

**Other Others, Different Differences:
Queer Perspectives on Teaching
English as a Foreign Language**

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	8
PART A: Perspectives on Otherness and Difference in Teaching English as a Foreign Language	18
1 Terminological and Conceptual Foundations: Otherness and Difference	20
1.1 <i>Engaging with Otherness and Difference: A Constitutive Element of TEFL</i>	21
1.2 <i>Theorisations of Difference and Otherness.....</i>	27
1.2.1 Difference and Binary Oppositions: Structuralist Accounts	30
1.2.2 The Discursive Construction of Difference	37
1.2.3 Poststructuralism and Difference: Derrida, Deconstruction and <i>Différance</i>	45
1.2.4 Othering and the Other: Feminist, Postcolonial and Philosophical Positions	53
1.3 <i>Otherness and Difference in Education: Pedagogic Perspectives on Diversity</i>	69
1.3.1 Diversity in Education: Affirmative and Critical Pedagogic Perspectives	70
1.3.2 Kumashiro's Anti-oppressive Education	75
1.4 <i>Difference and Otherness in TEFL Research and Practice: Towards a Heuristic</i>	83
2 Cultural Learning in TEFL: Moving Towards Greater Complexity	88
2.1 <i>What's the Difference in Cultural Learning? – From Area Studies to ICC and Fremdverstehen</i>	92
2.2 <i>New Orientations in Cultural Learning: Moving Beyond Binaries and National-Ethnic Lines of Demarcation</i>	105
2.3 <i>'Other Others, Different Differences': Didactic Implications and Principles</i>	114
3 The EFL Literature Classroom: Exploring Otherness and Difference in Texts	118
3.1 <i>The Potential of Literature in TEFL: Exploring New Horizons of Otherness and Difference</i>	119
3.2 <i>Text Selection: Changing Canons, Changing Differences?.....</i>	124
3.3 <i>Aspects of Teaching Literature: Approaching Difference</i>	128
4 And What about Gender? New Impulses for Diversity and Difference	131
4.1 <i>Gender – A 'New' Category Gaining Ground in TEFL</i>	132
4.2 <i>Directions and Aspects of Gender Research in TEFL</i>	138
4.3 <i>Teaching Gender in TEFL: Conceptual Considerations.....</i>	148
4.4 <i>Gender in TEFL: 'Other Others, Different Differences'</i>	158
Outcome of Part A – Groundwork for Diversity in TEFL.....	162

PART B: Diversifying English Language Teaching: The Potential of Queer Perspectives on TEFL 164

5 Sexual and Gender Diversity: Legitimising a New Dimension of Otherness and Difference in TEFL . 166

<i>5.1 The Curricular Dimension: Sexual and Gender Diversity in German TEFL Curricula and Educational Guidelines</i>	<i>167</i>
5.1.1 The Case of Baden-Württemberg: Public Struggles over Sexual Diversity in the New Educational Guidelines	168
5.1.2 The Educational System in Germany: Overview	170
5.1.3 The German Educational Standards for Foreign Language Education	173
5.1.4 Legitimising Sexual and Gender Diversity in TEFL – An Analysis of German TEFL Curricula and Educational Guidelines	178
<i>5.2 The Pedagogic Dimension: Research at the Intersection of Education and Sexual and Gender Diversity</i>	<i>185</i>
<i>5.3 International Research Discourses on the Queer Dimension of ELT</i>	<i>187</i>

6 The Potential of Queer Theory: Mapping a Queer Focus onto TEFL..... 197

<i>6.1 The Semantics of Queer</i>	<i>197</i>
<i>6.2 Queer Fields of Contestation: Politics, Theory, Pedagogy</i>	<i>200</i>
6.2.1 Queer Politics	200
6.2.2 Queer Theory	202
6.2.3 Queer Pedagogy	208
<i>6.3 Systematising Queer for the EFL Classroom</i>	<i>209</i>

Part C: Queering TEFL – Practical Implications 215

7 Accessing LGBT-Themed And Queer Young Adult Literature for the EFL Classroom 216

<i>7.1 LGBT-themed and Queer Young Adult Fiction: Circling in Key Concerns</i>	<i>216</i>
<i>7.2 Choosing LGBTQ-themed Young Adult Literature for the EFL Classroom: Critical Reflections</i>	<i>225</i>
<i>7.3 David Levithan’s Boy Meets Boy: Queer Potential and Teaching Implications.....</i>	<i>227</i>

8 Queering Teaching Materials: Beyond Heteronormativity and LGBTQ Invisibility in the Coursebook 232

<i>8.1 Materials Research in ELT: Terminology, Directions and Dimensions</i>	<i>234</i>
<i>8.2 Insights into Critical Materials Research: LGBT (In)Visibility and Heteronormativity in ELT and TEFL Coursebooks</i>	<i>248</i>
<i>8.3 Challenging LGBT Invisibility and Heteronormativity: Perspectives on Coursebook Content, Production and Consumption</i>	<i>252</i>

Conclusion 260

Bibliography273

German TEFL Curricula and Educational Documents273

Coursebooks and ELT Materials.....281

Primary Sources282

Secondary Sources.....283

Introduction

I've always known I was gay, but it wasn't confirmed until I was in kindergarten.
(Levithan 2003: 8)

