *The Catcher in the Rye* – narratological considerations and shared points of departure

2.2.1 Narrative structure in *The Catcher in the Rye*

One key aspect of *The Catcher in the Rye* is its first-person perspective, which positions Holden not only as the protagonist but also as the narrator of the story. This narrative choice offers readers a deep insight into Holden's thoughts, beliefs, and motivations. However, since the novel's story is also told from a retrospective viewpoint, it limits the reader's understanding to Holden's subjective version of the events.

> "I'm not going to tell *you* my whole goddam autobiography or anything. I'll just tell *you* about this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas just before I got pretty run-down and had to come here and take it easy" (Salinger, 2014/1951, ch. 1, p. 3; emphasis V.K.),

is how the protagonist introduces himself to the reader and sets up his story. Holden's story centers on his expulsion from his school, Pencey Prep, his disconnection from his peers, and his subsequent trip to New York City. But only after reading the last chapter, when he refers to "this one psychoanalyst guy they have here" (Salinger, 2014/1951, ch. 26, p. 234), can the reader piece together that he is recounting the events from a mental facility. Throughout the novel, as highlighted in the quote above, Holden addresses his story to "you", a narrative technique that fosters a personal connection with the reader, though it remains unclear to whom this "you" refers. Graham

argues, “this sense of connection between Holden and the reader is one of the key aspects of the novel’s power” (Graham, 2007, p. 19).

Reading the novel in school could allow students to develop empathy for Holden by understanding his thoughts and motivations, making his journey more personal and engaging. The direct address to the reader especially fosters a sense of trust and intimacy, which may encourage students to read further and discuss his reasoning. As Surkamp and Nünning (2024) argue, reading literature helps learners shift perspectives and expand their understanding to promote further empathy, tolerance, and the ability to adopt diverse perspectives (Surkamp & Nünning, 2024, pp. 14–15).

But what happens when that empathy is too generously given? In her article, Urtasun (2021) references an anecdote from literary critic Booth, who observed that “instead of joining Salinger in his deeply sympathetic but critical exploration of Caulfield’s character, they [his students] simply sided with him against the whole world” (Booth, 2005, pp. i–ii). Urtasun warns that Holden’s first-person narration can easily sway readers to adopt his perspective and manipulate readers to share the protagonist’s view. She argues that this presents an opportunity, however, to critically examine the role of empathy in reading, encouraging students to reflect on whether it can blind judgment. This is particularly important in *The Catcher in the Rye*, where trustworthiness and integrity are the core dilemmas of the novel, as Holden attributes his struggles with others to the “phoniness” and hypocrisy of the adult world (Urtasun, 2021, pp. 142–146).

Reading the novel, hence, can foster empathy, but it should also invite critical reflection. By incorporating *Life is Strange*, teachers and students can aim to challenge Holden’s perspective and analyze the narrative techniques used in both works.

2.2.2 Narrative structure in *Life is Strange*

Unlike the linear nature of the novel, the narrative structure of *Life is Strange* is more dynamic, allowing players to actively shape the story. While the novel positions the reader as a passive observer, the game places players in the role of Max Caulfield, experiencing the story from a limited third-person perspective. Nevertheless, players are confined to Max’s viewpoint, knowing only what other characters reveal to her, which creates a unique blend of narrative control and limitation.

The plot in the game unfolds over five episodes, beginning with 18-year-old Max returning to her hometown, Arcadia Bay, and discovering her ability to rewind time after witnessing her estranged best friend, Chloe Price, being shot. She prevents the shooting and reconnects with Chloe. Together, they try to stop an impending storm which Max foresees and which is about to destroy their town, and they investigate the mysterious disappearance of Chloe's friend, Rachel Amber. Throughout the game, players face moral and emotional dilemmas that affect not only Max but also those around her. Choices in the game are categorized as minor or major, with the latter significantly altering the narrative. For example, in the first episode, Max can either "Report Nathan" (who shot Chloe) for carrying a gun, which leads to hostility towards herself but aids another character, or "Hide the truth", which prevents the bond with that character from forming. After the decisions in the game are made, Max comments on her decision, and players can either decide to rewind time and make a different choice or continue with the plot until they reach a checkpoint, where the plot will be saved. Some of the consequences and outcomes will only progress in later episodes. These choices lead players through different narrative branches providing various options to explore. However, although players can rewind time and explore even more narrative branches, the game overall maintains an overarching storyline that continues across the episodes (for a detailed overview of major choices and their consequences, see *Life Is Strange Wiki. Choices and Consequences*, n.d.).

The implemented narrative structure in *Life is Strange* offers profound didactic potential for the English language classroom. Unlike linear texts, the game promotes interactivity, enabling the learners to navigate multiple paths, which not only changes the didactic and methodological possibilities but also its demands in teaching (cf. Lütge et al., 2019, pp. 525–526). Therefore, Lütge et al. emphasize that understanding the narrative structure of digital literature, especially in interactive forms, is crucial for learners (2019, pp. 530–531). The element of interactivity transforms learners from passive consumers into active participants as they explore the story world, make choices, and engage with characters. Becker further argues that particularly *Life is Strange* can offer valuable insights into American high school life. It allows students to virtually interact with peers, explore the campus, and experience classroom dynamics (Becker, 2021, p. 84). However, this interactivity makes each player's experiences unique, so it would be nearly impossible to recreate that exact same experience again (cf. Lütge et al., 2019, pp. 529–530). For learners, this means greater control over their learning experience. They must actively engage with and consider the consequences of their choices, which influence the story's overall progression, but also in which conversations they

would like to engage, which rooms to explore, or which objects to inspect or collect. Thus, learners become co-authors and share agency with the game developers as they explore the narrative (cf. Becker et al., 2024, pp. 13–14). While it may be challenging for teachers to monitor each group's progress, this limitation can foster meaningful communication and literary discussion, as differing experiences in the game encourage the need for authentic interaction (Lütge et al., 2019, p. 532). Furthermore, this approach can encourage teachers to step back and adopt a more collaborative role alongside their students. By participating as co-learners in the learning process rather than solely directing it, teachers can foster a more interactive and equitable dynamic.

Moreover, as already indicated, players are not fully autonomous in the game. The narrative is still centered on Max, and this reliance on the protagonist's perspective requires critical examination: Especially since players must actively engage with the story, they might align more closely with Max's view. For that reason, I further suggest some strategies to combine the novel and the game, focusing on discussing the game's decision-making feature.

2.2.3 Connecting novel and game

To truly gain the advantages of using both the game and the novel in teaching, connecting them and initiating a dialogue between the two is essential. One of the game's key features is that the players have to make decisions for the protagonist, Max. It would be interesting to explore how this element of decision-making could be incorporated into the novel. Urtasun (2021) proposes deconstructing the potential blind trust in Holden's narration by performing a close reading of a scene in Chapter 22, where Holden's sister, Phoebe, asks him why he left school (Salinger, 2021, p. 143).

> "'Oh, why did you *do* it?' She meant why did I get the ax again. It made me sort of sad, the way she said it. 'Oh, God, Phoebe, don't ask me. I'm sick of everybody asking me that,' I said. 'A million reasons why. It was one of the worst schools I ever went to. I was full of phonies. […] Even the couple of *nice* teachers on the faculty, they were phonies, too,' I said. 'There was this one old guy, Mr. Spencer. His wife was always giving you hot chocolate and all that stuff, and they were really pretty nice. But you should've seen him when the headmaster, old Thurmer, came in the history class and sat down in the back of the room. He was always coming in and sitting down in the back of the room for about a half an hour. He was supposed to be incognito or something. After a while, he'd be sitting back there and then he'd start interrupting what old Spencer was saying to crack a lot of corny jokes. Old Spencer'd practically kill

> himself chuckling and smiling and all, like as if Thurmer was a goddam prince or something.' […]" (Salinger, 2014/1951, pp. 185–186; original emphasis).

After a lengthy explanation, his sister Phoebe replies, "You don't like *any*thing that's happening" (Salinger, 2014/1951, p. 187; original emphasis), indicating that the problem lies not with the school but with Holden himself. At first glance, his explanation may seem trivial or even silly, but the beginning of the quote hints at deeper reasons beyond just disliking pretentious teachers. He later recalls an event where a classmate was bullied so severely that he committed suicide (which I will explore further in Section 2.3 of this article). Holden blends this seemingly minor complaint with genuine traumatic experiences, providing an opportunity to analyze these dilemmas and choices. Learners could discuss: Was leaving the right choice? If the novel had the same interactive features as the game, would they rewind any scenes, including him leaving school? What other outcomes could have occurred if Holden had made different choices, and what are the consequences of his current choices? Learners could also step into the perspective of his sister and design a small branching narrative starting from Holden's explanation, viewed through her eyes, with various possible responses and outcomes. The overall goal is to encourage empathy while also promoting critical reflection of his actions.

To further enhance discussions and encourage learners in the physical reading, they could be prompted to find similarities between the two works. A lesson could guide them to actively search for Easter eggs and similarities in the game that mirror the novel's themes, helping students make exciting connections that highlight the text's enduring relevance. Several blogs have already identified and discussed these Easter eggs (Hisbrokenbutterfly, 2020; *Life Is Strange Wiki. References (Life Is Strange)*, n.d.). In the following I will only highlight a few that could be especially interesting for a teaching unit. For example, in addition to their shared last name, "Caulfield", players might notice another reference in Max's dorm room. On the wall between her windows, there is a poster titled *The Winger and the Cow*. As seen in the screenshot below (Fig. 1), the title and the design closely resemble the cover of the first edition of *The Catcher in the Rye* (Fig. 2, both Figures on the next page) (cf. Hisbrokenbutterfly, 2020; *Life Is Strange Wiki. References (Life Is Strange)*, n.d.).

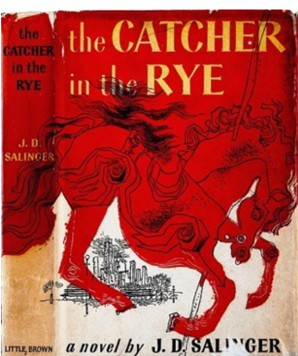

Figure 1: Screenshot of Max's dorm room (© Square Enix)[1]

Figure 2: First-edition cover of *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)[2]

In episode 3, the player can further explore the principal's secretary's office, where they will notice a rack in the corner, next to the bathroom door, with a single red hat hanging on it (Fig. 3).

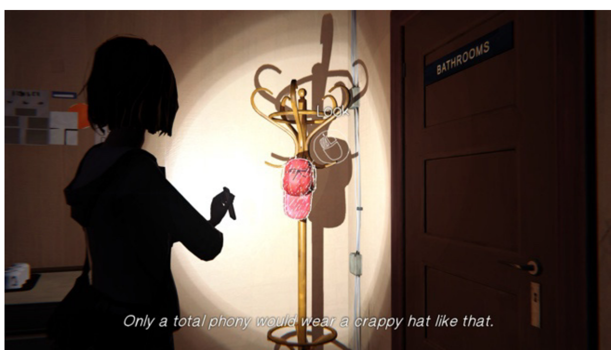

Figure 3: Screenshot of the principal's secretary's office (© Square Enix)[3]

When players click on the hat for a closer look, Max remarks, "Only a total phony would wear a crappy hat like that," mocking Holden, who frequently

[1] Screenshots from *Life is Strange* are created and shared here in line with Square Enix's Material Usage Policy: https://www.square-enix-games.com/en_US/documents/materialusagepolicy; last accessed: 20.02.2025.

[2] This image is in the public domain. The image is a scan of the original dust jacket, and both the scan and the cover are public domain because they were published in the U.S. between 1929 and 1977 without a copyright notice. For further information, regard: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Catcher_in_the_Rye_(1951,_first_edition_cover).jpg?uselang=en#Licensing; last accessed: 20.02.2025.

[3] Screenshots from *Life is Strange* are created and shared here in line with Square Enix's Material Usage Policy.

calls people “phony” in the novel (Dontnod, 2015, ep. 3; cf. Hisbrokenbutterfly, 2020; *Life Is Strange Wiki. References (Life Is Strange)*, n.d). The hat is a further reference to Holden’s iconic “red hunting hat, with one of those very long peaks” (Salinger, 2014/1951, ch. 3, p. 21), which he wears throughout the novel. Students could explore why the game developers chose to include this red hunting hat and analyze its significance in the novel. For instance, they could examine why Holden emphasizes, in the novel’s final scene, how his little sister gives him the hat back, leading him to feel a sense of acceptance in his transition from childhood to adulthood (cf. Salinger, 2014/1951, ch. 25, p. 233). Here, the connection of the novel and the game could serve as a useful tool for understanding the symbolic weight of the hat and its broader significance in *The Catcher in the Rye*. However, they could also discuss the implications of implementing a different object or reference to connect Holden’s and Max’s worlds.

There are more similarities between the novel and the game. However, since these involve more sensitive topics, I will not consider them as Easter eggs. Instead, I will address them in greater depth in the next section, which focuses on mental health, to ensure the gravity of these issues is properly considered.

2.3 A closer look I: mental health

The novel and the game portray challenging mental health issues or risks, such as loss, depression, suicidal thoughts, and (attempts at) sexual assault, making it essential to approach these themes with care in the classroom. Talking about these topics might be intensely challenging for both teachers and students. However, I would like to encourage viewing them as an opportunity to engage students in meaningful discussions about mental health. Unfortunately, research shows that mental health issues, especially anxiety and depression, are on the rise among adolescents globally (Becker, 2024, p. 47; WHO, 2021). Since schools play a crucial role in supporting teens through this vulnerable phase, the English language classroom could foster emotional resilience and promote a deeper understanding of mental health (Becker, 2024; Ludwig et al., 2024b). Moreover, addressing these issues in class can help reduce the prejudice and stigma around mental health and provide them with tools to recognize and cope with challenges they and others face in their everyday life to support their journey of becoming more empathetic and healthier individuals (Becker, 2024; Ludwig et al., 2024b).

Nevertheless, I would like to emphasize that teachers are not mental health experts, so we cannot expect teachers to treat mental health issues in the classroom. Instead, the opportunity lies in analyzing the fictional characters and language presented in the game and novel to open up discussions about mental health. This approach could encourage students to explore how language and narrative might perpetuate stigmas while also considering ways to deconstruct these patterns within literature and beyond. By discussing the similar themes and issues that the characters in the game and novel go through, learners can examine these topics through the lenses of fictional characters. This might encourage students who may be dealing with mental health issues to explore and discuss these topics without feeling compelled to disclose personal information. Simultaneously, it offers students who may have never encountered such issues the opportunity to gain insight, develop empathy, and learn how to address these topics respectfully. This provides an opportunity to approach the topic scientifically by analyzing and comparing both narratives while still acknowledging the personal implications and challenges inherent to it.

To further demonstrate these themes, both Max and Holden experience profound loss. Learners can observe how losing someone so close can be traumatic and how their grief deeply affects their decisions in both narratives. Max ultimately contemplates sacrificing the entire town to save Chloe, while Holden makes poor choices, such as leaving his school and distancing himself from those around him. As the blog *Strange Dark Stories* (Hisbrokenbutterfly, 2020) points out, Holden frequently wishes to turn back time and even imagines conversations with his lost brother, Allie, when he feels particularly depressed (cf. Salinger, 2014/1951, p. 110). Perhaps Max's ability to turn back time to bring Chloe back ultimately reflects her desire to avoid truly confronting her grief, too, and therefore only occurs in her mind (Hisbrokenbutterfly, 2020). Identifying similarities in these character-driven narratives might engage students in discussing the emotional challenges and obstacles the characters face while also building a bridge to broader discussions of these issues in young adults, all within the context of character development, narrative, and language.

However, there are more sensitive scenes in the game and novel that need to be discussed carefully and with adequate trigger warnings. In the novel, Holden plans to stay a few nights at Mr. Antolini's place, a professor he finds both strange and intelligent and someone he perceives as trustworthy. When Holden arrives at his apartment, he already feels dizzy, and after he has drunken some coffee there, he gets so tired that he can barely engage in the

conversation anymore. Later, when Holden wakes up, he finds Mr. Antolini sitting right next to him and patting his head. When Holden asks him what he's doing, he responds, "Nothing! I'm simply sitting here, admiring" (Salinger, 2014/1951, ch. 24, p. 211). Holden then panics and leaves the apartment immediately. After that encounter, Holden is not only scared but questions whether he might have overreacted because Mr. Antolini has always just been nice to him. It is also one of the last scenes before we learn that Holden has been admitted to a mental health facility.

A very similar scene is played out in *Life is Strange*. At the beginning of episode five, Max wakes up and realizes she is tied to a chair. Mr. Jefferson is right in front of her and she remembers that he drugged her before to take pictures of her. Mr. Jefferson is, similar to Mr. Antolini, a young and charismatic teacher whom Max initially admired. However, he uses his position as an art teacher to take illegal photos of young girls to capture the beauty and loss of innocence with his camera. Unlike Holden, Max can rewind time to escape this dangerous situation. Moreover, because Max detects even more pictures of young girls Mr. Jefferson photographed, she eventually manages to get him arrested (cf. Dontnod, 2015; Hisbrokenbutterfly, 2020).