With this proclamation of his sexual identity, the out and proud, openly gay high school sophomore Paul, protagonist of David Levithan's acclaimed novel *Boy Meets Boy*, takes the reader back to his early childhood memories. It was before the regular kindergarten naptime when five-year-old Paul sneaks up to the desk of his teacher, where he finds a groundbreaking note scribbled on his report card: "PAUL IS DEFINITELY GAY AND HAS A VERY GOOD SENSE OF SELF" (Levithan 2003: 8). Puzzled and confused by the word 'gay', whose meaning is yet opaque to Paul, he browses through all the other report cards of his fellow kindergarteners, only to find out that "not one of the other boys had been labeled DEFINITELY GAY" (ibid.). Of course, he is caught red-handed by his teacher, visibly alarmed that a child has read the report cards, but Paul at once demands clarification: "What's gay?" (ibid.). The teacher's answer is as straightforward as it is simple. "It's when a boy likes other boys", she explains (ibid.). For Paul, the teacher's explanation causes a moment of epiphany, causing him to renegotiate the assumptions and views he has so far held about himself and the world around him:

I have to admit: I might not have realized I was different if Mrs. Benchly hadn't pointed it out. I mean, I was five years old. I just assumed boys were attracted to other boys. Why else would they spend all of their time together, playing on teams and making fun of the girls? I assumed it was because we all liked each other. I was still unclear how girls fit into the picture, but I thought I knew the boy thing A-OK. (Levithan 2003: 8)

Up to this formative moment in kindergarten, Paul has always taken the homosocial arrangements between boys for granted. For him, boys liking boys constituted a natural and unquestioned invisible norm permeating his life, but it was not before his teacher explains to him 'the other norm' – "the whole boys-liking-girls thing" (ibid.: 9) – that Paul develops an awareness of what he has never understood before: Marriages are mostly between men and women! It dawns upon Paul that "this man-woman arrangement" (ibid.) is not just "another adult quirk, like flossing" (ibid.), but indeed "[s]ome sort of silly global conspiracy" (ibid.). Immediately, Paul calls into question if the way he has always felt is still right, being overburdened by the new insight he has just become consciously aware of. His teacher assures him that the way Paul feels is absolutely right and he must always remember that.

When Paul returns home from kindergarten the same day, he is excited to break the news to his parents. He waits until his favourite Nickelodeon block is over and then seeks out his parents, waiting for a suitable moment. His father is busy in the kitchen, so he decides to walk over to his mother, who is reading a book on the couch. Paul subsequently has his coming out, but for him, it is not a confession of a problematic or unspeakable homosexual identity – it is a groundbreaking truth that needs to be told:

"GUESS WHAT!" I said. She jumped, then tried to pretend she hadn't been surprised. Since she didn't close her book – she only marked the page with her finger – I knew I didn't have much time.

“What?” she asked.

“I’m gay!” (Levithan 2003: 9)

Ironically, his mother’s reaction is not necessarily what the reader might expect. Instead of being shocked, surprised or sympathetic, she does not seem to bat an eyelid. Paul remembers:

Parents never react the way you want them to. I thought, at the very least, my mother would take her finger out of the book. But no. Instead she turned in the direction of the kitchen and yelled to my father.

“Honey . . . Paul’s learned a new word!” (Levithan 2003: 9-10)

Paul’s learning of a new word is indicative of the complex role language plays in the constitution of identity. Before the noteworthy day in kindergarten that brought the word gay into Paul’s vocabulary, he nonetheless had a good sense of self and his own unique view on the world. One could argue that it did not need the label ‘gay’ for Paul to figure out ‘the boy thing’, and it seems that Paul’s assumption that boys feel attracted to boys has so far formed a natural knowledge Paul simply lived by without making much fuzz about it. Then again, ‘gay’ is a readily available identity category to Paul’s teacher. In reading Paul as gay, she assigns him a gay identity in the kindergarten report card. In a way, she uses language to ‘make’ or ‘declare’ Paul gay and thus crafts an identity for him. Paul takes up the new word he finds on his report card. When he eventually grasps its meaning, it provides him with a new rubric into which he can now articulate his experiences, feelings, and observations. The advent of this new word confirms Paul’s identity and structures his position in, and relationship with, the world around him. At the same time, however, the newly learned word also ruptures Paul’s worldview. Even though he develops a more conscious sense of his self, he also begins to realise that he is now different from most of the people he knows. The label gay equips Paul with a linguistic means to divide the world up into ‘the boy-girl-thing’ and ‘the boy-boy-thing’. Oddly, only in learning the word gay does Paul notice at all that he is different, and the norm he has so far created for himself begins to shift by grasping what the ‘normal norm’ actually is. From this point of view, language has the power to mark out difference, and indeed, language serves to open up a world of difference to Paul that he has so far been unable to perceive.

To extrapolate from this literary example with the out-and-proud gay teenager Paul to the context that this dissertation seeks to explore – that is the institutionalised provision of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) within the German school context –, the question emerges: Is there a space for Paul’s voice, for his memories, for his gay identity in the EFL classroom? Would the world of difference that opens up to Paul make a difference to the EFL classroom in which foreign language learners gradually explore a culture and a language that is different from their own? Is there maybe an inherent potential for learners in reading a novel such as *Boy Meets Boy* in the EFL classroom – a novel in which a protagonist who is ‘Other’ than the heterosexual norm moves centre stage to negotiate the ups and downs, the intricacies and complexities not only of his highschool life, but also of his love life? Would the EFL classroom maybe even lack something if voices such as Paul’s were omitted? If voices such as Paul’s would find entry into the EFL classroom, this would necessitate to legitimise the advent of new content, that is, the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) identities and issues into the scope of TEFL. In the past years, focal points such as competence-

orientation, standardisation and testability have gained increasing momentum in TEFL discourse, leading to a ‘content gap’ that diminishes the status of relevant and meaningful topics for EFL teaching and learning. Yet it needs to be seen, as Hu et al. (2008: 170-179) argue, that this content gap cannot be filled with any arbitrary content – just because it might serve the development of competences – but that the suggestion of new content needs to be carefully legitimised and linked to the range of topics and concepts that are considered to be educationally relevant for the EFL classroom.

Against the backdrop of legitimising a focus on sexual and gender diversity within TEFL, it appears that the current rhetoric that is, for example, to be found in conceptualisations of cultural learning can be used productively to project a queer horizon of sexual and gender diversity onto TEFL. To illustrate this argumentative link, I quote Freitag-Hild:

Die Pluralität, Heterogenität und Hybridität von kulturellen Lebensformen und Identitätsentwürfen in heutigen Gesellschaften erfordern es, bei den Lernenden ein zeitgemäßes Verständnis der englischsprachigen Kulturen zu entwickeln, das der Vielstimmigkeit und der Komplexität von Kultur(en) und Identität(en) Rechnung trägt. Diese Zielsetzung beinhaltet, die Vielfalt kultureller Lebensformen und individueller bzw. kultureller Identitätsentwürfe im Fremdsprachenunterricht zugänglich zu machen und eine nachhaltige Auseinandersetzung mit unterschiedlichen Perspektiven anzuregen.¹ (Freitag-Hild 2010b: 3)

Even though Freitag-Hild uses this position to legitimise the use of British fictions of migration in the classroom, it is soaked with a highly generalisable endorsement of cultural diversity that cannot only be transferred to ethnic diversity (as is the case in British fictions of migration), but also to sexual and gender diversity. If the call is to acknowledge the plurality of identities and cultural expressions, and if the call is also to draw an accurate portrayal of today’s diversified Anglophone societies in the EFL classroom, then the logic of Freitag-Hild’s rhetoric also stretches out to include voices such as Paul’s. Hence, a focus on sexual and gender diversity might have a legitimate place in the EFL classroom so that learners can explore this particular facet of cultural diversity in depth and from multiple perspectives. As a figure of thought that will run centrally through this dissertation, I suggest thinking about this increasing cultural diversity that is to be mirrored in the EFL classroom as ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’, i.e. those ‘new’ axes of difference and Otherness that have so far received little or no attention in TEFL research and practice in contrast to more established axes.

In the following section, I will explain why I have chosen the concepts of difference and Otherness as viable lenses through which to view and investigate the field of TEFL. The experience of cultural difference, Otten (2009: 47) argues, is a fundamental premise of pluralistic societies and therefore a social reality that is difficult to be ignored or argued away. The fabric of cultural differences that becomes tangible on the macro-level of society is, ultimately, constituted by individual people and their sets of identities, expressions, values or lifestyle choices. As Delanoy points out, “the right to differ is grounded in the individual, since each person represents a unique mix of cultural elements” (2013: 162), including, but not limited to, how the individual expresses their gender, lives their sexual orientation, feels a sense

¹ English translations of German quotes used throughout this dissertation can be found in the print version of this dissertation that will be published by the LIT Verlag (Münster) in 2017.

of ethnic belonging, is affiliated to a notion of regional or national heritage, or is positioned within economic opportunities. When Delanoy speaks of the individual representing a mix of various cultural elements, this is reminiscent of Geertz' point of view that individuals are "suspended in webs of significance" (1973: 5) they themselves have spun, invested with meaning, and which coagulate into what Geertz takes to be 'culture'. Yet, the neutral acknowledgement that societies are pluralistic, or the positive affirmation that a society's individuals differ from each other, must not obscure the oftentimes controversial discourses that unfold around cultural differences. The moral panic that erupts over educational plans to include sexual and gender diversity into school curricula, the responses to the recent influx of migrants into European nation states, or the attempts to ban face-veiling burqas or hijabs worn by some Muslim women in public are but three examples of how cultural differences are constantly renegotiated, contested, or vilified.

Looking at the discourses that surround cultural differences from a theoretical vantage point invites a range of questions that hint at the contested nature of difference and Otherness:

The key issue [...] is not about 'difference' per se, but about the question of who defines difference, how different categories of previously conceived universal categories (e.g., women) are represented within the discourses of 'difference' [...]. How does difference designate the 'other'? Who defines difference? What are the presumed norms from which a group is marked as being different? What is the nature of attributions that are claimed as characterizing a group as different? How are boundaries of difference constituted, maintained, or dissipated? [...] How are various groups represented in different discourses of difference? (Ramji 2007: n.p.)

The questions raised by Ramji sensitise to the critical issues that are at stake when embracing difference and Otherness as theoretical concepts. Ramji shows that difference primarily comes to matter when it enters the social sphere and becomes enmeshed in a set of human interactions and power relations that construct difference as difference by setting up clear lines of demarcation, by defining difference against given norms, and by linguistically or symbolically representing difference as different in discourse. What emerges as a result is a web of distinct social categories such as gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or age. Each of these categories, in turn, is permeated by finer distinctions such as female and male, heterosexual and homosexual, cis-gender or trans-gender, with some of these identities or 'labels' becoming the Other in contrast to their respective norm. What also becomes apparent in Ramji's questions is that difference must constantly be produced and reproduced in discourse, indicating that a lot of cultural effort must necessarily be invested to keep up the fine distinctions of difference markers. At the same time, however, the clear-cut lines of demarcation are not embossed in stone. As social and discursive constructs, they are principally unstable and can be dissipated, which hints at the potential to change and unsettle any fine-tuned system of differences. What is also striking in Ramji's position is that the whole sociocultural project of setting up differences is prone to universalising and simplifying difference, thus containing a myriad of differences within seemingly universal categories of difference, or producing stereotypical assumptions about the Other. Here, the critical challenge is to interrogate and rework pervasive stereotypes while opening up neatly contained categories of difference in order to unlock the diversity that is actually hiding underneath.