Although these are extremely sensitive scenes, they allow exploring crucial issues such as violence, trust, power, and boundaries. Teachers, however, should consider consulting with school administrators and be prepared to enable students to seek further support, such as counseling, if necessary.

This information, along with trigger warnings, is also crucial for the next aspect I would like to point out, as both stories deal with the topic of suicide. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden recalls a tragic event involving one of his former classmates, James Castle. A group of boys bullied James after he called one of them "conceited" (Salinger, 2014/1951, p. 188). The boys demanded he take his words back, but when he refused, the boys physically assaulted him and locked him in a room. James, unable to escape, jumps out of the window and dies. A similar scene occurs in *Life is Strange*. The character Kate Marsh is severely bullied after a video of her kissing strangers goes viral. In episode two, Max finds Kate on a rooftop, attempting suicide. The scene is particularly difficult for players, as they control Max's actions. If players supported Kate throughout the first two episodes and encourage her on the rooftop, they can convince her to come down and save her life. If not, Kate will jump. This is an emotionally intense moment, which is why I recommend playing the last scenes of episode 2 together in class and allowing adequate time to discuss the scene. However, I would like to emphasize that

teachers need thorough preparation for this sequence. It is crucial to address these issues before learners engage with the reading material and the scenes in the game, ensuring they are not caught off guard. I suggest introducing these topics beforehand using different materials to ensure learners are prepared for what they are about to encounter (I will explore this aspect of tension and challenging discomfort more in depth in Section 2.5 of this article).

Both James and Kate suffer from severe bullying, with tragic consequences. By examining these scenes, students can explore the profound emotional and psychological effects of bullying. Kate's public humiliation through cyberbullying further demonstrates its modern-day impact. As Opitz (2024) notes, cyberbullying "transcends and amplifies the effects of traditional bullying" (p. 196), since harmful content can be widely distributed, leaving victims feeling as though there is no escape. Even though digital technologies are a part of students' lives, risks come with them, such as cyberbullying, and this should not be ignored in ELT (Opitz, 2024, p. 202). Learners could discuss the importance of responsible digital behavior and reflect on the way they engage with others. Additionally, learners can explore ways to support peers facing similar challenges, emphasizing kindness, responsibility, and awareness in both real-life and digital settings. This discussion might be especially relevant considering both characters' tragic outcomes, likely stemming from untreated mental health issues that were compounded or reinforced by bullying.

I would like to argue that studying these scenes could help learners recognize the severity of depression as a life-threatening mental health condition. A lesson plan could also encourage students to reflect on the medium and how these scenes are portrayed. Students can discuss the impact of decision-making in the game, fostering moral reflection. Most importantly, discussing these scenes should, as already indicated, open opportunities to introduce learners to mental health resources, such as counseling services or crisis hotlines, while also providing support for those who may need assistance accessing these resources.

One might argue whether these topics are appropriate for ELT. However, as Louloudi emphasizes, mental health is crucial when addressing social justice issues. By neglecting the topic because it is too difficult or too controversial for both teachers and students, we "further perpetuate[] the consideration of mental health as a taboo, instead of opening up a conversation to support both students and teachers" (Louloudi, 2024, p. 239). It is also important to note that, according to the 2024 WHO report, "suicide is among the leading causes

of death in people aged 15–19 years." Moreover, half of all mental health disorders begin by the age of 14, yet many go unnoticed and, hence, untreated. Among other factors, the main risks, as the WHO highlights, that lead to mental health issues are the pressure to align with peers, the quality of relationships with them, but also "violence (especially sexual violence and bullying)" (WHO, 2024).

As mentioned earlier, *The Catcher in the Rye* continues to be published and is sold to this day. Similarly, the game has achieved significant commercial success: According to the official X (formerly Twitter) account, the game reached 20 million players in 2023 since its release (cf. Life is Strange [@LifeIsStrange], 2023). This may lead to the assumption that the "controversial" aspects of both the novel and the game contribute to their success, as they resonate with a broad audience, demonstrating that these topics are far from niche. Nevertheless, the topics are already present in popular literature, whether in printed or born-digital literature, making it necessary to engage with them. As young adults, in particular, need spaces where mental health can be openly discussed, these works provide an important platform for such conversations. As Becker argues, "[l]iterature has the power of lifting existing stigmata and granting access to the complex phenomenon underneath, so the EFL classroom as a literature classroom can become an emancipatory setting for learners" (Becker, 2024, p. 54). Discussing mental health in ELT, particularly through the examples of *Life is Strange* and *The Catcher in the Rye*, could, therefore, encourage young adults to feel less isolated in navigating these challenges while also equipping them with the tools to critically engage with and deconstruct existing narratives that require further examination. After highlighting the similarities and connections between the novel and the game, I will explore how they can be contrasted and juxtaposed in the following section.

2.4 A closer look II: gender and sexuality

By juxtaposing *The Catcher in the Rye* with *Life is Strange*, we can explore how literature and digital narratives portray gender roles and challenge traditional perspectives, making them powerful tools for critical discussion in the English language classroom.

König et al. (2016), echoing Volkmann's (2007) observation, note that despite the appearance of equality, the literary canon remains dominated by white, heterosexual men. Texts by female authors or featuring predominantly female or LGBTIQ* perspectives are still rare in A-level curricula, reflecting

persistent heteronormative and sexist tendencies (König et al., 2016, p. 27). As an alternative to *The Catcher in the Rye*, König suggests including works with queer representation (König, 2018, p. 168), which is why I propose supplementing it with *Life is Strange*.

But why should we address gender in our English language classrooms? König et al. (2016) argue that children and teenagers are already exposed to gender norms through family, peer groups, and media, which introduce them to different concepts of gender. However, they also face traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity that shape their lives, creating conflicting gender expectations (König et al., 2016, pp. 19–20). The authors further argue that schools play a "double role of being both an agent of socialization and an agent of education" (p. 20). As an agent of socialization, schools are also agents of societal power and contribute to constructing gender norms and practices. However, as an educational institution, schools should allow and encourage personal and subject-related development. As König et al. argue, "it is part of the educational mandate of schools in Germany to support students in developing fundamental ethical principles, which include respect, justice, tolerance towards others, and gender equality" (2016, p. 21). I fully agree that addressing gender and sexuality in the classroom is essential for promoting social justice in education.

Especially because *The Catcher in the Rye* is a prime example of canon literature authored by a white male, it is important to examine the concepts of gender presented within it. The narrative unfolds from Holden's male perspective, and while numerous female characters appear, they remain largely marginalized. In fact, throughout the story, Holden objectifies and insults women and girls. However, his relationship with women is further conflicted as he expresses a protective instinct towards their innocence, as seen in his bond with his sister Phoebe and his anger towards Stradlater when he believes he will have sex with his childhood friend Jane (cf. Salinger, 2014/1951, ch. 4). Additionally, he criticizes his advisor Luce for insulting a former girlfriend, rejecting the objectification of women by other men (cf. ch. 19, p. 160). Despite these moments of conflict, the novel contains deeply misogynistic elements.

However, König et al. (2016) argue that even though a novel might be blatantly sexist, learners may not recognize these patterns due to their prevalence in cultural products. Students could, therefore, approach the text by analyzing the narrative situation and the representation of characters (König et al., 2016,

p. 28). They further suggest asking students to investigate female representation, for example, which adjectives, phrases, or activities are used to comment on women. Additionally, the authors suggest including a follow-up task in which students move beyond the male perspective to confront this inequality by incorporating the missing female viewpoint (König et al., 2016, p. 28).

To illustrate how König et al.'s (2016) approach can be incorporated into teaching, I would like to highlight a scene that Baldwin (2007, p. 112) suggests could be analyzed to reveal Holden as a problematic narrator. After arriving in New York, Holden goes to a bar and observes three women at a table. Although he describes them as being "around thirty or so," he still refers to them as "girls." Throughout the encounter, he judges their appearances and insults them, calling them "ugly" (Salinger, 2014/1951, ch. 10, p. 77), "witches" (p. 78), and stating that they are "giggling like morons" (p. 78) or "stupid" (p. 79). Later, he joins their table, complaining that they were too ignorant to invite him to sit with them. However, Baldwin argues that "Holden here draws on the codes of conventional male behavior in imposing himself uninvited on the space occupied by the women," making it clear that it is Holden's behavior, not theirs, that is truly "ignorant" (Baldwin, 2007, p. 113). Learners could rewrite the scene from the perspective of one of the three women, sharing their thoughts with a friend about the encounter. Alternatively, teachers could implement a decision-based narrative branch (cf. Section 2.2.3 of this article) that allows students to explore how one of the girls might have responded to Holden's behavior, considering various choices and consequences in the process.

Furthermore, I suggest analyzing the concepts of masculinity and manliness portrayed in the novel to foster a comprehensive reflection on gender role construction. Holden's attitudes toward women and other men provide opportunities to discuss masculinity both in the novel and within the societal context of the 1950s, as Baldwin (2007) argues. This analysis can deepen the students' understanding of how gender norms influence behavior and relationships in the narrative and beyond. When considering concepts of masculinity in the novel, it is particularly intriguing to examine who is marginalized within this framework and, as a result, excluded from heteronormative perspectives.

In chapter 19, for instance, Holden meets his former mentor Luce and remembers how he used to tell them in school, that

> "it didn't matter if a guy was married or not. He said half the married guys in the world were flits and didn't even know it. He said you could turn into one

> practically overnight, if you had all the traits and all. He used to scare the hell out of us. I kept waiting to turn into a flit or something" (Salinger, 2014/1951, ch. 19, p. 159).

Robinson argues that the scene highlights how, in the 1950s, men who deviated from norms of masculinity were often suspected of being homosexual (Robinson, 2007, p. 73). I would argue further that it not only reveals Holden's uncertainty regarding his sexual orientation but also demonstrates homophobic tendencies. The term "flit" functions as a derogatory label used to insult individuals based on their sexual orientation or traits that are not "manly" enough to discriminate a targeted group. Holden also describes Mr. Antolini's attempt on assaulting him as a "flitty pass," remarking, "even if he was a flit he certainly'd been very nice to me" (Salinger, 2014/1951, ch. 25, p. 214). This reinforces stereotypes of homosexuality as deviant and dangerous, placing blame for inappropriate behavior on the stereotype of gay men as inherently predatory, rather than on Mr. Antolini himself. While I do not wish to downplay the violence and trauma that Holden experiences, the novel's homophobic undertones might reflect or reinforce social attitudes towards masculinity and manliness, as well as queerness.

Conversely, scholars offering queer readings of the novel argue that Holden's narrative reflects the struggles of a "repressed gay adolescent who realizes that he lives in a time and place in which same-sex desire is taboo" (Hekanaho, 2007, p. 89; Werner, 2006). Hekanaho argues that Holden, as a teenager in the 1950s, would have struggled to understand his sexual identity amidst the rigid norms of heterosexuality and the prevalent prejudice surrounding same-sex desire. She also points out that Holden's use of the term "flit" underscores that his fear is not merely of male-male desire but of effeminacy (Hekanaho, 2007, p. 92). He frequently uses terms like "flits" and "perverts" to describe identities that contrast with traditional masculinity, while simultaneously feeling both attracted to and repulsed by diverse gender expressions and sexualities. For example, in chapter 9, Holden observes a person cross-dressing and initially condemns the hotel as being "full of perverts and morons" (Salinger, 2014/1951, ch. 9, p. 68), yet later admits it is "fascinating to watch" (p. 70). Moreover, Holden's experiences with physical intimacy are confined to violent confrontations with male peers, which demand closeness and engagement, while he avoids deeper physical connections with women. According to Hekanaho (2007) this is why the narrative's focus predominantly lies on his social and emotional relationships with boys and men, highlighting Holden's masculine ideals (Hekanaho, 2007, p. 97). Analyzing and discussing these concepts of masculinity and manliness in

teaching could help learners to uncover societal expectations, challenge notions of what is considered being “normal” or socially acceptable, and distinguish marginalized identities. However, a comparative analysis of *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Life is Strange* further highlights significant differences in gender representation, prompting critical discussions on how literature can contribute creating more equitable and nuanced portrayals of gender.

In *Life is Strange*, the main protagonists, Max and Chloe, are female characters, allowing us to contrast Holden’s male-centric narrative with the perspectives of two female leads, while also engaging with potential queer representation. By adopting Max’s perspective, in particular, learners can reflect on whether the characters and the narrative itself differ by experiencing the story through a female lens. Following König et al.’s (2016) approach, learners can analyze the narrative situations, character representations, and the adjectives, phrases, or activities used to portray female, male, and queer characters (p. 28), and discuss how these aspects in *Life is Strange* differ from *The Catcher in the Rye*. This comparison may not only highlight the differences in representations but also create opportunities to challenge and confront the prejudices depicted in the novel, particularly regarding queer identities.

In the game, players can choose between a romantic interest in Max’s best friend, Chloe, or a fellow classmate, Warren. However, even if players opt for Warren, some scenes leave Max uncertain whether her relationship with Chloe is purely platonic. This ambiguity allows Max to be seen as a bisexual character, presenting LGBTQ+ representation as a central theme. For example, in episode 3, Chloe dares Max to kiss her, giving players the choice to either “Kiss Chloe” or “Don’t kiss Chloe.” If players choose not to kiss her, Chloe expresses disappointment, and later in episode 4, when Max wishes she had kissed her, Chloe responds, “Oh yeah, now you suddenly want to kiss me? You had your chance.” However, this decision also significantly impacts the game’s ending. Towards the end of the game, all narrative branches lead to a major decision. Due to the butterfly effect caused by Max’s choices, the town and all her friends are put in danger by a storm that is threating to destroy Arcadia Bay. Players are left with two options: either sacrifice Arcadia Bay, allowing Chloe and Max to move on after the town’s destruction, or sacrifice Chloe, returning to the beginning of the week, where she dies again in the shooting that initially set the events in motion. If the players chose for Max and Chloe to kiss in episode 3, in the end, when the players decide to sacrifice Chloe, she kisses Max passionately. If they have not kissed before, they will either share a hug at the end of the scene or hold hands. This example also

shows how choices in the game impact the overall branching narrative (Sowa & Robbinson, 2024).

König et al. (2016) particularly advocate for encouraging discussions on same-sex relationships in the classroom. By comparing both the queer representation in the novel and the game, learners can critically reflect on the personal effects of representation and the harm caused when same-sex relationships are ignored, dismissed, or discriminated; for example, through the question: "How does it affect those in particular for whom such texts could be models of identification because they identify themselves as gay or bisexual?" (König et al., 2016, p. 33). This approach could foster a deeper understanding of queer representation and allows for the deconstruction of prejudices encountered in the novel.

Additionally, this provides an opportunity to discuss female and queer representation in literature and media over time. Given that the book was published in 1951, a lesson could explore the cultural and historical contexts in which it was written. So, in addition to close readings, learners could also explore the novel's context through a wide reading (König, 2018, p. 153). The novel offers a chance to develop a deeper understanding of the values and norms that might have changed or can be found in literature and media until today (Surkamp & Nünning, 2024, p. 21). In this way, we can highlight that the novel is a cultural product of the 1950s and portrays representations of gender and sexuality that learners may wish to discuss and challenge. Such discussions provide an opportunity to incorporate queer theory into the English language classroom. As Merse (2020) argues, queer theory in ELT deals with sexual and gender identities and thus also addresses issues of norms and power structures (Merse, 2020, pp. 109–110). The goal of integrating queer theory into critical language education is to make LGBTQ+-related identities visible and to encourage a deeper examination of the normative models through which biological sex, gender, and sexuality are constructed (Merse, 2020, p. 111). This approach could also encourage learners to remain critical of the game so that *Life is Strange* is not viewed as a utopian example of how gender structures should function. It is essential to remind students that they are engaging with a cultural product that reflects its own issues and limitations, which can be critically examined, challenged, and transformed.

The character of Kate Marsh, for example, serves as a powerful case study to explore the implications of female sexuality and societal expectations. As mentioned before, Kate was severely bullied. At a party, Kate was drugged by Nathan. Later, a video surfaces showing Kate kissing strangers, an act that

starkly contrasts with her established identity as a shy girl. As the video goes viral on campus, Kate faces humiliation, and her classmates shame and bully her, labeling the video as “porn” and writing derogatory comments on her dorm door (cf. ep. 2). In the game, the players have to decide whether to support Kate and encourage her to report the incident to the police or dismiss Kate’s story. This scene illustrates how female sexuality is often weaponized for humiliation and exemplifies victim-blaming instead of emphasizing the need to confront issues of consent and sexual violence. However, this could also lead to uncomfortable discussions in class, as not all learners may align with Kate’s character or actions. I will address this aspect in more depth in section 2.5 of this article. Nevertheless, focusing on this episode could foster significant discussions about sexuality, gender expectations, consent, and bullying. By further comparing these concepts to those presented in *The Catcher in the Rye*, students may realize that some aspects of these issues have not changed as drastically as they might have initially believed but can still be seen today.