The questions posed by Ramji recommend themselves for a thorough reflection on the relationship between difference or Otherness and the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) – a relationship whose critical exploration lies at the heart of this dissertation. In a field that is attuned to conceptualising pedagogies for teaching and learning a foreign language and mediating encounters with foreign cultures, questions revolving around cultural difference and Otherness are an essential component of its epistemological framework: How can learners be made aware of the meaning-making practices, e.g. linguistic, visual, or multimodal, that are used to mark cultural differences in discourse (cf. The New London Group 1996)? What cultural differences play a crucial role in the EFL classroom, and what cultural differences receive attention in research? Are differences thematised that go beyond the binary of Self and Other which, according to some critics (e.g. Alter 2015a; Blell/Doff 2014; Lütge 2013a), intercultural learning carefully crafts between Anglophone target cultures on the one hand and a learner's home culture on the other hand? In how far can a sensitivity towards cultural differences generally support the interrogation and deconstruction of binary oppositions, including the 'popular' binary of the culture of the Self and the culture of the Other that seems so deeply enshrined in TEFL? What does the relationship between TEFL and marginalised cultural differences look like, i.e. is there an epistemic space for moving 'other Others' into view that are yet invisible in classroom practice and theoretical research? And how can learners be encouraged to engage with cultural difference and Otherness, possibly even so that they gradually relativise or decentre from their own cultural imprints, values or worldviews (cf. Hu/Byram 2009b: vii)? I am not suggesting that these questions have never been raised and discussed within TEFL before, and nor is this the point at which to provide a satisfactory answer to all of them at once. Rather, I intend these questions to be understood as the backdrop against which this dissertation as a whole will develop.

What must be emphasised is that the terminology that comes with the concept of difference – including, but not limited to, terms such as norms, hierarchy, power, line of demarcation, binary opposition, the Other, representation, or stereotype – has long been discussed and reflected in TEFL, especially in those sub-fields that relate to culture, literature and gender. Here, aspects of cultural difference, a reflection of norms, or a critical engagement with binary oppositions of Self and Other have found concrete ramifications in conceptualisations of cultural learning, literary learning and gender-sensitive approaches in the EFL classroom. From this vantage point, embracing the theoretical concept of difference in the context of TEFL might not seem surprising, but as I will argue, a close investigation of how difference and Otherness are dealt with in TEFL reveals how vibrantly and critically these concepts are currently being renegotiated. In particular, I am interested in revisiting culture-, literature- and gender-oriented TEFL discourses to investigate in how far they are moving towards endorsing a wider range of 'other Others' and 'different differences', thus providing an epistemic basis for establishing a queer perspective in TEFL. Consequently, choosing the theoretical concepts of difference and Otherness as the main critical lens in this dissertation offers a promising research angle from which to derive valuable impetuses for the field of TEFL. On the other hand, one must not forget that the concept of difference and its aligned

terminology also hint at the contested and controversial force field that I enter when anchoring such concepts and terminology centrally in my research. I am aware that, at least initially, providing notions of difference and Otherness a space in research might cause competing reactions. While some might perceive the location of difference and Otherness in TEFL research as a controversial provocation, others might not bat an eyelid, assuming that it is an unnecessary activity to pursue in view of pluralistic societies that have allegedly moved beyond difference. In a first attempt to legitimise and sketch out my usage of the concepts of difference and Otherness and to illustrate the epistemological stakes of these concepts, I will now briefly enter this force field and unfold an introductory line of argumentation along these two ends of what could be imagined as a continuum – that engaging with difference and Otherness might be considered provocative or indeed unnecessary.

For one, engaging with Otherness and difference might be seen as provocation or inducing controversy. Inviting these viewpoints into the theoretical framework of this study could lead to being accused of ‘Othering’, and hence to adhering to or reproducing in TEFL the discursive processes by which existing cultural differences are constructed as Otherness or the Other (cf. Moosmüller 2009: 23; Volkmann 2010: 138f). Also Messerschmidt points to the critical issue that each address of difference might involve the speaker in practices of Othering, whereby the normalcy of existing conditions is reinforced and some people are categorised as the Other (2013: 57). ‘Othering’ could hence entail that, for example, *certain* genders, ethnicities, classes or sexualities might be positioned as Other, while those cultural differences that hold power are constructed as normal or natural, leading to dichotomous or binary oppositions of clearly defined and essentialised cultural differences such as man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, white/black. As such, the order of relationship between the Other and its norm might be maintained, and Bauman pointedly encapsulates this order as follows:

In dichotomies crucial for the practice [...] of social order the differentiating power hides as a rule behind one of the members of the opposition. The second member is but *the other* of the first, the opposite (degraded, suppressed, exiled) side of the first and its creation. Thus abnormality is the other of the norm, deviation the other of law-abiding, illness the other of health, [...] women the other of man, stranger the other of the native, enemy the other of friend, ‘them’ the other of ‘us’ [...]. Both sides depend on each other, but the dependence is not symmetrical. The second side depends on the first for its contrived and enforced isolation. The first depends on the second for its self-assertion. (Bauman 1991: 14)

Uncritically maintaining such an asymmetrical order, constituted by practices of isolating, silencing or de-valuing qua ‘Othering’, or to speak with Foucault, by “procedures of exclusion” (1981 [1970]: 52), is certainly not desirable in TEFL research and practice, nor is the reproduction of cultural differences as essential and absolute to be strived for. From my point of view, however, it would lead to a lopsided practice if any mentioning of difference or Otherness is to be dropped altogether for fear of reproducing Othering just by simply naming the Other. I do argue that such a radical view would rob TEFL research from any discursive ground upon which to base a productive and reflective engagement with Otherness and difference in its own discipline. In suggesting this, I follow Moosmüller (2009: 23) who also rejects such a wholesale abandoning of any naming or discussing of difference per se, and instead favours to take critical perspectives on ‘Othering’ into account to enrich research. Harnessing the critical potential

inherent in cultural differences and Otherness could entail to interrogate the very order that maintains the relationship between a norm and its Other. As Bauman convincingly shows above, the Other always has to be thought of as relational to a norm – without the Other, the norm would become meaningless, and vice versa. In dropping the Other altogether, then, pedagogic opportunities would be lost to critically explore the norm, too. Furthermore, a critical perspective on difference and Otherness in research can provide a heightened awareness of any instances within TEFL research and practice in which ‘Othering’ might occur – maybe tacitly, maybe with no intent to harm – or in which certain cultural differences are silenced or blocked from view (e.g. homosexuality). To conclude with, my employing the critical lens of Otherness and difference does not aim at reinforcing any Othering. Instead, I employ this lens to cautiously and sensitively develop a discursive ground both for TEFL research and practice by integrating critical perspectives on Otherness and difference.

From a second perspective, one could ask if notions of difference still play a role in today’s diverse, multicultural, connected and globalised societies at all. Especially if one looks at cultural difference from a transcultural point of view, one could conclude that a theoretical engagement with difference is unnecessary and has become obsolete because cultural differences are beginning to disappear or have already disappeared in processes of cultural fusion. To illustrate this exemplarily, I quote Volkmann who critically refers to the tendency of transcultural theory to

project a positive horizon of achievement with an ultimate social and cultural equilibrium or fruitful give-and-take of individuals and cultures. Ultimately, transculturality promises a disappearance of exactly those social and cultural components which traditionally defined the sources of resistance when it comes to an exchange between individuals, i.e. to intercultural understanding and tolerance. (Volkmann 2015: 26-27)

In line with Volkmann, I would like to call into question if this ‘equilibrium’ in which cultural differences have seemingly dissolved is already the actual state of being or if it is not more of an all-too optimistic “global utopian vision” (Volkmann 2015: 27). While it might be appealing to wish for such a global utopian vision, one could also argue that this vision is rather a goal that is ideally still to be achieved. Therefore I consider it misleading to take this vision with its post-difference ethos as a starting point and use it to act as if, one could also say deny, cultural differences per se have no longer any value in TEFL theory. Also Otten writes:

Bei aller theorieästhetischen Eleganz fehlt es vielen transkulturellen Behauptungen, etwa zur *völligen* Auflösung der Eigen-Fremd-Relation oder zur Suspendierung kultureller Zugehörigkeiten als Moment gesellschaftlicher Strukturbildung, an hinreichender empirischer Untermauerung. (Otten 2009: 60; my emphasis)

This shows that transcultural theory runs the danger of taking something for granted that is actually still to be anticipated. While it is certainly promising to take transcultural perspectives as an incentive to abandon the separating forces of cultural differences (cf. Otten 2009: 60) and overcome the hindrances to cross-cultural communication and understanding (cf. Volkmann 2015: 27), one should also be careful not “to hush up persevering sentiments of cultural difference” that “are still experienced by many individuals not just as the exception, but rather as the norm in cross-cultural encounters” (Volkmann 2015: 27). Given the notion that cultural differences (still) continue to persist and matter, one could also stress the creative potential of

cultural differences and see them as enriching to the individual (cf. Otten 2009: 60; Volkmann 2015: 27). By extension, this creative potential can also be harnessed in the EFL classroom when learners can engage creatively with cultural differences, e.g. by following a reader-response criticism approach to initiate a dialogue between learners and a literary text that deals with cultural differences (cf. e.g. Delanoy 2016: 22) or by employing product-oriented approaches to teaching literature that encourage learners to develop their own texts in which they negotiate their experience with cultural differences (cf. Nünning/Surkamp 2008: 63-64). On yet another level, one can also argue that globalisation accelerates the process of bringing individuals with various cultural differences together. Hence, the ability to engage with difference becomes increasingly important in cross-cultural contact situations as an absolute necessity in an interdependent global society, as Volkmann (2010: 132) proposes with reference to the sociologist Beck (2008). By way of conclusion, I seek to stress that difference and Otherness have not become an obsolete or unnecessary focus for TEFL and that any attempt to abandon such a focus mirrors more likely a wishful thinking or even a misguided practice than an actual grasp of social realities in which cultural differences continue to matter.

The study presented here seeks to show in how far there is a current climate within TEFL in which a more diversified and complex focus on Otherness and difference is gaining increasing momentum. Indeed, notions of difference and Otherness have always been central to or have circulated widely in current theoretical concepts in TEFL. Learning a foreign language, and in the process getting into contact with new cultural spheres and phenomena, is inextricably bound up with the learner's experiencing of Otherness and difference. This experience of Otherness and difference, for example, cuts across key disciplines within TEFL such as inter- and transcultural learning, gender studies, and teaching literature. My interest lies in showing whether there are lines of Otherness and difference that have long found their way into mainstream TEFL and are now part and parcel of TEFL theory and practice, and if there are other, more controversial and contested types of Otherness that have found little or no attention up to now – possibly including sexual and gender diversity. In view of these considerations, this dissertation will follow a double function. First and foremost, I seek to show how TEFL-specific discourses of *Kulturdidaktik*, *Literaturdidaktik* and *Genderdidaktik* are widening towards endorsing more complex engagements with Otherness and difference, while at the same time maintaining that an engagement with difference remains a central component of TEFL. I will then apply a queer perspective as a specific example of how one can come to a more nuanced and differentiated understanding of engaging with 'other Others' and 'different differences' in TEFL by focusing on sexual and gender diversity. These insights mirror the second function of this dissertation, that is to legitimise why a focus on sexual and gender diversity – often articulated in terms of the acronym LGBT – might have a place in TEFL research and in the EFL classroom. In breaking down my research interest, I aim at investigating the following questions:

- In how far are concepts of Otherness and difference within current TEFL-specific discourses of *Kulturdidaktik*, *Literaturdidaktik* and *Genderdidaktik* renegotiated and remodelled towards greater complexity and diversity?