Juxtaposing both media allows us to examine how characters are portrayed and developed in both *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Life is Strange*, enabling students to gain insights into the evolution of gender roles and norms surrounding sexuality over time. Additionally, this comparison highlights that both works are cultural products of their respective times. Thus, this approach may encourage students to recognize these formations as socially and historically constructed, fostering a deeper understanding of how cultural narratives shape contemporary culture and perceptions of identity, showing that interventions are needed.

2.5 Embracing discomfort in ELT

Fostering discussions around sensitive topics in the classroom can be both challenging and essential for advancing social justice in education. Especially by addressing issues tied to power structures, such as gender, racism, sexuality, or mental health, emotional responses might be provoked (Louloudi, 2024, p. 241). The themes explored in this article may already be perceived as controversial. By engaging with these topics in the classroom, learners might be confronted with their own biases, and reflecting on them may unpack our own normative ways of thinking. However, as Louloudi (2024) emphasizes, drawing on the work of Boler and Zembylas (2003), and Ayers (2014), embracing this underlying discomfort can be an opportunity to work toward social justice goals. A key element of creating critical discomfort in

the classroom, according to Louloudi (2024), is centering students' perspectives and possibly joining them as an equal participant by sharing personal reflections, if appropriate. This approach aims to create an environment where students feel "safer" to engage with challenging topics that provoke discomfort while fostering critical reflection without overwhelming them (Louloudi, 2024, pp. 241–244).

However, as Ayers (2014) argues, creating a "safe space" for learners, where all opinions are honored, can sometimes undermine social justice goals. The issue lies in the fact that "equal is not necessarily fair in situations of unequal power" (Ayers, 2014, p. 1). Implementing critical discomfort, therefore, involves letting debates unfold and sharpening them when significant differences emerge (Ayers, 2014, p. 3). For instance, it is the teacher's responsibility to challenge racist or queerphobic remarks, but Ayers strongly advises against simply silencing these utterances. Silencing such remarks might lead students to internalize them or find alternative ways to express similar views. For instance, Ayers argues that "the general approach of privileged people in the presence of the oppressed is to avoid saying something that will be offensive" (Ayers, 2014, p. 3). Instead, Ayers stresses the importance of engaging with the underlying issues, exploring where these remarks come from, and addressing them constructively. Silencing or punishing a student merely reinforces a system of judgment and regulation, returning the teacher to an authoritarian role and does not foster a change in thinking or perspective. Ayers, therefore, advocates for struggling, and examining together to encourage engagement, reflection and learning (Ayers, 2014, pp. 2–3).

Similarly, in the concept of "pedagogies of discomfort" by Boler and Zembylas (2003), discomfort is seen as essential for dismantling privileges, biases, and societal norms. The authors argue that, as students critically evaluate their worldviews, they may experience feelings of anger, grief, disappointment, or resistance. The pedagogy of discomfort seeks to examine these emotional responses to analyze how they are embedded in students' everyday lives. This approach allows them to uncover unconscious privileges or biases tied to power structures to ultimately foster sociopolitical awareness (Boler & Zembylas, 2003, pp. 107–108). As Louloudi (2024) further argues, embracing discomfort and emotional labor is, therefore, vital for critical literacy and advancing social justice goals in education. By reflecting on and challenging biases, teachers and learners can collaboratively deconstruct power structures and transform societal norms, particularly in language education settings (Louloudi, 2024, p. 242). Critical discomfort, thus, operates as both a method

and a topic of analysis, inviting students to explore their emotions and reactions while critically engaging with societal issues.

Nevertheless, Louloudi highlights that discussing topics such as mental health in the classroom comes with significant risks. For example, if students share personal experiences of mental health struggles, teachers may feel obliged to help or treat these issues. While this instinct is understandable and reflects a natural desire to support students, the author emphasizes that “teachers are not and cannot be seen as mental health professionals; the aim of such a lesson plan is to reinforce the deconstruction of biases and not give medical advice” (cf. Louloudi, 2024, p. 250). Allowing critical discomfort in the classroom does not diminish the extensive preparation required from teachers; rather, it demands significant effort from both teachers and learners. However, it creates opportunities to shape discussions where everyone can learn from one another, engage with “controversial” societal issues, and collaboratively uncover their roots. In doing so, the classroom ideally becomes a space to challenge and reimagine societal norms, fostering broader equity and understanding.

3 Teaching *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Life is Strange* – methods and approaches for a teaching unit

Throughout this article, I have already suggested a few scenes and examples of how both the novel and the game could be used together for teaching. In the following section, however, I would like to offer practical examples for a potential teaching unit to introduce both media, specifically highlighting the social justice topics of gender, sexuality, and mental health discussed earlier. My approach is based on the framework for critical literacy by Louloudi et al. (2021) to foster democratic learning in English language education. The primary goal of the teaching unit is to critically engage learners with themes mentioned above, in both *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Life is Strange*, using an oscillating approach to encourage to alternate between the novel and the game to help students draw parallels between the two works and their themes. This approach aims to keep both narratives in conversation, foster critical thinking, enhance media literacy, and empower learners to use their insights to create narratives that challenge injustice and promote more inclusive representations.

First, I would like to address some legal and organizational aspects of the game *Life is Strange*. In Germany, the USK (Unterhaltungssoftware Selbstkontrolle) rates the game as suitable for ages 12 and up, while PEGI (Pan

European Game Information) classifies it for ages 16 and above. Given the sensitive topics the game addresses, Becker (2021) suggests playing it with older students, such as those in *Sekundarstufe II*. Alternatively, teachers may opt to focus only on the first episode, where the more challenging themes are less prominent, as episodes two and onward delve deeper into heavier topics (Becker, 2021, p. 87). The first episode is also available for free online, yet this approach would limit the lesson plan's focus on mental health. From a financial perspective, the teacher needs to decide whether to buy the game for classroom use only or have students share the cost and play in small groups. Each episode takes about 1–2 hours to complete, so it is important to consider the time constraints. Becker notes that the game is not too demanding and could be played easily, even by inexperienced gamers, at home (Becker, 2021, p. 87). However, I would advise against allowing students to play episodes 2 and 3 alone at home. Otherwise, it would be essential to provide clear guidance on how far students can progress in the narrative without encountering potentially triggering content.

The proposed teaching unit begins with a shared *pre-reading/-playing activity* in which both *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Life is Strange* are introduced. The teacher presents the covers of both works, along with a screenshot of the *Life is Strange* Easter egg referencing the novel (cf. Section 2.2.3 of this article). Additionally, students receive fact sheets for both protagonists (Becker already suggested a fact sheet for *Life is Strange*; cf. 2021, p. 90). They then brainstorm responses to the following questions: "How might these two works be connected despite their different media and time periods?" and "What overlapping issues could they explore?" The teacher also introduces core themes, such as the genre (coming-of-age), gender, sexuality, and mental health, if these have not already been addressed during the brainstorming phase. This activity aims to spark curiosity about both works and highlights that students will engage equally with both media. The goal is also to inspire interest in the social concepts that will be explored throughout the unit.

For the *pre-playing activity*, learners work in small groups and receive one of the first ten diary entries written by the protagonists during the initial days of the story. A *Fandom* webpage lists all the diary entries, including varying content for different narrative paths; this webpage could be shared and explored with the learners (*Life Is Strange Wiki, Max's Diary*, n.d.). Since the entries are longer than the brief narrative chunks during the game, it allows students to reread them later if the game moves too quickly to fully engage with the content. In their small groups, students will read and discuss questions such as, "Why might life be strange for Max, and what struggles could

she face as a young woman?". Following this discussion, learners will create a short diary entry from Max's perspective, encouraged to make predictions about the overall plot and to express these in their entries. This activity should help students to connect with the character and gain insight into someone else's world and thoughts.

In the *while-playing activity*, learners play *Life is Strange* in small groups, exploring the decisions and paths available in episode one. They are asked to test various choices and record their outcomes in a tree diagram; paths they did not take can be left blank for now. The groups should be further encouraged to discuss controversial decisions and their potential consequences. As Becker suggests, comparing decisions in class can be insightful, as some students may wish to make more reckless choices while others might aim to avoid conflicts (Becker, 2021, p. 91). Alternatively, the game could be played collectively in class, utilizing a *Menti* tool as a voting system to engage all students in making collective decisions for the protagonist. The teacher or a dedicated student then needs to enter the decisions but pauses at critical moments to discuss how these choices may affect Max's relationships with other characters, or her own journey. The overall goal is to empower students to take control of Max's narrative while the themes unfold in her life. This approach encourages students to negotiate different possibilities and outcomes, fostering a deeper understanding of the character's experiences and the consequences of their choices.

For the *post-playing activity*, students come together in a group puzzle to discuss and compare their tree diagrams. This collaborative discussion allows them to fill in the elements they did not experience in the game and discover how different choices affected the overall outcomes. Even if some branches remain blank, this still represents a valuable learning opportunity. This activity enables students to analyze and understand the narrative structure of the game, while the tree diagram visually represents the overall branching narrative (Becker, 2021, p. 91). Alternatively, if the game is played collectively in the classroom, the episode concludes with an overview of the choices made by the player, along with statistics comparing those choices to other players worldwide. Students could then actively research alternative outcomes by watching "let's plays" on *YouTube* to fill in their tree diagrams, sharing their findings in a group puzzle to gather additional insights.

The further *pre-reading activity* leverages the popularity of *The Catcher in the Rye* by highlighting its presence in various pop culture moments beyond the game, which can spark the students' interest in reading the novel. For

example, the novel is referenced in episode 2 of season 14 of *South Park* (Parker, 2010). In this episode, the characters are excited to read the novel because their teacher announces it has just been unbanned by the school board, urging them to approach the controversial text maturely. However, later in the episode, Stan, Kyle, Cartman, and Kenny feel tricked into reading the book, as they do not perceive it as controversial at all. Inspired by this, the boys write their own novel, aiming to be particularly offensive and vulgar. Two brief snippets on *YouTube*, each about a minute long, are available to effectively introduce the topic and the episode (cf. aight, 2021; GoodFor-Laugh, 2021). Watching the short snippets could be followed by a brief research phase, exploring the novel's historical background and possible reasons behind its censorship so the students get a first glimpse into why the book addresses "controversial" themes. Alternatively, or additionally, the teacher could inform the class about the novel's banning from schools across the U.S. and share a few quotes or short scenes that highlight its controversial themes, such as one of the scenes referenced in this article. With both options, learners could brainstorm what they think makes the novel "controversial" and what their expectations are, especially after playing the game. The teacher could also refer back to the responses from the initial *pre-reading/-playing activity*, allowing learners to build on their earlier assumptions.

Learners then read the novel's first chapters for the *while-reading activity*, while focusing on the narrative situations in both the game and the novel. They explore their roles as readers and players, considering the effects of these narrative perspectives on their perceptions of the characters. Students analyze which adjectives, phrases, or actions are used to describe characters, which encourages them to further investigate anything they might perceive as "controversial." Throughout their reading and gameplay, learners should be encouraged to note and track their findings in a character map. An online mind-mapping tool can facilitate this process, allowing students to add more information as they progress through the novel. This character map serves as a reading log but is more character-centered, emphasizing the analysis of representations of characters. Since the novel is narrated from Holden's perspective and the game uses a limited third-person narrative, both protagonists would occupy the center of the character mind map. From there, students would note which characters are introduced and how they are described, recording the adjectives or actions associated with them, as well as observations about relationships, themes, and conflicts. The character map serves two main functions throughout the teaching unit: first, during a later reflection phase, students will actively compare how gender representations and mental health issues are portrayed in both the novel and the game; second, it will serve as a

foundation for their *long-term post-playing/-reading activity*, which will be discussed later.

In the *post-reading activity*, learners are further encouraged to critically reflect on the representation of a character by creating a more just portrayal. In one of the novel's early chapters, the protagonist, Holden, fights with his roommate, Stradlater, about Jane Gallagher. Jane does not appear in the narrated scenes, so she never gets to speak or actively engage with anyone; readers rely solely on Holden's perspective to understand her character. Therefore, students are asked to revisit their character map to review how Jane is described and presented and to now give her a voice in her own storyline. For instance, learners could be encouraged to write her into the game *Life is Strange.* Learners would need to consider then how they would describe her in her own story and what possible choices and outcomes they would like to assign to her, particularly in her interactions with Stradlater and Holden. This activity aims to reflect on and challenge the material, fostering a deeper understanding of character representation and providing learners with narrative agency. It further prepares students for the *long-term post-reading/-playing activity*, encouraging them to engage thoughtfully with themes of representation and choice in both works.

For the *long-term post-reading/-playing activity*, learners are encouraged to think about their narrative agency on a larger scale as they work in groups to create their own branching narrative about a young adult navigating life in the 2020s. Drawing on their insights from both the novel and the game, students can write a story that aims to portray more just representations, unlike the satirical approach taken in the *South Park* episode. They can develop characters that challenge conventional gender roles, represent diverse sexual orientations, or explore mental health struggles, all while addressing societal expectations and dilemmas. The character maps created earlier will assist in this process. As students gather more details for their character maps, they will identify story elements, attributes to include, and stereotypes or traits they wish to challenge within their narratives. Both the book and the game will serve as inspiration for adapting their stories, creating new paths, and developing meaningful dilemmas. Toward the end of the project, students will present or perform their branching narratives in groups and evaluate their work. This activity aims to empower learners since they not only reflect on how we as society can challenge unjust representations, but they also grow their narrative competence, while fostering their ability to craft engaging and meaningful stories to further encourage social justice for young adults.

4 Conclusion and outlook

By focusing on the literary classic *The Catcher in the Rye* alongside the game *Life is Strange*, this article explored how integrating these two media in the English language classroom can introduce students to diverse narrative forms beyond the traditional linear novel. The game, as a form of born-digital literature, offers a more interactive and immersive storytelling experience, helping students engage with new formats and prepare them for the digital landscape. Additionally, combining these works creates opportunities for meaningful discussions on gender, sexuality, and mental health – topics that are integral to Social Justice Education.

This article further aimed to provide practical examples for facilitating these important conversations in the classroom. The teaching approach suggested here is meant to empower learners by engaging them with thought-provoking content that is relevant for their everyday lives, to prepare them for newer formats of narratives and to encourage them to create their own. After all, education is about helping learners shape their identities inside and outside of the classroom and about encouraging them to envision and create a more just society. This approach first and foremost aims to highlight the importance of student-centeredness in Social Justice Education. By embracing students' stories, voices, insights and ideas, teachers and students, as co-learners, can create an environment that fosters not only deconstruction, but also of empowerment, enabling them to take collective action for social justice. This may be just a small step toward Social Justice Education, but it reminds learners that they do not have to be passive observers. Their voices, actions, and decisions shape outcomes – and they matter.

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Fig. 2: Mitchell, M. (2019, July 29). *First-edition cover of The Catcher in the Rye (1951) by the American author J. D. Salinger.* Wikipedia. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Catcher_in_the_Rye_(1951,_first_edition_cover).jpg

Fig. 3: *Life is Strange*. Dontnod Entertainment and Deck Nine, 2015, Episode 3, © Square Enix.

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Teaching *Friday Night Lights* Critically

Theoretical Considerations and Exemplary Sequences

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Abstract: Sports arenas have always been a mirror for societal changes and affairs, as player protests during the Covid-19 pandemic and the FIFA World Cup showed. Therefore, it was even more surprising when H.G. Bissinger's *Friday Night Lights* (1990) "exposed" the open secret of institutionalized segregation and racism that run rampant in Texas high school football operations. While Black players were key contributors on the field, they were often excluded from "white" society once they were unable to perform. This article uses a critical foreign language pedagogy framework (Gerlach, 2020) to design exemplary teaching sequences based on the events described in *Friday Night Lights*. The goal of these sequences is to further the learner's critical literacy using a framework designed by McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004).

Keywords: football; critical literacy; critical pedagogy; racism

1 Introduction

Like many other sports fans, what truly made me fall in love with a sport were the narratives that were spun around it, as well as fan culture. Players' stories are simultaneously spun on the field and on TV and the most successful ones are immortalized in popular culture. And no league does it better than the NFL; viewership numbers have been steeply rising since the pandemic, and the league has even branched out and is playing games in Germany. My fascination with the NFL started when Philadelphia Eagles Quarterback Carson Wentz tore his ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) heading into the 2017 playoffs. Despite losing their best player at the most important position in the game, they fought through and made it to the Superbowl. There, perennial backup Quarterback Nick Foles stepped up and led his team to victory in a historical performance, cementing his legacy as one of the few Quarterbacks to win a shootout against the best to ever do it, Tom Brady.