- What is the potential of a queer perspective as a specific example of more differentiated ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ to accommodate a focus on sexual and gender diversity in TEFL??
- What are the implications of a queer perspective on classroom practice?

To embrace these research questions, I follow a research design that is conceptual and theoretical in nature. I look critically at existing TEFL discourses to find out how Otherness and difference as central figures of thought are conceptualised, contested and renegotiated in theories of cultural learning, teaching literature and gender-informed approaches, rooting the move towards greater complexity and diversity in these three distinct fields of TEFL. I will then use the insights of Queer Theory to understand how sexual and gender diversity can become available in TEFL research and practice. Having established this increasing diversity along the lines of queer thinking about TEFL, I will come to critically investigate the implications of queering the EFL classroom and make informed suggestions for changes in teaching practice. This research outline is condensed into three major parts that provide the overarching structure of my dissertation:

- **Part A: Perspectives on Otherness and Difference in Teaching English as a Foreign Language**
- **Part B: Diversifying English Language Teaching: The Potential of Queer Perspectives on TEFL**
- **Part C: Queering TEFL - Practical Implications**

In part A, I will begin with laying a sound theoretical foundation to illuminate the critical concepts of Otherness and difference. This illumination will cover a range of theoretical approaches, including structuralist accounts of difference and their poststructuralist critique, specific theoretical stances on the term Otherness, and an exploration of pedagogic vistas on difference and Otherness. I will then critically look at *Kulturdidaktik*, *Literaturdidaktik* and *Genderdidaktik* as three central fields of TEFL theory, and investigate the conceptualisations of Otherness and difference that run through these fields, including a focus on the accompanying learning objectives that result from a learner’s engagement with Otherness and difference. I will show that current research in TEFL has the potential to move beyond its own limitations towards an endorsement of more complex conceptualisations of Otherness and difference in its own discourses, therefore providing an epistemic space into which a broader understanding of cultural diversity can be located.

In part B, I will zoom in on sexual and gender diversity as a specific and exemplary axis of difference and Otherness. As this specific focal point has up to now gained only marginal interest in current German TEFL debates, it is important to legitimise why sexual and gender diversity is presented here as a (new) example of more complex Othernesses and differences. In the first chapter of part B, I will legitimise this specific focus by drawing on curricular, educational, and international ELT-specific developments, which I will use to show that a focus on sexual and gender diversity turns out to be called for. In the second chapter of part B, I will explore in what ways the turn towards sexual and gender diversity in TEFL can be systematised

through a queer-informed framework. I will create an amalgam of queer political activism, queer theory and queer pedagogy in order to elaborate on the value of a queer perspective for TEFL and to identify connection points between queer-informed thought and TEFL.

The new location of a queer angle within TEFL poses the immediate challenge of how this greater complexity can filter down into concrete concerns for the practice of teaching and learning English as a foreign language. To show how a queer angle can play out productively in the classroom, I will show at the example of LGBT and queer young adult fiction how the novel *Boy Meets Boy* can be put to queer-informed use in the classroom. As a further arena of practical interest, I will shed light on the coursebook as the most widely used instructional medium and its potential impact on making the classroom a space in which sexual and gender diversity matter. I will start out to hint at the inherent limitations within coursebooks in view of the (in)visibility of sexual and gender diversity, and then demonstrate how published coursebooks that are currently in use can be ‘queered’.

All in all, this dissertation contributes to widening the scope of theoretical and practical impulses that serve to update TEFL discourses in view of the cultural diversity both research and classroom practice can accommodate. It seeks to overcome the current limitations of TEFL in view of the types of difference and Otherness that have actually moved into more mainstream attention, while simultaneously acknowledging that TEFL is generally open and inclusive towards various lines of difference and Otherness which in sum make up cultural diversity. In suggesting to mount a queer focus on the renegotiations of cultural diversity currently on the way in TEFL, I aim at closing a specific gap that cuts across both TEFL research and classroom practice – the turn towards integrating an interest in sexual and gender diversity into the scope of the discipline.

PART A: Perspectives on Otherness and Difference in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

In the first major part of this dissertation, I will present an investigation of the current status and renegotiations of the concepts of Otherness and cultural difference within the discourse of Teaching English as a Foreign Language. I will locate this investigation in the TEFL-specific fields of cultural learning, learning with literature, and gender-informed approaches to EFL education, as it is a central contention of this dissertation that the concepts of Otherness and difference, and the specific theoretical viewpoints these concepts engender, run centrally and vitally through what is known in the German TEFL discourse as *Kulturdidaktik*, *Literaturdidaktik* and *Genderdidaktik*. In line with the first research question I am pursuing, that is to investigate in how far concepts of Otherness and difference are renegotiated and remodeled towards greater diversity in these discourse domains, I seek to employ a meta-perspective on these specific TEFL domains in order to show to what extent the concepts of Otherness and difference are remodelled and renegotiated towards greater complexity and diversity. My interest is in finding out in how far TEFL incorporates cultural diversity into its own theoretical conceptualisations and the ensuing practical considerations, what specific lines of cultural difference (e.g. national identity, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or class background) are actually moved into the horizon of possibility, and also if there is a sensitivity towards marginalised ‘Others’ that might still be administered to a position of silence and invisibility within TEFL research and classroom practice.