With the thoroughly American product gaining more hold in Germany, English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers could use this trend as an opportunity to foster sociocultural learning with a relevant connection to the students' lives. One of the most famous football stories is *Friday Night Lights*, a 1990 non-fiction book by Buzz Bissinger, in which the author accompanies a Texan high school team throughout their season. During this endeavor, he accompanies the players during their classes and interviews influential people such as politicians, preachers and coaches. His investigation, originally intended to get to the heart of the football craze, instead resulted in him exposing the town

for its racist sentiments, failed inclusion and abuse of players for entertainment. This paper will look at racism as both a form of othering (s. Section 4) and systemic oppression of minorities. The reaction to *Friday Night Lights* was a shock – how could such sentiments and policies still exist, more than 15 years after the civil rights act and seemingly successful desegregation (Debenport, 1990)?

Similar sentiments have been gaining traction once again, with far right and fascist political parties calling for the reversal of immigration and incidents of racially motivated violence rising. In light of these challenges, teachers are urged to teach their learners to recognize, analyze and criticize racist structures, sentiments and messages (s. Klaes' contribution, pp. 78–117 in this issue). Many researchers argue that this includes building a critical consciousness and furthering the ability to recognize statements and stances that are undemocratic, underlining the importance of developing critical literacies (Louloudi et al., 2021).

This article will make a case for the use of *Friday Night Lights* in ELT classrooms to foster critical literacy and promote the development of a Social Justice Education environment. For this, principles of critical foreign language pedagogy (Gerlach, 2020) as well as critical literacy didactics (e.g. Luke, 2014) will be connected to cooperative language learning and critical literacy lesson frameworks. Finally, there will be some suggestions on how to implement certain parts of the book in a lesson, focusing on analyzing racist sentiments, institutions and structures through the white gaze theory.

2 Becoming critical: a method and a stance

Critical literacy is an educational approach that invites learners to analyze, question and evaluate materials with regard to the sociopolitical power they carry with them in order to then learn how to take action against societal injustices in- and outside of the classroom (Luke, 2014). Critical literacy as a concept can be traced to the writings of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970), who developed critical pedagogy as a teaching philosophy to further the efforts of an educational campaign among Brazil's illiterate population during the second half of the 20th century. Freire argued for a more critical approach to teaching that would equip adult learners with the tools to organize political representation and emancipate themselves as literate members of society. To do that, they needed to be not only literate in reading texts, but also in reading the text's purpose, perspectives and underlying beliefs. This meant turning away from the "banking model" of education, which treats learners

as passive, empty containers that just need to be filled with knowledge, and instead focusing on problem-posing education, which asks learners to solve problems and use their already acquired knowledge along the way (Freire, 2012, pp. 71–75). This approach is also why Freire argued that teachers need to rid themselves of the authority of pre-packaged educational materials and their administration's influence to be able to create truly critical and autonomous students. Recognizing that those educational authorities are products of the ideology shared by the current government (and usually a large portion of the population) is imperative to recognize the ideology's faults and any misconceptions of its character. This essentially means that teachers should attempt to align with and include their students' interests, restructuring education as a dialogue that actively includes the students as equals (Freire, 2009, pp. 15–16). This also requires teachers to take a step back and reflect on their own opinions, dispositions, and upbringing, and how those entanglements influence their teaching.

While Freire mainly sought to make his learners create the curriculum, his binary, Marxist analysis of "oppressor" and "oppressed" does not account for the effects of globalization and rising complexity of political dynamics (Luke, 2014, pp. 8–9). Luke, therefore, defines critical literacy as:

> "[…] [the] use of the technologies of print and other media of communication to analyze, critique and transform the norms, rule systems and practices governing the social fields of everyday life" (Luke, 2014, p. 2).

Current definitions and approaches of critical literacy, therefore, *also* focus on critical discourse analysis, looking to understand how words, grammar and discourses influence relations of power and our concepts of reality. Hence, critical literacy can be described as a critical approach to materials of any kind regarding their ideological functions, reflecting how the reality described within those texts differs from one's own. This also goes for the language features used to achieve that effect (Luke, 2014, p. 7).

As Gerlach (2020) points out in his introduction *Kritische Fremdsprachendidaktik*, creating critical thinkers is a key process of democratization. Therefore, critical literacy should inherently be part of any curriculum that aims to create responsible citizens. Since critical skills are not objectively measurable, teachers helping learners build a mindset that allows them to come to their own conclusions and reflect on them is the most important part of critical literacy and critical pedagogy.

However, that does not mean that critical pedagogy as an approach is neutral or unbiased. Jeyaraj and Harland (2016) have rightfully pointed out that, because it has its roots in left-wing theory, it eventually leads learners to challenge traditional power structures and find themselves on the left side of the political spectrum of discussions (Jeyaraj & Harland, 2016, p. 589). But Freire and others have argued that no education or teaching can be truly neutral, as curricula and the context in which contents are thought are always influenced (or even created) by the current governing body. Avoiding critical literacy in the name of political neutrality would just result in regression to political apathy (Gerlach, 2020, pp. 17–18).

But this does not stop teachers from using critical pedagogy, because they can and should address the topic of neutrality in their classrooms. As the aforementioned study by Harland and Jeyaraj (2016) showed, teachers that are familiar with the goals and benefits of critical pedagogy also tend to be aware of its risks and often vocalize them. Ultimately, they focus on teaching their students to be critical, even of their teaching, while constantly reflecting on their practice. Gerlach (2020) also emphasizes a similar aspect, as he claims that teachers should plan their teaching from a learners' perspective, focusing on their questions and connecting cultural issues and topics to their everyday lives (Gerlach, 2020, p. 18). Gerlach's critical foreign language pedagogy extends the principles of critical pedagogy and critical literacy to make them applicable to the ELT classroom by meeting curricular goals and addressing the aforementioned concerns, therefore legitimizing the use of critical literacies in ELT contexts.

This also extends to the role of literature when fostering critical literacy. Matz (2020) argues that teachers should make use of literature to help learners reflect on their feelings, ideas and language. It can also be used to further their literacy, in the sense that learners should get better at communicating with others as well as at understanding, explaining and critically reflecting that communication on a meta-level. In the German curricula, this goal is defined as discourse competence*,* modeled after Foucault's concept of discourse and "meaning the ability of people to participate in multilingual and complex social processes and discourses, to be part of them and to shape them" (Matz, 2020, p. 56).

This certainly negotiates part of the aforementioned definition of critical literacy by Luke (and others), and Matz (2020) argues that because of this, fostering discourse competence and critical literacies are mutually dependent and a central curricular goal. Matz (2020) also argues that the overall goals

such as enabling independent critical judgment and action, fostering peaceful attitudes, and making ethical and religious values understandable need to be modernized and adjusted to the complexity of globalization. Drawing from current and older research, Matz concludes that emphasizing sameness instead of otherness is a key process to help learners form a global identity (Matz, 2020, pp. 57–58). Matz (2020) continues their article by connecting these conclusions to youth novels dealing with the curricular topic of 'visions of the future'. Some of these aspects are relevant for *Friday Night Lights* as well, since it is fundamentally a dramatic and somewhat tragic narrative and deals with issues that most learners hopefully have not encountered yet, most of them concerning human rights. However, it also heavily emphasizes personal development, young people's dreams and aspirations, and how they deal with failure or disappointment.

3 A critical literacy framework

Teaching learners to take a critical approach towards literature that they encounter is not possible without a proper framework. A good way to introduce learners to critical literacy strategies is McLaughlin and DeVoogd's (2004) framework described in their book *Critical Literacy: Enhancing Students' Comprehension of Text*. It should be noted that their proposal sticks closely to Paolo Freire's ideas regarding the teacher's role, with their main task being to motivate and foster a good learning atmosphere (providing materials and time) by valuing independent thought (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, pp. 36–37).

Their main strategy for critical analysis is "problem posing", which is essentially a historical source analysis. The reader evaluates the intended audience and origin of the source, as well as the motivations and intentions of the author in a broader or historical context. The reader also explicitly looks for perspectives that go unmentioned and are possibly marginalized, and then thinks about how they can further social justice by using what they have learned during their analysis. This procedure can then be simplified by switching the gender, race or another characteristic of some characters and analyzing how this changes power relationships and the (intended) message of the text (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, pp. 47–48, 63).

The other strategies suggested by the authors branch out from these key aspects but add different reading strategies such as partnered pattern reading and strategies that are meant to help learners relate the text's contents to their

lives. These strategies are introduced through a five-step method of *explaining*, *demonstrating* the strategy, *guiding* the learners through it, *practicing* it and finally *reflecting* on its use and implications (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, pp. 39–40, 41–45). The last step is also where teachers should again reflect on the aforementioned point of political neutrality and whether their practice truly considers their learner's perspectives and does not push them towards a pre-set conclusion.

Once some strategies are established, McLaughlin and DeVoogd's (2004) lesson plans follow a process of engaging learners, guiding their thinking, extending their thinking and finally reflecting on the process:

- *Engaging* the learners' thinking is similar to common activation exercises that relate to what they have already learned or get them to ask questions about something they have not learned yet.
- Teachers then need to *guide* their learners' thinking while they work on analyzing a text, for example by making use of reading strategies or by providing guiding questions.
- Afterwards, learners and the teacher *engage* in a critical discussion and try to come up with ideas on how to act on what they have learned.
- Finally, the teacher should *reflect* on what they taught, how they taught and chose it and how the learners reacted to both content and methods used. Teachers can then use their reflection to adjust the next lessons to what their learners have gained (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, p. 41).

Furthermore, teachers and learners could profit from a cooperative language learning framework, as it helps teachers put more focus on group work and help create a more positive classroom atmosphere, which would help during the discussions (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, pp. 71–73). It could also be a way of providing scaffolding to weaker learners and lead to more interactions and discussions between learners regarding social justice, while positioning the teacher into the role of a guide and fellow learner. This is why the sequences developed in this paper will be based on the cooperative language learning framework.

4 Content and analysis

Friday Night Lights is a nonfiction novel written by H.G. Bissinger, published in 1990, with the events of the book taking place in the fall of 1988. Bissinger moved from Philadelphia to a small, west Texan town called Odessa to find out more about how an obsession with high school football could keep a town "alive" amidst financial crises and the vast nothingness of the Texas oilfields. While he found many lives tied to the city's football team, he also found a town stuck in time, its white inhabitants clinging to the ideals of the pre-civil rights movement white majority.

Bissinger spends the entire 1988 season with the team, retelling their games in short chapters, and interviewing players, their families or other important members of the community to compliment the picture. The town hopes that their team will make a run for the state championship, and most fans have very high expectations. The apparent protagonist, star running back Boobie Miles, is injured during a preseason scrimmage and never plays at his former level again. Nevertheless, Bissinger continues interviewing him, recording the tragic story of a teenager that was sure he would be a well-paid sports star slowly realizing that he has almost no other options. Other players, among them fullback Don Billingsley or quarterback Mike Winchell, also receive more detailed portrayals, with Bissinger providing insights into their school days and private lives, enjoying the fame and status of being small town celebrities. During the entire book, Bissinger acts as the narrator and sometimes as the focalizer.

During the personal passages focusing on the players, the reader is often met with an internal focalization, making it seem as if Bissinger had extensive access to the interviewees' thoughts and emotions. During game-related passages, the focalization mostly stays external, but sometimes dives into key players' minds to shine more light on their inner turmoil during mistakes. This switching between focalizers makes it seem like an omnipotent zero focalizer just switches modes at will.

However, Bissinger may only report what others told him, which means that any analysis of the novel's content must first evaluate whether he is a reliable narrator, and how his disposition towards certain characters and the public reception of the book may have influenced what he was willing to relay.

While Bissinger's main focus remains with describing the events surrounding the football season, his repeated focus on racism, especially structural racism, stands out. He frequently does in-depth research on the race-related history

of the town, and race plays a major role in each of his interviews, game reports, or historical context narrations. This is especially prevalent in a chapter titled "Black and White" that is an in-depth dive into the race-relations in Odessa and could be described as the key chapter for understanding the underlying narrative about race. Bissinger (2004) presents the opinions of several "white" men and women on desegregation and the current state of the town, as well as the opinions of several BIpoc[1], including the vagabond-turned-preacher Lawrence Hurd, who offers strong opinions on the effects of competitive sports on BIpoc men:

> "He firmly believed that football, like other sports, used blacks, exploited them and then spit them out once their talents as running backs or linebackers or wide receivers had been fully exhausted. For a few lucky ones, that moment might not come until they were established in the pro's. For others, it might come at the end of college. For most, it would all end in high school. 'Before, it was take the blacks and put 'em in the cotton fields. Let 'em do farm work. Let 'em do share crops. In the twentieth century, because of football, the real smart people use these blacks just like they would on the farm. And when it's over, they don't care about them.'" (Bissinger, 2004, p. 109)

During this chapter and during the description of racist incidents, Bissinger's disposition shows in the way he frames these incidents and how many different opinions and people he recites. An example for this would be a passage where three men compare the injured Boobie Miles to a lame horse, then follows it up with another point of view from another coach:

> "On the practice field, a trio of men gathered one afternoon to joke about his plight. One of them suggested that maybe it was best for Boobie to just kill himself since he didn't have football anymore. 'No', one of them objected. 'When a horse pulls up lame you don't waste a bullet on him.' There was unrestrained laughter and the three enjoyed the analogy of comparing Boobie to an animal. It was repeated. […] Only Nate Hearne had a different perspective on it all." (Bissinger, 2004, p. 262)

As most "white" Odessans use the *n-word* like any other word and without considering its power, Bissinger often uses direct quotes when describing these incidents, instead of the usual factual and paraphrasing style (Bissinger, 2004, p. 89). During the aforementioned chapter on race relations, Bissinger gives ample room for BIpoc to share their experiences and voice their opinions, while giving little room for the town's "white" inhabitants to share their

[1] In this paper, BIpoc is used to refer to black, indigenous and people of color.

opinions beyond why they think that BIpoc are not to be trusted and why the town is so divided.

In another very relevant sequence, the reader is confronted with the thoughts of Fullback Don Billingsley on not getting his chance to be the starting Running Back after Boobie's injury (Bissinger, 2004, pp. 84–88). Bissinger describes how Bobbie's backup, Don Billingsley, struggles to hold onto the ball onto the field, resulting in him getting benched for a black player called Chris Comer. Due to his age, Comer should not be on the team, but he was elevated from the junior squad after Boobie suffered his injury. Billingsley then blames the fact that he lost his starting job on the circumstance that black players are allowed to play on the Permian team, stating that he did not even get a chance to carry the ball, and he, as a "white" football player, is subject to a stricter treatment and different expectations. He does this despite having obvious problems hanging on to the ball, costing the team points, and having a reputation of not being committed enough:

> "With all those eyes focused on him, the ball popped loose from Don's hands without anyone's touching him. […] Regaining his composure, he had peeled off a nice thirty-four-yard run on a sweep. But then, with time running out in the half, he had fumbled again […]."
>
> "'I didn't get to carry the ball,' was how Don Billingsley sized it up. 'They moved up another [n-word] to carry the ball. […] In practice, the [n-word]s[2], they do what they want to do, and they still start Friday night. […] There are different rules for black and white at Permian.'" (Bissinger, 2004, pp. 84, 85, 87, 88)

This sequence again hints at Bissinger's disposition towards the "white" population of Odessa, as he contrasts the events on the field with Billingsley's attribution, making him look like a hypocrite. It also represents the general opinion of "white" Odessans, who do not consider the n-word a slur and are portrayed as against desegregation and interracial relationships (Bissinger, 2004, p. 89). While the events are seemingly arranged to make him look hypocritical, we only hear Billingsley's side of the story, not those of the coaches or the player who replaced him. His quote on racial bias ends the fourth chapter and is then followed by the aforementioned chapter "Black and White", where Bissinger then clarifies how racial bias and segregation actually affect the town's minorities by reporting their stories and experiences. In the following paragraph, the narrator is speaking, once again showing his disdain

[2] Racial slurs have been replaced by [n-word]; the novel does not censor them.

for the injustice and downright cruel practices of Odessa's "white" institutions. This is also where the narrator recounts the changes brought upon the desegregation, with the formerly "white" schools taking on BIpoc students. The narrator underlines his argument by adding a quote from a BIpoc that emphasizes the point of segregation:

> "Desegregation had not altered the essential character of the Permian program. It was still a white institution. The overwhelming majority of its fans were still white. The overwhelming majority of its players were still white. But those few blacks attending Permian had made enormous contributions, one after another shipped across town to Permian for the mass enjoyment of an appreciative white audience and then shipped right back again across the railroad tracks to the Southside after each game. [...]
>
> 'We know that we're separate until we get on the field. We know that we're equal as athletes. But once we get off the field, we're not equal […].'" (Bissinger, 2004, pp. 106–107)

Throughout the rest of the book, the topic of race politics comes up repeatedly, and Permian's season, as well as the novel, eventually ends in a semifinal loss to the Carter Cowboys, a historically black school that did not field a "white" player. During the chapter leading up to the final game, Bissinger describes the lengthy and dramatic court process which decides whether the Carter Cowboys are even allowed to participate in the playoffs. The decision hinges on the failing math grade of a player, as teams that want to participate need to field players with passing grades, and the grade seems to be justified. The school's principal changes the grade to a passing grade, only to get overruled by the state's highest education official. Throughout the final court process, it is revealed that the school's grading system is way too complicated and that the teacher could justify giving almost any grade, but no one asked whether the student had actually learned anything. Eventually the judge decides that grading is not an exact science, and that the Carter Cowboys get to stay in the playoffs. The math teacher who gave the failing grade is sent to another school and punished by not being allowed to teach math anymore (Bissinger, 2004, pp. 300–311). Bissinger's description of this situation also shows his rather negative disposition towards the role that sports play at high schools, as the narrator remarks that "of course, he [the math teacher] was forbidden to teach math to prevent further threats to the sanctity of football." (Bissinger, 2004, p. 311) While Bissinger mostly focuses on the aspect of football, this situation once again highlights how race influences the perception and discussion of a team's right to participation, with one school board

member saying that this situation would not have happened with a "white" superintendent.