The insights I seek to generate by engaging with these concerns mirror a two-fold epistemological outcome that I would like to establish in part A as a whole. On one level, I aim at assembling a substantial theoretical ground so as to identify key heuristic issues that are at stake when Otherness and cultural difference move into the focus of TEFL research. On a second level, developing a current insight into how Otherness and difference are (re)conceptualised in culture-, literature- and gender-oriented approaches to TEFL, including a concern for possible limitations inherent in these domains. In sounding out in how far TEFL provides a discursive space for accommodating or endorsing a more nuanced variety of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’, I will use part A to develop a conceptual-theoretical ‘docking station’ that might generally be useful for establishing a more intensified focus on cultural diversity in future TEFL research and practice. Given my specific interest in establishing a queer perspective on TEFL, the outcome of part A is also intended to legitimise the epistemological nexus between TEFL as a discipline and sexual and gender diversity as an explicit subject in research and classroom practice. Within the argumentative logic of this dissertation, I suggest that this nexus can theoretically be mounted on the engagement with Otherness and difference that, as I will show, runs centrally as a constitutive element through EFL education.

The theoretical investigation that will unfold in part A comes in four individual chapters. The first chapter will lay a solid terminological and conceptual foundation regarding the concepts of Otherness and difference, and hence provide an important backbone for all

subsequent considerations. To begin with, I will show exemplarily, e.g. by drawing on central tenets of cultural learning, that an engagement with Otherness and difference can be said to occupy a constitutive, if not central position in TEFL research and classroom practice. In the following section, I will continue with a detailed discussion of theories into which the concepts of difference and Otherness have been articulated (cf. Currie 2004: 85). With the selection of theoretical positions I have collated here I will draw on a wide range of disciplines that originally lie outside the core domain of TEFL research, but which I will access here as link disciplines for TEFL, including linguistics, sociology, cultural studies, and philosophy. From each of these heterogeneous theoretical positions, I will retrieve conceptual understandings of Otherness and difference which I will then extend into a reflection on their value for the field of TEFL. This move mirrors an increasing tendency in TEFL research to draw on related theoretical link disciplines such as cultural studies to substantiate and enrich individual research foci by employing an interdisciplinary perspective (cf. Klippel 2006; Hallet/Nünning 2007). What follows from here is an exploration of pedagogic conceptualisations of diversity that address the engagement with Otherness and difference in education both from an affirmative and from a critical point of view. It will be obvious from this wide range of theoretical and pedagogic positions that I am aiming at making the key theoretical premises that underpin my research clear and transparent. Ultimately, the line of thought and reflection I will develop in the first chapter will be condensed into a heuristic that is intended to serve as a ‘guiding map’ – sensitive to the critical concerns that are at stake – for modelling Otherness and difference onto the sphere of TEFL research and classroom practice. In picking up on the theoretical premises collated in the first chapter, the following three chapters assembled in part A will each move into focus a specific domain of TEFL research, beginning with cultural learning (chapter 2), continuing with an exploration of literary didactics (chapter 3) and finally turning to gender-informed approaches in TEFL (chapter 4). Each of these domains will be investigated with a specific critical and theoretical lens in order to retrace how these domains currently address and conceptualise the engagement with Otherness and difference. My interest lies in describing recent openings in the field that are indicative of a turn towards greater diversity, but also in identifying persistent limitations that might stand in the way of embracing more diverse cultural differences and marginalised ‘Others’ within TEFL discourses. Part A will conclude with articulating a theoretical ‘docking station’ that could become epistemologically useful for legitimising the inscription of ‘different differences’ and ‘other Others’ in TEFL, including a queer focus.

1 Terminological and Conceptual Foundations: Otherness and Difference

The terms Otherness and difference bring to mind seemingly straightforward and readily accessible everyday meanings, but they can also be articulated against elaborate theoretical frameworks spanning a wide scope of intellectual thought and fields (cf. Currie 2004: 85). On the one hand, the terms Otherness or difference might quickly evoke the idea that a certain entity A is not the same as another entity B, with some line of distinction that can be drawn between A and B so that they become distinguishable. Otherness and difference might also be connected with related words such as foreign, unknown, or alien, which attribute a certain semantic quality to a person's or an object's Otherness or difference. A look into the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) reveals that the term *difference* is defined as “[t]he condition, quality, or fact of being different”, as “dissimilarity”, or as “[a] particular way in which two or more things differ” (OED 2016a: “difference”). These definitions cause the impulse to ask, “Different from what or whom?”, which hints at a certain comparison or relation underlying two objects or people that are different from each other. The term *otherness* is defined in the OED as “[t]he quality or fact of being other”, “difference, esp. from an expected norm”, or “separateness from or oppositeness to a [...] thing, or from or to an observer” (OED 2016b: “otherness”). Similar to the definition of *difference*, *otherness* also appears to stand in relational terms to something that it is opposite or separate from, and it additionally has connotations of deviance or abnormality, being different from an expected standard or norm. Approaching the terms Otherness or difference through an everyday understanding or dictionary definitions already casts some light on their meaning. Additionally, Otherness and difference as critical concepts are rooted in diverse academic disciplines and theories, where the scope of their meanings might be reminiscent of, but certainly transcends, these initial and intuitive understandings. They are centrally discussed, for example, in structuralist and poststructuralist theories, in philosophy and sociology, in feminist and post-colonial studies, and in pedagogy, to name a few, but also in the field of TEFL where, for example, a critical engagement with cultural difference or concepts of understanding the Other (known as *Fremdverstehen*) play a major role in theory and classroom practice (e.g. Bredella/Christ 1995a). This oscillation between quite straightforward and theoretically complex meanings, which Currie calls the “doubleness” (2004: 85) of these critical concepts, calls for developing conceptual and terminological clarity of the theoretical trajectories of difference and Otherness.