His growing disdain for the athletics program is also shown in a previous sequence where he interviews teachers at Permian. The teacher points out how much of the school's resources of both money and time is invested in football instead of academics. The narrator finishes this part with a description of a substitute lesson, where "they learned about American history that day by watching 'Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid' on video" (Bissinger, 2004, pp. 146–147), an old Western-Comedy. These are just some examples, and overall Bissinger's rather critical stance towards the influence of high school football on the academic curriculum is clear. This is also a part that teachers can use to reflect on their own position in the educational system, reflecting on how disciplinary punishment is decided upon or how department budgets are distributed.

Overall, Bissinger succeeds in opening a window into the lives of Odessa's inhabitants and their motivations, wishes and fears. This inevitably revealed the structural racism deeply embedded and accepted in "white" Odessans. After publishing the book, Bissinger faced heavy criticism from the people of Odessa whose racist opinions were now out in the open for everyone to read. The signings and his visit to Odessa following the book's release had to be canceled due to threats of bodily harm (Bissinger, 2004, p. 362), which is an interesting reaction, considering the inhabitants were open about their opinions and should have known that they could appear in Bissinger's project.

5 Anti-racist theory and English Language Teaching

As mentioned in the introduction, this paper will mainly focus on using the portrayal of racism in the novel *Friday Night Light*s to further Social Justice Education, because the author spends most of the book exploring its effects, forms and history in Odessa. The novel also contains passages that could be used to gain a deeper understanding of gender norms, sexism or the effects of a financial crisis on small towns that rely on one economic branch. That is beyond the scope of this article, but since these aspects often interact with racism, teachers should consider making use of these passages if they feel that they could be suitable.

Ensuring a safe discussion of content containing racism should be a teacher's highest priority, which requires teachers to accept that racism is a part of their

identity and socialization, and that they need to continue working on deconstructing the impact it has on them (Güllü & Gerlach, 2023, p. 32). Preparing such discussions may prove to be extensive work, as properly explaining important words and phrases such as white privilege or white gaze may take some time, and talking about why certain words might be hurtful and how to avoid saying hurtful things can lead to confusion and even more questions. Therefore, when a teacher sets out to plan an anti-racist lesson, they need to be aware that doing so requires commitment to critical pedagogy.

According to Braselmann (2023), teachers and learners first need to reflect on their experiences and current position regarding racism, making sure that they are aware of the racist experiences that some of their learners may have had. Learners should not be made to share their own experiences, but if they are willing to do so, they may need to be discussed in theoretical or abstract contexts to ease the learners into talking about such a hurtful topic. The teacher also needs to address racism as transnational and transversal, actively challenging established racist and colonial narratives and stereotypes. Those narratives are exemplified by pointing them out in media that uphold or reproduce racist knowledge, and their use of language is critically reflected upon by pointing out the role of the English language in the construction of such narratives (Braselmann, 2023, p. 172).

This can be a challenge, because when one wants to deconstruct and discuss racism in any context, "white" contributors will eventually have to confront their "white gaze". The white gaze is a perspective taken by a socially constructed group that is not subjected to racism and that structurally and socially profits from being part of this "white" group. Other, diverse groups get homogenized, resulting in the "white" majority purposefully misunderstanding cultural ties and assigning negative traits to groups of non-"white" people that feel no relation to each other. They are set opposite of the "white normalcy" and seen as "lesser" and "abnormal" through the white gaze.

Members of those marginalized groups that experience racism report feelings like they must disprove the "white" groups' assumptions by acting differently than their assigned stereotype. In essence, it is a way of othering non-"white" people that is propagated at home and in social institutions (Güllü & Gerlach, 2023, p. 24).

Güllü and Gerlach (2023) also note that racist ideologies have changed over time; they stopped focusing on the biological concept of race, instead referring to cultural differences when othering non-"white" people. That is why

teachers need to pay attention to redefining the term "culture", moving away from a static and oversimplifying definition towards one that emphasizes the complexity and dynamic nature of cultures (Güllü & Gerlach, 2023, p. 34). It is also key to accept that race is a social construct, and not based on biological or ethnic categories. This would become increasingly obvious the more learners engage with the topic, as it would become evident that society introduces new categories when needed and manipulates old ones as they see it to keep up the structural advantages of the majority (Braselmann, 2023, p. 170). In *Friday Night Lights*, structural racism is reflected upon by multiple characters and is the focus of Bissinger's portrayal. Usually, learners have already interacted with the topic of racism before, for example in history lessons dealing with colonialism. This might enable them to relate the inequalities in the book to their prior knowledge of racism.

6 Sequence design

The following sequences will focus on opportunities of furthering the critical deconstruction of racism, thus leaving chapters of the novel aside that deal with other problematic topics such as gender and sexism. However, it would be advisable for the teacher to read the entire book with the learners, using critical literacy strategies to focus on other social justice topics that come up in the book. The sequences were designed for a learner group of at least grade 10, and ideally, they would be very familiar with the method of *problem posing.*

Before teaching any sequence dealing with *Friday Night Lights*, teachers should aim to guarantee that the learners are prepared for the discussions ahead, preparing the learners for identifying hurtful language and acting against it, realizing why social justice is an important topic and defining important terms needed to discuss racism and football. This sequence should be taught before the learners begin reading the book. It could consist of a joint effort of learners and the teacher creating a glossary that acts as a permanent resource for the learners, as well as designing a social contract in which the learners and the teacher commit to being open-minded while minding the already established discussion rules and vocabulary. The glossary would need to define terms such as "white", "black" and the n-word as they are used in the book and in current times, providing historical context and appropriate replacements for them to enable safer discussions of the book's contents.

6.1 Sequence 1: Don Billingsley

In this sequence, learners engage with the previously mentioned thoughts of Fullback Don Billingsley on not getting his chance to be the starting Running Back after Boobie Miles' injury (s. Section 4). The goal of the sequence is to introduce the learners to the problem posing strategy using McLaughlin and DeVoogd's (2004) framework for introducing new critical literacy strategies. The sequence gives learners the opportunity to examine how white privilege, and racist belief might influence the "white" people's perception of their own failure (Bissinger, 2004, pp. 84–88).

Learners should have read at least up to the last part of chapter 4 (Bissinger, 2004, p. 84). It once again emphasizes why and how racist language can hurt others, giving the learners a concrete example to discuss later.

6.1.1 Explaining

The sequence starts with an activation exercise in which learners are asked to explain the terms that they had discussed during the first sequence, then the teacher projects pages 65–67 onto the wall. They explain the problem posing strategy and provide guiding questions. Those could include: *What are the points of view that we are presented with? What kind of relationship do the characters have to each other? What type of behavior does the text attribute to what group? Which perspective is missing?*

6.1.2 Demonstrating

Then, the teacher reads the pages aloud, making sure to highlight answers or interesting passages that relate to the questions that they have established beforehand. They make sure to demonstrate their thought process and explain what they are looking for, but only highlight one or two passages, leaving enough text for the learners to practice with.

6.1.3 Guiding

Afterwards, learners head into pre-established cooperative groups and read the part again, using the teacher's highlighted passages as a guide to practice their own analysis and come to their own conclusions. After an adequate amount of time that depends on the learner group, the groups present their results, with the teacher moderating the discussion when necessary.

6.1.4 Practice

Next, learners will practice the newly acquired method on a new passage, the previously mentioned incident in which Don Billingsley shared his opinion on race relations and behavior in the team (Bissinger, 2004, pp. 84–88). Should groups be in need of support, the teacher may provide more specific questions to scaffold their efforts, such as: *Why did he believe that he was being treated unfairly? Whose perspective is not heard here? What if a BIpoc player said this about a white player?*

6.1.5 Reflecting

The last step is reflecting on the strategy and results; this may take more than a single lesson. During the reflection, the learners and the teacher should consider how the use of the new strategy influenced their approach, process and results.

6.2 Sequence 2: Desegregation at Permian

This sequence could deal with the structural dimension of racism, using segments of the chapter “Black and White”. The chapter is a fantastic source of perspectives on the race relations in Odessa, but it is also littered with slurs, which means that the teacher and the learners need to pay more attention to keep discussions safe.

The learning goals for the sequence would be for learners to recognize, analyze and deconstruct structural dimensions of racism in texts with the newly acquired problem posing strategy. To achieve this, the sequence will follow the basic framework of engaging, guiding, extending and reflection that McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) established. Learners will first read pages 105–110 that are part of the previously mentioned chapter “Black and White”, which deals with the issues that BIpoc face in Odessa and contains some of the previously quoted passages about BIpocs being exploited for their athleticism (s. Section 4 for examples).

6.2.1 Engaging

The sequence starts with the teacher engaging the learners' thinking by having them think about incidents in sports that they are familiar with. What do the media talk about, what do the players want to emphasize when they individualize their uniforms or when they do charity work? They share their ideas with their partner and then with the class.

6.2.2 Guiding

Then, the learners get together into their cooperative groups to read pages 105–110 and use the problem posing strategy to analyze the text. The teacher should provide them with guiding questions projected onto a wall or written on a blackboard, such as: *What perspective is missing? Why is it missing? Who is being marginalized? Who controls the situation that is being described? What are the intentions of the author?*

6.2.3 Extending

The learner groups then get re-arranged, which could either be done randomly or through a group generator that can be adjusted so that certain group constellations can be avoided. Learners then exchange their results within the new groups and collect them within a mind map. They then try to relate their insights to their results from the activation task – have they encountered similar situations in the media? Are similar situations still happening in sports today, and do people know about them?

If this phase works well, and learners can make connections to recent events, the teacher may ask them to come up with a way to take action. The groups present their results and decide on a way to take action. This could be writing an informal piece and publishing it in the school newspaper, a letter to a charity or political institution or recording and publishing a video on the topic – as long as the learners make use of their newly acquired knowledge for this topic to influence the discourse and it is achievable, anything goes. A great example, should the learners not be able to find one, is the UEFA's "No al Racismo" campaign, which suggests that the organization is taking an anti-racist stance, while allowing for their players to be harassed and insulted on the pitch, highlighting that racism is a structural issue that cannot be fixed by a social media campaign. Taking action is also the hardest part of the framework, as analyzing and discussing a text is usually easier than setting up a

class project to take action on social justice issues, but it is simultaneously the most important one.

6.2.4 Reflecting

Finally, the teacher should reflect on how the sequence went, what they learned, what the learners learned, and what they can improve. The learners should be part of this process as well, and provide feedback.

7 Conclusion

It almost comes as no surprise that Bissinger faced threats of bodily harm from anonymous Odessians after he had published *Friday Night Lights*. His observations regarding the obvious and mostly unquestioned effects of structural and everyday racism exemplify that while the Civil Rights movement may have impacted the federal legislature, it would take quite a while for the changes to affect the everyday lives of Black people.

The at times very critical nature in which Bissinger portrays racist statements or situations constitutes a special challenge for designing tasks around them. Some of the structural racism is openly criticized, and Bissinger makes an effort to include as many perspectives in his book as possible, not veiling his political stance. This lessens the effectiveness of the critical questions that learners may pose, as half of the answers to the questions such as *"Who is marginalized or underrepresented?"* are already provided.

However, this arguably lightens the workload for learners with good critical literacy skills, and scaffolds those that still struggle. Since the main goal was to use the book to further critical awareness of racism, spending less time on the text could enable the learners to spend more time reflecting on whether they have encountered similar behavior in their lives or whether they hold similar views. Especially the historical and structural dimensions could be put into focus, as Bissinger gives a fantastic summary of how the town came to be and what events shaped its political atmosphere during the early chapters. By shifting the focus from the portrayal of racism in the text to how racism affects the lives of people in another country, transferring the findings to the learners' own experiences may be easier.

While the teaching approaches of critical pedagogy and cooperative language learning work very well together, and establishing a critical literacy frame-

work should be manageable, designing tasks that ask “white” learners to question their own privilege may prove to be challenging. Since there is no telling of how “white” learners will react to criticism towards their identity, teachers need to be prepared to deal with being antagonized, or even the learners’ parents getting involved. And even then, the teacher has not even accounted for how they can navigate the potentially hurtful situations for learners belonging to a minority. But this is exactly why teachers need to constantly reflect on their actions and dispositions and be an active member of the critical classroom that they are trying to build. Enabling their learners to take action, while not always easy, is the most important step of Social Justice Education. To successfully teach a K12 classroom with an anti-racist stance, teachers need to be committed to the cause (s. Klaes’ contribution in this issue). But although it might be challenging, teaching learners to question their own values and beliefs can lead to a more just and open-minded society that truly embraces and protects equity.

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Teaching Queer Critical Literacies

Intersectional Considerations for a German ELT Classroom

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Abstract: The constant negotiation of gender and sexuality – socially, politically, and individually – influences our thinking and actions in all areas of life, including education. Yet, the incorporation of such topics is tabooed in the classroom. This paper contains a unit that embeds queer life-worlds in already existing fields from the curriculum. It aims to demonstrate the instruction for challenging the cis- and heteronormative gaze in ELT. More specifically, it argues that teachers should centralize the students' personal interests to promote social justice. Therefore, the framework of queer critical literacies is suitable as it not only focuses on the education of gender and sexual diversity but also examines the reflection of underlying power dynamics, structural marginalization, knowledge, and agency. This cannot be done without an intersectional approach that provides a realistic and holistic view of identity.

Keywords: queer critical literacies; ELT classroom; intersectionality; diversity; Englischunterricht; Intersektionalität; Diversität

1 Introduction

School practice has an impact on the students' gender images. Schools serve as primary places where students learn about gender roles, often reinforcing traditional binary notions of masculinity and femininity (König, 2018, pp. 8–23). The interplay between gender and educational practices influences experiences, outcomes, and identity formation, making it critical to examine how gender dynamics operate within these environments. In adolescence, teenagers negotiate their sexual as well as gender-related orientation; schools should be a safe environment to support the development of their identities. Especially queer individuals often experience heightened vulnerability within educational settings due to systemic heteronormativity and pervasive social stigmas. Schools as a microcosm of broader society fail to provide inclusive environments that affirm diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (Summer & Steinbock, 2023, p. 78). Krell and Oldemeier revealed in their German study in 2017 that more than half of the interviewed trans and gender-non-conforming teenagers met teachers who derided their identities (Krell & Oldemeier, 2017, pp. 167–172).

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of addressing LGBTQ+ issues in academia, it remains a significant shortage of hands-on materials designed to counteract pervasive heteronormative perspectives and to empower agency regarding queer identities. This research gap is particularly evident in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), where diversity is and

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should be taken up as an educational opportunity. Although progress has been made in the development of materials (König et al., 2015), there is still a considerable gap on the resources that teachers find accessible to teach and negotiate gender in ELT.

The article reacts to the inadequacy of available resources in teacher education, highlighting the necessity of frameworks such as queer critical literacies (QCL) to offer educators the tools and knowledge needed that foster a more inclusive and affirming learning environment for all students. It not only focuses on the education of gender and sexual diversity but also examines the reflection of fundamental power dynamics, structural marginalization, knowledge, and agency. Whereas queerphobia is a common practice in educational institutions, the reappraisal and inclusion of realities outside of cis- and heteronormativity are predominantly ignored (Gray, 2023, pp. 27–28). This cannot be done without an intersectional approach because the artificial separation of categories such as race, class, gender, and sexuality cannot demonstrate a realistic and complete prospect of identity (Gay, 2023, p. viii). This article aims to demonstrate how queer realities as well as the instruction for challenging the cis- and heteronormative gaze can and why it should be included in ELT. More specifically, it argues that teachers should centralize the students' personal interests to promote social justice regarding the representation of various genders and sexualities.

Hence, I begin by giving an insight into the theoretical concepts of taboo literacy, queer critical literacies, and intersectionality as they are closely related:

- The "suggested taboo categories are […] related to issues of social (in)justice and (un)equal power relations, which can be related to the areas of race, class, gender, and disability" (Ludwig & Summer, 2023, p. 9). Especially the usage of language – how power dynamics are established, solidified, and shattered – plays a role.

- Even if Ludwig and Summer "introduce taboo literacy as a goal of critical literacy" (2023, p. 4), it cannot be equated. Critical literacies imply coming from a determined perspective and aiming to take responsibility for forthcoming social changes – strictly speaking social justice – and not only dealing with tabooed topics in school as they exist in every domain.

- The concept of queer critical literacies is shaped by Govender and Andrews's proposal. As a call for future academic work, they ask to see how their framework is used "to structure critically reflexive accounts

> of curriculum design and pedagogical practice in primary, secondary, and higher education classrooms" (Govender & Andrews, 2022, p. 91).

I will lay the theoretical foundation to, then, ascertain if the regulated guidelines (curricula, textbooks) fulfill the line of the approaches. Consequently, this paper outlines the current intentions regarding gender and sexuality that are compiled in the curriculum and put into practice through the textbook. For exemplary visualization, I inspect the present curriculum from North Rhine-Westphalia. As a way to fill one segment of this gap in academic research and implementation in the school, this paper illustrates this discussion by means of a unit that embeds queer life-worlds within the existing materials.

2 Teaching social justice: taboo literacy, queer critical literacies, and intersectionality

The connection between social justice, gender, and intersectionality is foundational to understanding and addressing the complexities of identity within educational settings, including the ELT classroom. It is insufficient to merely educate students on isolated sociopolitical topics; instead, effective education must emphasize the intersections of these issues to foster a deeper understanding of how they interact and shape individual experiences. Reflecting on one's identity requires an awareness of how societal classifications influence one's position within various power structures. My approach to teaching critically is rooted in both political and identity-forming perspectives, recognizing that education is a powerful tool for social transformation. The following sub-sections will delve into the topic of teaching queerness by examining it through three key aspects: incorporating tabooed topics in school, exploring (queer) critical literacies, and educating with an intersectional approach.

2.1 The controversy of addressing taboos

When teachers introduce topics such as mental health, sexuality, or discrimination, they risk creating discomfort and ambiguity for every participant (Alter & Fuchs, 2023, p. 51; Braselmann, 2023, p. 171). In that, the field has long been praised by perspectives that education should remain 'neutral' ergo not include or negotiate sociopolitical topics that students encounter in and outside of the classroom anyway. Materials have been 'norm washed' in the past (Ludwig & Summer, 2023, p. 15), which impeded facing controversial topics through common textbooks. Issues that are a product of everyday lives are raw and unfiltered, but their adjustment for school can be time-consuming for teachers (Ludwig & Summer, 2023, p. 16).

Recent research in the field shows that taboo topics have long been sidelined in ELT: Ludwig and Summer (2023), for instance, have begun to fill a long overdue research gap. In academia, the exclusion of controversial topics is called 'parsnip policy'. PARSNIP is an acronym for various tabooed topics such as porn, politics, alcohol, religion, and -isms – many topics that fall within the environment of students or teenagers in general. This is one important justification that makes 'parsnip' issues highly relevant for foreign language teaching. From the same collected volume, Summer and Steinbock's study on student-oriented teaching, for example, shows the importance of involving tabooed topics. On one hand, half of the participants expressed that they are interested in the topic of sexualities in their spare time. Simultaneously, Summer and Steinbock state that "57.4 % of participants stated that they had never talked about homosexuality […] [and] 77.6 % never addressed gender reassignment in class" (Summer & Steinbock, 2023, p. 75). Further on, the participants not only assess 'parsnip' issues as essential in school education but also ask for them in ELT (p. 77). As a result, it seems obvious that tabooed topics, especially gender and sexuality, are not as involved as the students would like them to be. Centering lessons around the students should not tolerate avoiding such issues because they might be uncomfortable to teach (Alter & Fuchs, 2023, p. 52; Braselmann, 2023, p. 170).

One way of handling discomfort is addressing a topic through fictional literature and characters. Considering a perspective that is separated from one's own opens another space of discussion: the *Didaktik des Fremdverstehens*. It builds upon the elemental assumption that the switch to an internal perspective of another (fictional) person "allows them to incorporate hitherto alien aspects of the other culture into their world-view, and overcome prejudices and stereotypes" (Fuchs & Könemann, 2018, p. 137). The students learn to differentiate between their personal feelings and fictional ones, which can ensure privacy (Alter & Fuchs, 2023, p. 53). König describes the negotiation of fictional situations as a safer space because the student has the position of the 'concerned friend' (König, 2018, p. 139). This feeds two birds with one scone. Analyzing gender on the basis of fictional characters does not necessarily oppose another crucial concept, namely learner-centeredness, which is desired from both the students' side and from critical literacies (Vasquez, 2017, p. 7). In fact, the concepts can be easily combined as the latter may include working with fictional texts as well.

2.2 From critical literacies to queer critical literacies

As presented in the previous subsection, teaching social justice is a delicate and highly sensitive topic. However, there are specific approaches in language education that can help both teachers and students work towards social justice in and outside of the classroom. The subsequent approaches give an insight into how to deconstruct injustice as well as power dynamics through texts and other forms of media.

Scholars describe the ideological perception that heterosexuality and being cisgender are the predominantly accepted systems in modern Western society (Regan & Meyer, 2021, p. 1). More specifically, this perception influences other domains in life like parenthood, the workspace, or relationships. When activities differ from the 'norm', these practices are socially rejected or stamped as 'abnormal' (Regan & Meyer, 2021, p. 1). Individuals and groups that challenge these norms are marginalized and discriminated against on a structural basis. The view of gender as a binary radically excludes queer people from society and impedes their daily lives. Vice versa, being seen as straight or cisgender unveils structural privileges and personal security. These patriarchal norms have more impact than consent or ethics (Regan & Meyer, 2021, pp. 1–2, 5–6). This contrast between exclusion and privilege underscores the necessity of critical literacies, which equip individuals with the analytical tools to deconstruct entrenched norms and challenge the narratives that perpetuate exclusion and inequality.

Critical literacies are rooted in different theories and teaching methods: The concept broadly originates from the Frankfurt School, a socio-philosophical school of thought from the 1920s that was highly influenced by critical theorists such as Marx, Hegel, and Adorno. Another influential work has been Freire's contribution to critical pedagogy, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), which gave a ground-breaking insight into relations within the classroom and society, not only for Brazil but for the rest of the world as well. These two examples of 20th-century concepts show the interdisciplinary linkage of critical literacies (Vasquez, 2017, pp. 1–2).

Critical literacies can be defined as a methodology to analyze and reflect on any communicational media. For school practices, it can be a "political orientation to teaching and learning and to the cultural, ideological, and sociolinguistic content of the curriculum" (Luke, 2014, p. 21). The critical engagement with texts and media centers around power dynamics, contextualization, and social transformation (Luke, 2014, p. 25). Therefore, the learners do not

only focus on the content but also deconstruct the used language and how it transports power (Luke, 2014, p. 27). However, the definition of criticality and critical literacies are to this day very context-specific, making a broad, unanimous understanding almost impossible (see Louloudi, 2023; Pandya et al., 2022). To address this issue, several researchers have come up with a variety of elements that can help break down what critical literacies can look like in the classroom. Vasquez (2017), for instance, has defined key aspects of critical literacies.

(1) Its main purpose is to focus on sociopolitical debates and inequalities – i.e. power dynamics, agency, and social issues like class, race, and gender – impacting our language and our actions. The learners are guided to question the system: Its main premise, that "the world is seen as a socially constructed text that can be read" (Vasquez, 2017, p. 7), should make the foundation of working with critical literacies. Every subject and object can be analyzed in the classroom as it is dependent on someone's position and biases.

(2) The teachers should initiate the investigation of multiple perspectives. Critical literacies suggest that teachers ask critical questions to examine the status quo in society from various angles and to find possibilities for change. This gives a better understanding that the learners' understanding of the socially constructed object is influenced by their perspective.

(3) Critical literacies demand student-centeredness. The reflective lens needs to be put into practice in connection to the students' living environment, knowledge, and daily experiences. Bringing your own materials and personal opinions into the discussion can enrich the outcome (Vasquez, 2017, pp. 7–8). Nevertheless, teaching the diversity of genders and sexualities should not go along with pressuring the students to make a statement about their emotional state, sexual orientation, or gender. Teachers should not build the lesson on the personal experiences of all participants to minimize the risk of "violating their religious and political beliefs, their moral codex and sexuality" (Ludwig & Summer, 2023, p. 14) or traumas.

In Germany, the discussion on critical literacies is now gaining more attention in ELT. With his anthology *Kritische Fremdsprachendidaktik* (2020), Gerlach edited one of the few German contributions that directly addresses criti-

cal literacies. In this collection, Merse (2020) has highlighted how the teaching of queer life-worlds is implemented internationally, concluding that a monosexual view is seen as the norm in classroom practice. At the same time, heteronormative images are constantly reproduced by textbooks and other common materials. Still, queer theory in school should not stop here and only (better) portray and represent the queer community, but in doing so, also look at the hetero- and cisnormative character of the representation and how gender and sexuality are negotiated linguistically (Merse, 2020, p. 112). Exemplary depictions of LGBTQ+ realities should not simply be seen as an addition, but teachers should place them in existing subject areas in order to make productive use of content (Merse, 2020, p. 117).

As Merse's research has shown, many German ELT classes address this lack progressively: Plenty of German states, school laws, guidelines for sexuality education, and English curricula provide an option for dealing with the diversity of sexual and gender identities. These, then, are expected to be implemented and gain relevance in the classroom (Merse, 2020, pp. 107–108). It is insufficient to merely adapt the curricula; there is still a dearth of support for the implementation of the new guidelines. Consequently, there is a need for materials that engage in a rigorous examination of the social constructs. Merse suggests three dimensions of interventions for practical uses: the affirmative visualization of LGBTQ+ identities, the critical examination of heteronormativity, and the linguistic negotiation of sexual and gender identities (Merse, 2020, p. 112).

To better address this distinction, Govender and Andrews (2022) have framed an approach and techniques to challenge cis- and heteronormativity in schools within the setting of teaching and learning. Educating through the lens of queer critical literacies as well as dealing with gender and sexuality means

> "confronting how (student) teachers, teacher educators, learners, institutions, curriculums, texts, media, academics, research, and even governments are implicated in those power relations that [marginalize] or actively oppress non-normative gender and sexual groups while serving the interests of heteronormativity and (hetero)patriarchy." (Govender & Andrews, 2022, p. 82)

To do so, teachers are asked to pursue queering the context and content, disrupting the commonplace of the cis- and heterosexual 'standard'. Together with the students, they analyze different products of society to uncover inequalities, stereotypes, and the use of language. Govender and Andrews suggest tracking the hegemonic power structures, such as the heterosexual male gaze, in texts and medial presentations. Queer critical literacies also go along

with teaching the history of LGBTQ+ existence, resistance, adjustment, and persecution. Lessons should examine "how non-conforming identities and representations are shaped and to what extent they challenge and/or reproduce a range of norms" (Govender & Andrews, 2022, p. 84), which cannot be done without keeping in mind intersectionality. Even if or maybe exactly because there is not one right way to teach queer critical literacies, Govender and Andrews propose a conceptual framework that includes five steps: 1. *Questioning Representation*, 2. *Questioning Reading Practices*, 3. *Questioning Policing*, 4. *Questioning Knowledge, Assumptions and Meaning-Making*, and 5. *Questioning Self*. Together, these phases aim to critically pursue the representation, agency, and policy of queerness and queer people in society.

2.3 Intersectionality and its practical use in the classroom

Demanding an intersectional approach is a common phrase that appears in the outlook of many academic essays on critical literacies (Low et al., 2022, p. 315). However, it is my impression that far fewer dare to combine these techniques in practice. In one way, this could be because both theories are not necessarily rigidly formulated or point to a clear path of implementation.

The academic world has broadly defined the framework and object of investigation of this complex approach: Intersectionality focuses on collective experiences, such as diverse discrimination forms that certain groups make within society (e.g. Collins, 2019; Crenshaw, 1989; Meyer, 2017). In other words, it recognizes discrimination as a structural issue leading to marginalization. Therefore, it does not look at singular characteristics of identities but rather at how specific sections like race, class, and gender are intertwined. These -isms and disempowerments stand in contrast to the personification of absolute privilege, namely the white, wealthy, elderly man (Meyer, 2017, p. 34).

Historically, intersectionality developed from a thought of criticism. Various theories of intersectionality are compiled by people who are adversely affected by it (Meyer, 2017, p. 22). It is deeply rooted in the research on the marginalization of U.S. black women. Hill Collins's writings *Black Feminist Thought* (1990) and *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology* (1992, together with M.L. Andersen) and Crenshaw's essays "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" (1989) and "Mapping the Margins" (1991) are pioneer works for seizing intersectionality. They aimed to criticize the white or rather whitewashed, middle-class heterosexual, Western feminist movements of the second half of the 20th century (Meyer, 2017, p. 35). Crenshaw established to

recognize that intersectionality does not mean adding different forms of discrimination, but an intertwinement on different axes (1989, p. 149).

Discrimination is a structural problem that goes beyond individual experiences. This also means recognizing social inequality, which is determined by privilege and discrimination. Moreover, the marginalization of minorities limits their self-determination. They must conform to norms, which reinforces collective oppression. This leads to violence from the dominant society (Meyer, 2017, pp. 73–79). The resulting power grid is labeled as the 'matrix of domination' of intersecting power dynamics (Collins, 2019, p. 239).

Since this paper aims to show an exemplary insight into teaching the intersection of sex and gender in foreign language lessons, Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) is essential for the previously illustrated discourse.[1] Butler overcomes the typically Western distinction between the socially constructed 'gender' and the supposedly natural 'sex'. Both terms are socially constructed and are shaped through political discourse (Butler, 1999, p. 10). Women have to meet the standards of the male, white, and phallogocentric view. Butler recognizes the intersections of 'sex', gender, sexual practice, and desire: Western society heterosexualizes its participants and equates being female with femininity and being male with masculinity. Everyone is assumed to be 'naturally' heterosexual until proven otherwise (Butler, 1999, pp. 20–27).

By centering my paper around the intersection of gender and sexuality, I must recognize that this could easily fall into the trap of whitewashing intersectionality. Europe's feminists tend to interpret gender as the most important component and exclude race from the academic discourse. This Eurocentric view disregards that black, female activists developed it to fight the marginalization within the feminist movement. In the past and today, the academic feminist dialogue is predominantly white (Bilge, 2014, pp. 175, 191–192).[2]

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[1] Butler writes that the "masculine/feminine binary constitutes not only the exclusive framework in which that specificity can be recognized, but in every other way the 'specificity' of the feminine is once again fully decontextualized and separated off analytically and politically from the constitution of class, race, ethnicity, and other axes of power relations that both constitute 'identity' and make the singular notion of identity a misnomer." (Butler, 1999, p. 7)

[2] Bilge identifies a change in the last years: Black scholars' "knowledge production is now recognized if regulated by the principles of white science, though of lesser value and severely limited to their own kind. While whites still have the authority

Since intersectionality is such a complex concept, only a few scholars are committed to including it in teaching practices. Even fewer have tried to explicitly make intersectionality a topic in schools: Naples's article "Teaching Intersectionality Intersectionally" (2009) and Case's anthology *Intersectional Pedagogy* (2017) raise awareness on how to implement the approach in and around (adult) education. Especially one of the newest academic works on teaching intersectionality, Carter and Vavrus's *Intersectionality of Race, Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Teaching and Teacher Education* (2018), shifts its focus to "analyzing the empowering dynamics of the resistance, resilience, and transcendence [of] marginalized groups [engaging] in opposition to oppression and exploitation" (Gay, 2023, p. vii). Gay invites readers to not only perceive intersectionality as an approach but also as a call for change.

3 Relevant *Bildungspolitik*

The following teaching unit is planned for students in the *Einführungsphase* of a German *Gymnasium*. By scheduling this content at a later point in school, I want to make sure that gender and especially sexuality can be discussed as part of their life-worlds. Therefore, they need to acquire a special set of vocabulary that allows the students to negotiate a range of words in this stage of their life so that they start reflecting on complex and relevant issues. Learners at this age are teenagers who are confronted with puberty and its influence on their bodies and environment. The expectations that society has regarding their behavior change and contain a claim for responsibility. What makes puberty such a highly precarious situation is that the learners' experience is a finding process of their identity, negotiated between social media, social anticipation, and personal hopes.

Some of these students will be allowed to vote in German federal states or the EU and therefore should get in touch with political ideas, structures, and promises. Considering the politicization of queerness, knowledge on gender and sexuality has to be negotiated in school. Many right-winged parties – populist and extremist – actively stigmatize queer people and restrict the freedom of minority groups. However, teaching critically does not automatically need to orientate oneself towards a party, as it rather focuses on power relations and language. Democracy and social participation are to be encouraged (Gerlach, 2020, p. 18).

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to produce knowledge on non-whites, the opposite is less valid" (Bilge, 2014, p. 193).

Queer adolescents deal with their non-heterosexual or non-cisgender experiences. This can be followed by insecurities about their inner coming out and thoughts about whether or how to communicate them to their environment and how to meet partners. Trans and gender-non-conforming young people might also experience physical developments during this time that do not correspond to their gender perception (Krell & Oldemeier, 2017, p. 193). At this age, the pressure to adapt to the cis- and heteronormative behavioral structures increases and can lead to psychological strain (Krell & Oldemeier, 2017, pp. 193–194). Aside from the internal pressure, discrimination, and external forces are common experiences for members of the LGBTQ+ community in educational institutions. Hushing non-heterosexual and non-cisgender lifestyles or making fun of queer people contributes to the fact that coming out in school remains ambivalent and difficult for many adolescents and young adults. Krell and Oldemeier's study illustrates that four out of ten adolescents state that they have experienced discrimination within places of education and work. More than half of the adolescents and young adults stated that they had experienced discrimination at school in the form of verbal abuse, insults, and ridicule (2017, pp. 105–114). Krell and Oldemeier's research shows that we cannot omit an intersectional perspective because the conceptions of lesbians and gays, for instance, differ in how society treats them.

The Ministry of Education in North Rhine-Westphalia published a new version of the curriculum in 2023 that, in contrast to the curriculum from 2014, explicitly addresses gender- and sexuality-related diversity (MSB NRW, 2023, p. 9). While the previous standard curriculum was centered around intercultural competencies, the subsequent one covers broader, multidisciplinary objectives like education on human rights, politics, democracy, digital media, sustainability, and gender (MSB NRW, 2023, p. 8). Thus, the teachers are instructed to encourage multiperspectivity in practice. This includes the willingness to meet other people without prejudice and critically understand individual life-worlds. Especially the newest curriculum for North Rhine-Westphalia's *Einführungsphase* of the *gymnasiale Oberstufe* consolidated the thematic field of the opportunities and challenges of young people regarding ethnic, cultural, social, sexual, and gender diversity (MSB NRW, 2023, p. 18). Hence, one could argue that queer critical literacies could be understood as part of addressing diversity in the ELT classroom.

So, how do queer critical literacies and the standard curriculum in this German federal state align? To simply think that queer critical literacies are directly included would be short-sighted. Yet, both directions share certain val-

ues and aims in teaching. Particularly the current version sets political education, social responsibility, and social justice matters as fundamental goals for accomplishing the educational mission of schools (MSB NRW, 2023, p. 9). Still, intercultural communicative competencies, based on Byram's concept (1997), are a major aim of ELT. They have been criticized for their static view of culture and understanding of 'self' and 'other' (e.g. Louloudi, 2023, p. 333; Plikat, 2017).

Furthermore, the decision on what topics to cover should be student-oriented. The curriculum and critical literacies agree upon the aim to propose active and responsible participation in shaping their personal lives (MSB NRW, 2023, pp. 9–10). Nevertheless, the core issue of critical literacies, teaching to question power structures, individual and structural discrimination, and agency, is neither openly communicated nor requested. Including gender and sex issues is a corresponding sign toward queer critical literacies. What is missing now is a permanent critical view, with which topics like race, class, ability, and gender can be worked through.

Queer critical literacies are particularly suitable to teach in foreign language classes because they embrace the components of culture, literature, and language. König demonstrates how teachers can access gender reflection by analyzing the status quo of language. The alleged binary system of gender and patriarchal structures is constructed and can be uncovered in ways to speak. Various genders and sexualities are part of every society, which makes them relevant for intercultural learning and developing such competencies (König, 2018, pp. 34–35). Through foreign language negotiations of gender, the process of teaching and learning is slowed down and reduced in complexity. Then, the students have the possibility to translate step by step and talk about gender-related phenomena that are not (yet) normatively occupied in their minds. Some emotional topics can be verbally expressed in an easier way through another language because it builds a certain distance between the speaker and its content (König, 2018, pp. 36–37). Ideally, the teachers allow the students to have a say regarding content. Due to the learner-centeredness in critical literacies, the students' desire to communicate can rise. However, connecting to their life-world can carry the risk of initiating discomfort and silence (König, 2018, pp. 321–325). In the following, I will present a teaching unit that gives the students the possibility to address their personal interests without losing sight of the curriculum and to negotiate gender and sexualities in a productive manner.

4 Lesson design

The following teaching unit (see also Table 1) consists of five lessons, each of which will roughly be 90 minutes long. First, a general overview of the teaching unit is introduced to then focus on a more detailed presentation of one of the included lesson plans, with all the goals, competencies, and particularities relevant to the curriculum. It is my goal to follow the intersectional approach without confronting the students with the exact definitions and contradictions. In other words, I aim to break down the essence of intersectionality without simplifying it. Thorsten Merse pleads for including topics such as gender and sexuality in the already existing agenda considering that the curriculum is constantly loaded. Doing justice to the agenda and the students can be difficult for teachers. Queer critical literacies should be anchored and linked to the present subject areas (Merse, 2020, p. 117). One advantage is that the students will not get the impression of gender and sexuality as something that is separated from their daily lives. The linkage to existing knowledge gives relevance to topics outside the cis- and heteronormative ideology. This unit, for example, is tied to the curriculum by touching on topics like South Africa as an English-speaking reference culture, digital and social media, different forms of literature, challenges for young people, and shaping the future.

Table 1: Overview of the teaching unit (own presentation)

Lesson	*Queer critical literacies*	*Content*
1	Questioning Representation and Reading Practices I	Challenging heteronormativity
2	Questioning Representation and Reading Practices II	Cape Town as the 'gay capital', identities of queer people Exclusion within the LGBTQ+
3	Questioning Policing	Inclusion in and exclusion from politics, institutional handling of queerness
4	Questioning Knowledge, Assumptions, and Meaning Making	Restricted knowledge, safety on the internet
5	Questioning Self	Project design on queer representation and allyship

1. Govender and Andrews's plan is stipulated in a way that begins with *Questioning Representation of Queer People and Experiences.* To introduce the unit about queer identities, the teacher can ask the students about what they think belongs to the nature of identities. Most likely, terms like sexuality and gender will be named because they influence our everyday lives. Then, the teacher can initiate the use of a digital mind map while they deepen their knowledge of gender and sexuality. Braselmann suggests this method of drawing mind maps with -isms, privileges, and forms of discrimination to visualize possible overlaps and intersectional relations (2023, p. 175). The students should bring together their already existing knowledge on these matters. Thereafter, the focus needs to be drawn away from their own identity and experiences since access to queerness should not begin on a personal level that might overstrain their emotions. I propose to introduce one part of queerness through short stories. In the sense of queer critical literacies, the attention shifts to *Questioning Reading Practices*.

2. The second sequence of this unit also aligns with Govender and Andrews's *Questioning Representation and Questioning Reading Practices* to negotiate queer critical literacies. The primary learning goal is to deconstruct the exclusion within the queer community that underlies the concepts of intersectionality, sexualization, and capitalism. It is essential for students to understand the various forms of resilience, with Cape Town – renowned for its diverse and vibrant LGBTQ+ community – serving as an illustrative case study. A subsequent analysis will examine this session in greater detail, addressing the methodological and content-related aspects in a comprehensive manner.

3. The third lesson, *Questioning the Policing of (A)Gender and (A)Sexuality*, centralizes the school policy on gender and sexuality and reflects on the requirements of the North Rhine-Westphalian curriculum. In the first working phase, the students are invited to deconstruct school policies. The methodological-didactical implementation is linked to Chris Richards's requests for future research: He wishes to see an investigation into "how these identities are represented, if at all, in ELT materials and how this particular silence can be addressed in an inclusive way" (Richards, 2022, p. 172) after analyzing main-stream classroom materials like textbooks. In the second working phase, the instructor hands out the German and Scottish curricula. In the late 2010s, the Scottish government established an LGBTQ+ inclusive education working group and thereby embedded a queer-friendly teaching policy in their national core curriculum (TIE, 2020). Because the curriculum functions as the basic element for the construction of the textbook, the students need to

contemplate what effect the documents have on teaching and broadly on their lives.

4. *Questioning Knowledge, Assumptions, and Meaning-Making* is the focus of the fourth lesson in this unit. As an exemplary realization, I chose the topic of dating outside the cis-heteronormative concept. Digital media have had an enormous influence on the construction and empowerment of queer identities (Fox & Ralston, 2016, p. 635). Especially online dating is a part of queer culture because it can be a safer and more anonymous way to meet people for sex, friendship, and romantic intentions (Fox & Ralston, 2016). Individuals that do not fit into cis- and heteronormativity can use these platforms to avoid confrontations vis-à-vis and decide beforehand if they like to meet the person. Yet, the advantages can quickly become its downside: Anonymity can be exploited.[3] To conclude the lesson, the teacher shows the website *Queering the Map* (https://www.queeringthemap.com/) to the students. Locations on the map are commented on by people from the LGBTQ+ community who share their experiences and associations with the chosen place. This collaborative cartography marks queer memories, unfolding their realities and their individual agency. The comments are set worldwide, showing queer love in countries where it is forbidden; every place has its own queer history.

5. In the fifth and final lesson, the students follow Govender and Andrews's *Questioning Self*. One essential part of critical literacies is the reflection of personal biases as socially constructed and the possibility to actively challenge the predominant power dynamics that cause systematic discrimination (Govender & Andrews, 2022, p. 89). Instead of implicitly enforcing this reflection like in the past lessons, this sequence aims to explicitly call for social justice and gives options to do so. On the basis that the teacher has built over

[3] For many people, the internet functions as an intangible space where you cannot hold them accountable for their words. By the exclusion of topics that fall under the spectrum of PARSNIP-taboos, (media) literacy loses its authenticity. Haskins and Ludwig demonstrate in their article "Let's Talk about Sexting" how to implement such tabooed topics in the classroom and state that "in the digital age, it is important to encourage young adults to think about their own actions online and make them aware of possible (often life-long) consequences that may follow from them: essential skills in the digital skills landscape" (2023, p. 141). Many teenagers will probably use online dating platforms one day and should learn their benefits and risks rather than be told to demonize them. Not only dating platforms are used to connect with individuals romantically and sexually; *Instagram* and other forms of social media are filled with sexbots and people that show abusive behaviors.

the last sessions, the participants should negotiate their role as allies together. Being an ally also means being open-minded when situations and people occur that are not fulfilling the cis- and heteronormative view or the male gaze. These strategies are the foundation of respectful behavior and should be expanded to a point where the students will actively advocate queer realities and oppose individual and structural violence to enforce social justice.

As previously stated, this section will provide a more comprehensive overview of the second session (see Table 2). The topic of Cape Town is particularly suitable for English lessons as it is referenced in numerous textbooks on South African history and culture. This is likely to facilitate the consolidation of prior knowledge about the country and its history. Particularly the information on apartheid should already be firmly established in the students' minds, given the comprehensive nature of the lesson plan. Covering Cape Town in ELT offers an opportunity to challenge the Eurocentric perspective and reflect on stereotypes associated with African countries and their individual approaches to queerness.

Table 2: Second lesson: Questioning Representation and Reading Practices II (own presentation)

Phase	*Topic*	*Method*	*Materials*
Introduction	Evoke background knowledge: What do you remember regarding Cape Town and apartheid? How does Cape Town celebrate Pride Month?	plenum	textbook
Working (I)	Research different queer-friendly hotspots, events, places, and pictures on the internet.	group	pictures and texts from their research
Collecting	Describe what you have found in your research. Together, we can add the information to the digital mind map.	plenum	digital mind map
Transfer (II)	Read the following article on the South African language Gayle and point out the main aspects.	with a partner	Tanya Olckers's article "Gayle: South Africa's Secret Gay Language" (2023)

Phase	Topic	Method	Materials
Deepening (III)	Discuss how language can be used as a form of oppression or for the sake of reliance and empowerment. Write one tweet to explain your opinion and discuss the power of Gayle in a few sentences.	alone	online tool to collect all of the tweets
Collecting	Read out your tweets.	plenum	online tool

The lesson pursues the following learning objective: The students engage in a discussion on the extent to which language can be employed as a discriminatory and empowering tool. This is exemplified by the case of Cape Town. Students describe how Cape Town, as the 'queer capital of the world', focuses on white, gay, young men who enjoy numerous privileges. The representation of gay men is sometimes stereotypical and sexualized. For them, this form of tourism offers public spaces to meet, for instance, saunas, clubs, and nude beaches. Groups such as black people, trans people, and lesbians, who do not have as many privileges, are excluded. Conversely, they discuss the empowering potential of language for marginalized groups, such as Gayle, in Cape Town.

In the first working phase, the students are divided into small groups and use their technical devices. Their task is to research via search engines to find hotspots for queer people existing in Cape Town. Online maps, pictures, and reviews are helpful tools for finding such places. As already mentioned above, the practice of critical literacies contains that the teacher asks deconstructive questions. Suitable questions could be:

- What spaces are developed to support queer living in Cape Town?
- Where can they meet? For which queer group can Cape Town be a fun, safe travel spot?
- Does it recreate a cliché you have in your mind?
- How is queer sexuality portrayed?
- Which LGBTQ+ groups are not seen?

By dealing with these issues, the students will understand that Cape Town is not an inclusive place for every group within the LGBTQ+ spectrum:

> "De Waterkant has in many instances not considered the inseparability of sexuality, race, gender, and class, and consequently, the particular dominance of gay white males within the Pink Village may raise questions about whether the physical space considers the inclusive rights of all oppressed communities and the extent to which pre-existing privileges (such as the white male privilege) have influenced the area's demographic composition." (Venske, 2015, p. 206)

Cape Town profits immensely from this kind of tourism and financial expenditure of white gay men. Lesbians, trans, or asexual people are not thought of in this kind of hedonistic experience. Simultaneously, the capital supports the cliché of the partying, young gay community. When the participants in the classroom take the online pictures into account, the photographed people are either shirtless and 'homomasculine' or dressed in drag. The existing cruising zones and saunas are commercializing and opening a safe space for the sexual activities of white, upper-class, gay visitors from Europe. The male gaze plays an essential role because the queer culture in Cape Town is developed and reinforced by the desire of wealthy men. Together with their knowledge of apartheid, the students can complete the picture of which groups are excluded nowadays from the flourishing pink tourism. By actively searching for queer spaces, they get an insight into a realistic scenario that queer people might face when looking for safer spaces. Finding a destination for vacation is done with caution for members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Reygan states that lesbian invisibility originates in the patriarchal structures of post-apartheid Cape Town. This especially applies to "Black lesbian women in South Africa, whose sexuality is constructed by reactionary voices as outside of 'tradition' and 'Africanness' and therefore subjected to a form of genocide and the attempted eradication of lesbian existence" (Reygan, 2016, p. 95). Proving his thesis, Reygan analyzed queer print media and explains the predominant lesbian invisibility in Cape Town's history: Due to apartheid, lesbian sex was considered to be impossible. Lesbians, black queers, and people living in poverty are excluded from the consumerist 'gay culture' that develops into a privatized and monetarized neighborhood in South Africa. These groups within the queer community were silenced but actively work against their marginalization (Reygan, 2016, pp. 91–96).

Yet, teaching queer critical literacies goes beyond the confrontation of oppressive systems. The students are asked to think a step further and "[explore] resistance, reconstructions of identity, and subversion" (Govender & Andrews, 2022, p. 84). One form of resistance is Gayle, a language that emerged from the queer, non-white working class. Even if some words in Gayle were

adopted by the white, gay, male patriarchy, it originally secured safe discussions for people with fewer privileges. Gayle is a form of opposition against heteronormativity and a protective shield that enabled queer people to talk freely without fearing persecution. This language influenced subcultural identities and empowered communities. Queer critical literacies attempt to deconstruct language and its social effects since "it is linked to discomfort around sex and sexuality" (Govender & Andrews, 2022, p. 88) and allows questioning the power and influence of its use. Gayle disrupts the patriarchal hegemony and stands for diversity. The second working phase of the lesson involves a reading task: For the application to the classroom, I propose the reading of Tanya Olckers's article "Gayle: South Africa's Secret Gay Language" (2023) from the online platform mambaonline.com, as it not only informs shortly but also gives some examples. This text gives an insight into the exceptional language and can open the final discussion on how linguistics and queer resistance are intertwined.

5 Role of the teacher and possible limitations

Before discussing possible limitations of teaching queer critical literacies, the following paragraph outlines exemplary issues that teachers need to calculate when targeting queerness: recognizing color, sensitivity to discriminating language, as well as self-awareness and managing their own queerness. In promoting gender reflection in foreign language teaching, a basic knowledge of gender theory is necessary. Being a teacher is accompanied by different privileges and disadvantages due to the predominant power structures. Their self-awareness and the people's external perception will shape the lessons fundamentally (König, 2018, pp. 226–228). Gay (2023) addresses the requirement of keeping the students' identities in mind and writes that

> "it is ironic that many teachers attempt to ignore their students' race or ethnicity or gender by being colorblind and culturally mute, while claiming to be committed to maximizing these students' individual and human potential" (p. viii).

This resilience against tackling racism also dismisses the hegemonic, patriarchal system that underlies our society. Individualizing discrimination cannot lead to social justice or activism in the next step, because then, everyone would be responsible for themselves.

On the basis of self-reflecting processes, queer teachers need to handle the dilemma of outing themselves in front of students. By coming out, they normalize queerness within the students' everyday world, within the mainstream.

On the other hand, the learners might think that their queer teachers can represent a whole community and function as their personal 'queer dictionary'. Here, the teachers should clarify that they can only speak from their own experiences and academic expertise. This does not mean those openly queer instructors should center their lessons around their anecdotes but this practice can establish a safer space for possible queer students. It is not to say that non-queer teachers should not also teach this sequence. It is important that all ELT educators deal with it professionally and reflect on their internalized biases, but queer teachers might struggle with differentiating between personal and professional knowledge. It might seem inauthentic for teachers to deal with challenging cis- and heteronormativity while hiding their own queerness. Nevertheless, it can be crucial: Before outing themselves, they should feel secure. Having LGBTQ+ people in the immediate environment has been proven to be the best way to break down stereotypes (König, 2018, p. 233).

This teaching unit is only one idea of how queer critical literacies can be approached in the German ELT classroom; however, there are certain limitations that need to be explored with regard to our situated context: Daily news show what can happen if teachers deal with tabooed topics in the classroom. In Florida, USA, a school principal has reportedly been expelled for showing Michelangelo's naked statue of David in Art class because parents complained about its 'pornographic' character (Zips, 2023). Nudity is falsely equated with pornography. This exclusion of both leads to the shameful handling of the body and its changes. There are numerous examples of teachers being fired due to queerness around the world. Incidents of such nature are not isolated cases.

North Rhine-Westphalia's school laws regarding sex education determine that interdisciplinary school-based sex education complements the one provided by parents. It aims to gain responsibility towards themselves and others. Sex education should support young people in developing their own values in questions of sexuality and enable them to deal with their own in a self-confident manner. It serves to promote acceptance among all people regardless of their sexual orientation, identity, relationships, and lifestyles associated with them. Furthermore, parents should be informed about the implementation of this form of education (SchulG NRW, 2022/2005, § 33).

This opens room for interpretation as to whether the planned lesson counts as sex education or teaching general knowledge. For this reason, teachers should check their scope of action with the school administration and, in a second step, perhaps with the parents.

Ludwig and Summer suggest that the teachers should reflect on their reasons for educating the tabooed topics and that they might discuss them with the students' parents beforehand as the teachers must negotiate and justify these methods with legal guardians. Parents might be afraid of the school tempting or misleading their children in a way that is not compatible with their education at home (Ludwig & Summer, 2023, pp. 15–16). The students' legal guardians can intervene and sometimes will do so.[4] Their possible involvement should not be interpreted as predominantly negative because they can bring relevant references to the teenagers' life-worlds when teachers decide not to shy away from the verbal exchange.[5]

6 Conclusion

Even if students are confronted with the topic of gender and sexuality in their everyday life, the incorporation of realities beyond cis- and heteronormativity is still stigmatized and tabooed in the classroom (Merse, 2020, pp. 107–108). The proponents of this policy seem to fear that teenagers, nowadays, will challenge the cis- and heteronormative traditions that predefine ethics and behavior without assessing the potential of these norms to harm and limit the LGBTQ+ community.

To counteract this silencing of queer realities in school, this paper has discussed the necessity of centering queer voices and challenging the cis- and heteronormative ideology, even if the education of gender and sexuality on a 'non-biological' level is tabooed in school. I have suggested considering Govender and Andrews's (2022) concept for teaching queer critical literacies because it provides guidelines for profound practice. Confronting the students

[4] As Wallace has shown in her bachelor's thesis, parents can sometimes be hesitant when teachers introduce critical topics. The study suggests that the parents can feel threatened and uncomfortable (Wallace, 2023).

[5] Speaking from my personal experiences, planning lessons to specifically teach intersectionality has been difficult. Its complexity and missing uniformity of definitions make the approach challenging to modify. Students should not be confronted with the extensive prevailing contradictions. This gives teachers the purpose to make it tangible, comprehensible, and close to their realities. The knowledge is explained to be adapted outside and inside the classroom as their democratic education goes beyond school walls. Educators should pursue the claim to present relations to democratic education in every unit because it is enshrined in German laws. This request can put pressure on teachers, but teaching with an intersectional lens is worth the effort.

with various cultural and social identities in ELT can only be feasible with an intersectional approach. It prevents a generalization of marginalized groups and reflects on agency and resistance. The teachers need to go through an ongoing process of self-reflection regarding their own biases and their attitude toward discussing issues of race, gender, sexuality, and class in school. Yet, teaching critical literacies must be student-centered and, therefore, needs to be flexible.

Moreover, my sample unit needs to be put into practice to test its implementability and utility. The preparation of the lesson cannot end with one unit. Queer critical literacies and intersectionality should be part of every lesson, sometimes more implicitly than explicitly discussed. Both approaches predetermine perspectives and possibilities that can be conveyed beyond the classroom. Additionally, one fundamental purpose is the dedication to social justice and, therefore, to promote respectful social interaction and democratic education to support students in becoming responsible citizens.

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Anhang

PFLB
PraxisForschungLehrer*innenBildung
Zeitschrift für Schul- und Professionsentwicklung

Racial Criticism as Part of Language Teacher Identity?

Pre-Service ELT Teachers' Positionings Towards Problematic Teaching Material

Online-Supplement: Code System

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M. Ed. thesis – Code system

MC (Main Codes)	SC (Sub-Codes)	Definition/coding rule	Anchor example	Quantity (n = 249)
Personal information	Studies	Information on the participants' studies and their progress (including their teaching subjects, the school type, and the semester).	*Für mich ist es Englisch und Sport auf GymGe. Genau auf Sek 2.*	9
	Teaching experience	Information on the participants' teaching experience (including internships and side jobs).	*Ähm ich habe eine „Aufholen nach Corona" Stelle mal gemacht, so projektmäßig samstags alle zwei Wochen für sechs Stunden (.) über ich glaube ein halbes Jahr war das angesetzt circa. Ja und sonst halt (.) Praktika. Und so Nachhilfesachen und sowas, aber mehr nicht.*	9
	Stay(s) abroad	Information on the participants' stays abroad.	*Ja ich war tatsächlich in Sambia ein Jahr lang. Allerdings ähm auch in einem Schulprojekt aber ich war da meist noch nicht/ wusste ich noch nicht, dass ich Lehrer werde und ich habe da mehr so*	15

			Hausmeister-Tätigkeiten gemacht (lachen) und so eine Pfadfinder-Gruppe geleitet.	
Definitions	Teacher Identity	The participants' understanding of the term 'teacher identity'.	*Also ja, die Rolle, die man als Teacher als als Lehrkraft einnimmt, ja.*	2
	Language Teacher Identity	The participants' understanding of the term 'Language Teacher Identity'.	*Ich hatte mich auch gefragt/ also zwischen dieser Rolle als Lehrer, Lehrerin und dann eben so Englisch als Unterrichtsfach/ also inwiefern man das sieht also dann eben so diese sprachliche Ebene oder dann das Gesellschaftliche. Also wie man sich selbst oder was man sozusagen WICHTIG/ als wichtig ansieht, wenn man Englisch unterrichtet.*	4
	Stereotypes	The participants' understanding of the term 'stereotype(s)'.	*Ich würde sagen, (.) dass Leute halt (...) ich sag mal in SCHUBLADEN gesteckt werden beziehungsweise man man/ Stereotype sind ja irgendwie so, man schreibt Leuten etwas zu aufgrund von EINER Eigenschaft.*	7

	Racism	The participants' understanding of the term 'racism'.	*Ich würde sagen, Rassismus ist halt (4) per se Diskriminierung aufgrund von Herkunft und (..) Aussehen und diesem Konstrukt R/ Rasse.*	6
Positions towards the material (positive aspects)	Various, short text formats presenting different perspectives	The material is evaluated positively because it contains various, short text formats which present different perspectives of people involved.	*Aber an sich finde ich es ja irgendwie clever auch gewählt. Nicht nur mit den unterschiedlichen Formaten, sondern dass alle halt daran auch irgendwo beteiligt sind. Also an einer (.) an einer spezifischen Sache. Ich finde, das macht es halt sehr LEICHT für die Schüler so in die verschiedenen Perspektiven reinzuschlüpfen.*	5
	Authentic and realistic	The material is evaluated positively as an authentic and realistic scenario is portrayed.	*Also für mich sind/ scheinen die schon relativ relativ authentisch zu sein so also so, dass es so halt passieren könnte. Ja (...) auf jeden Fall spannend. Das ist auf jeden Fall was Gutes denke ich, ja.*	3
	Addressing sensitive topics	The material is evaluated positively because it addresses sensitive topics such as	*andererseits ähm finde ich es auch gut halt damit umzugehen und darüber ins Gespräch zu kommen, anstatt es halt/*	3

		accidents, death, and social differences.	*irgendwie nicht über (..) ähm Unfälle, Tod und alles Mögliche zu reden.*	
	Linguistic adequacy	The texts are evaluated positively as the language is chosen according to the students' (expected) level of knowledge.	*SPRACHLICH ist es angenehm, wahrscheinlich auf dem passenden Niveau.*	2
Positions towards the material (negative aspects)	Trigger	The material is evaluated negatively as the scenario portrayed may evoke traumatic experiences in students who have experienced similar situations.	*Also erstmal finde ich es/ ähm also es ist eine krasse Situation irgendwie, die da beschrieben wird (..) ähm könnte für einige irgendwie (.) ziemlich triggernd sein, wenn man das halt schon mal erlebt hat oder sowas (..).*	2
	Unauthentic and constructed	The material is evaluated negatively because it appears unauthentic and constructed.	*Also es wirkt wirklich SEHR konstruiert, also jetzt zum Beispiel wieder zu diesem Interview.*	9
	Categorisation, stereotypical depiction, and stigmatisation	The material is evaluated negatively because it shows categorisation processes, stereotypical depictions, and thus operates as stigmatising.	*Also ich muss sagen, so auf den ersten Blick hatte ich kurz ein bisschen Schiss, dass das etwas stigmatisierend sein könnte. Also wenn das so ein bisschen so ist ähm ja keine Ahnung. Der Junge, der*	17

			von mir aus SCHWARZ ist, wird dann befragt und oder hat irgendwie keine guten Aussichten auf die Zukunft und (..) also ich glaube, ihr wisst was ich meine, //ne? Da hatte ich kurz// kurz ein bisschen Sorge.	
	Racist patterns	The material is evaluated negatively because it not only categorises and stigmatises (see above), but because it explicitly reproduces racist patterns.	*Ähm ich würde sagen (..) da werden (.) so race Narrative reproduziert im Sinne von ähm 'Schwarze Bürger*innen gehören/ oder sind Teil der der ähm sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Unterschicht', während es bei weißen Bürger*innen NICHT so ist. Ähm (..) da wird im Grunde genommen das gesamte (...) Konzept von (..) Rasse, Ethnizität auf (.) sozialen Status gelegt, mit sozusagen gleichge/ gleichgestellt kann man das sa/ also kann man fast sagen. Zumindest von der Darstellung HIER.*	9
	Missing background information	The material is evaluated negatively because	*Ja und auch nicht daran, dass es irgendwie also, dass es*	9

		background information about South Africa's history is missing.	*NATURGEGEBEN ist. Weil also ich ich glaube, dass diese Tabelle normalisiert das Ganze halt auch. Die zeigt nicht die //Hintergründe// davon.*	
	Missing reflection and food for thought	The material is evaluated negatively because it does not invite the students to (critically) reflect on processes of categorisation, stereotypical depictions, and stigmatisation as well as the reproduction of racist patterns (see above). Further, (stereotypical) categories are not deconstructed and critical food for thought is not given.	*Und das ist halt problematisch, weil (..) es was reproduziert, ohne die Wurzel davon anzugreifen, ohne zu hinterfragen, WIESO ist Sowas so.*	11
	Misinformation	The material is evaluated negatively as it contains misinformation.	*Und ich würde auch sogar bezweifeln, ob es faktisch korrekt ist, weil "gated community for whites only", gibt es sowas noch? Das ist doch total illegal mittlerweile.*	2

	Success story of social climbing	The material is evaluated negatively because it replicates success stories of social climbing.	*Ja, also ich finde es in dem Sinne problematisch/ also im Vergleich zu dem an/ zu dem Anderen. Also weil es dann eben wirkt wie diese Erfolgsgeschichte. Also dieses 'Da ist jemand, der hat/ sie hat Ideale und Werte' und der Andere eben vielleicht nicht.*	10
Stigmatisation vs. reality	-	Even though the participants problematise the material for several reasons, racial discrimination is actually still an issue in many societies (including South Africa), which creates a dilemma.	*Da hatte ich kurz// kurz ein bisschen Sorge. Andererseits denke ich das ja sowas wie Benachteiligung von (..) ja von bestimmten Gruppen in der Gesellschaft das ist ja immer noch gang und gäbe.*	10
Positions towards the importance of critical reflection	In-service teachers	The participants assess the importance to in-service teachers to critically evaluate the teaching materials they are using.	*Aber als ich so in Schule/ wo ich in Schule gearbeitet habe, habe ich dieses kritische Hinterfragen extrem wenig gesehen und fand das auch schon (.) schade irgendwie.*	11
	Reasons for (missing) reflection	The participants negotiate reasons why in-service	*weil der Workload halt eh schon viel zu hoch ist. Also dass halt irgendwie auch gar*	16

		teachers may or may not critically reflect on the teaching materials they are using.	*kein Raum für die so da ist, um um da wirklich mal (..) ähm konkret dann zu reflektieren.*	
	Felicity conditions	The participants postulate felicity conditions for teachers to critically assess the teaching materials they are using.	*Also ich glaube, dass es halt wirklich nur noch Lehrkräfte machen, //die// also man sagt ja immer so den Beruf auch als Berufung **sehen. Also** ich glaube ohne zusätzliches Engagement, dem Wille dazu (..) ne, die Schüler entsprechend vorzubereiten, funktioniert das nicht.*	5
	Self-assessment	The participants comment on the importance of critical engagement with teaching materials to themselves.	*Ja (..) aber generell ist es mir e/ total wichtig und ich würde es am LIEBSTEN selber zusammenstellen, anstatt ähm anstatt das aus aus Büchern zu nehmen, wo ich jetzt nicht ähm (..) nicht viel Kontrolle darüber habe, was da irgendwie reingeschrieben wurde (..) beziehungsweise gar keine Kontrolle habe (lachen).*	5

	Worries regarding critical assessment as a fully qualified teacher	The participants utter worries and obstacles they might meet with when critically assessing the teaching materials as a fully qualified teacher.	*Also ich hätte auch Angst, ne? Kommt natürlich voll auf die Schule, auf die Lehrkräfte drauf an, aber wenn ich dann da als junger Hüpfer gerade aus der Uni komme und dann sind da irgendwie fünf Lehrkräfte, die das schon (..) jahrelang machen, ich weiß nicht, ob ich immer den MUT hätte, mich da so durchzusetzen. Oder ob ich nicht dann (...) ja oder ob ich nicht dann manchmal auch ein bisschen Angst hätte so dann irgendwann die Blöde zu sein, die immer gegensteuert.*	5
Approaches to teaching the material	Suggested changes in teaching the material	The participants mention approaches to teach and modify the material under scrutiny.	*Vielleicht könnte man die Tabelle auch einfach ähm noch dadrum ergänzen, dass man halt bei den entsprechenden Spalten dann schreibt 'Why Fragezeichen'.*	29
	Insecurities with regard to teaching and adapting the material	The participants express insecurities with regard to teaching and adapting the material.	*Und ich denke mir dann auch so, wenn ich das mehr thematisiere, könnte sich ja so eine PoC ja in meinem Klassenraum auch denken 'Ach geil, nochmal eine weiße*	8

			Person, die mir jetzt erklärt, was Rassismus ist' so (lachen).	
Addressing stereotypes / racism in teacher education	-	The participants discuss the thematisation of stereotypes and/or racism within the scope of the first phase of teacher education.	*Ich meine/ ich würde sagen in der Anglistik haben wir insgesamt ein sehr gutes (.) weiß ich nicht (..) hier an der Uni A auf jeden Fall (.) sehr gute Kurse und sehr viele Kurse, die das irgendwie sehr kritisch sehen. Wo man das lernen könnte, wenn man wollte.*	16
The role of textbooks	-	The participants address the role of the textbook and how they (are trained to) use it.	*Aber ich ich finde, dass/ also ich habe das schon oft in Seminaren auch von Dozenten gehört, dass man ja das Lehrbuchmateri/ //also die// Unterrichtsbücher ja nicht BENUTZEN KÖNNTE und man müsste das immer alles selber machen und so.*	10