Given the epistemological interest I am pursuing in my research, that is to investigate in how far the field of TEFL can theoretically accommodate a more complex and diverse range of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’, this introductory chapter seeks to set the tone for this dissertation as a whole by delineating the theoretical concepts of difference and Otherness. In doing so, I aim at creating a rich conceptual basis that is meant to substantiate the line of argumentation and thought that will unfold in this dissertation and that hinges centrally on difference and Otherness as central figures of thought. I will begin this chapter with showing that an engagement with difference and Otherness can be considered a constitutive or even central element of TEFL research and practice. In contouring that my overall research angle is

not located at the utmost periphery of foreign language didactics, but cuts across a range of its core concerns, I intend this point of departure to serve as a legitimisation why Otherness and difference are indeed a viable focus on which to mount this dissertation. In the next section, I will move on to collate various theories of difference and Otherness and weave together a conceptual fabric that is meant to clarify, and distinguish from each other, the theoretical underpinnings of difference and Otherness relevant for this study. I will approach and revisit these theories with a fresh and TEFL-specific perspective, seeking to identify a range of principal concerns and challenges that are at stake when reflecting on the engagement with difference and Otherness in TEFL. In view of the expansive range of theories and disciplines in which the concepts of difference and Otherness are negotiated, I will offer an informed selection of those positions that from my point of view contribute to putting the understanding of difference and Otherness within TEFL on a sound basis. With my aim in mind to identify a space for ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ in TEFL, I will especially consider those theories that address issues such as binary oppositions and their deconstruction, marginalisation, the discursive construction of Otherness and difference, and the liberation of multiple identities from confining understandings of difference and Otherness. This section will therefore cover

- structuralist and post-structuralist accounts and critiques of difference and the notion of the binary opposition, supplemented with a turn to the power of discourse to construct difference, and to deconstructive thinking about difference;
- a brief introduction to the concept of ‘transdifference’ and its invigorating impetus to rethink and open up fixed assumptions of difference; an overview of theories of Otherness and the Other, with specific attention paid to feminist and postcolonial positions that are interested in bringing identities from the margins into consciousness and visibility, and to the notion of ineffability based on Levinas’ philosophy.

The remainder of this chapter will tap into pedagogic considerations of Otherness and difference in education, encompassing critical impulses from diversity pedagogy and anti-oppressive pedagogy, which is then followed by a concluding section that condenses the foregoing discussion and reflection into a TEFL-specific heuristic that is intended to provide guiding orientation for the ensuing renegotiation of Otherness and difference within foreign language didactics that I will pursue in this dissertation as a whole.

1.1 Engaging with Otherness and Difference: A Constitutive Element of TEFL

As the very term foreign language education suggests, learners are bound to encounter something that is foreign or unknown to them – or that is different from what they are used to – when learning foreign languages, and in the process they get into contact with new cultural spheres and phenomena. As such, foreign language education can be said to be inextricably linked with the learners’ experience of, and engagement with, Otherness and difference – be it learning a new language that is different from their own first language(s), be it exploring cultural practices up to now unknown to them, or reading literature that provides access to

unfamiliar lifeworlds and worldviews. The relationship between foreign language education and the experience of foreignness is encapsulated by Decke-Cornill and Küster as follows:

Der Fremdsprachenunterricht [...] bietet die Möglichkeit, im Zugang auf fremde Sprache die prinzipielle Fremdheit des anderen wahrzunehmen, die Relativität eigener Weltsichten zu erfahren, sich zugleich aber auch dem Fremden zu öffnen und es sich annähernd zu erschließen. Voraussetzung hierzu ist allerdings, dass Fremdheitserfahrungen thematisiert und reflexiv erschlossen werden. (Decke-Cornill /Küster 2014: 229)

In evaluation of Decke-Cornill and Küster's position, it is the potential of the foreign language classroom to first of all acknowledge that the other may be different or foreign – whatever form this difference may actually take. It is important to note, however, that the experience of the other's difference should not stop at the level of acknowledgement. Simply acknowledging others in their difference might indeed cement essentialising and absolute notions of the other within a clear-cut oppositional binary. What is indeed called for is a further engagement in which learners open up to Otherness and difference and gradually approach and access what is perceived to be foreign. Decke-Cornill and Küster highlight that, in engaging with the other, learners come to understand that their own worldviews are a relative matter in comparison to the other worldviews they encounter. Therefore, it is not about a one-sided acknowledgement of the existence of the other as such. Rather, what Decke-Cornill and Küster indicate is a reciprocal process in which any engagement with difference and Otherness is also bound to have an effect on the learners' sense of Self in that their own position is challenged and called into question in view of the other. Consequently, Decke-Cornill and Küster state: "Fremdheit kann daher keine absolute, sondern immer nur eine relationale Größe sein: Niemand ist fremd oder vertraut per se, sondern ist dies lediglich aus der Sicht des anderen" (2014: 230). While this actually shows the impossibility of maintaining clear-cut binaries between Self and Other, or Us and Them, it also indicates that a complex dynamic of learning processes is required to achieve this insight, which shall be explored in more detail later in chapter two. Indeed, Decke-Cornill and Küster highlight that Otherness and difference must become a deliberate topic in the classroom so that learners are given the opportunity to voice and reflect on their experience of encountering what is different from their initial point of view, and thus step back from essentialising any difference or Otherness as absolute.

While current research has paid continuous and scrupulous attention to the issue of how this engagement with Otherness and difference in foreign language education contexts can be (re)conceptualised and developed further (e.g. Lütge 2013a; Blell/Doff 2014; Volkmann 2014; Alter 2015a), the very fact *that* Otherness and difference play an important role is not fundamentally called into question, as Christiane Lütge points out:

Nun stehen Differenzenerfahrungen, Perspektivenvielfalt sowie die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Verstehen des ‚Anderen‘ traditionell im Zentrum der Literatur- und Kulturdidaktik und des Fremdsprachenunterrichts allgemein. (2012a: 33)

This quote underlines that an engagement with difference and Otherness is viewed as a constitutive, even central, element of foreign language education. Furthermore, the engagement with difference and Otherness – unfolded along the lines of diverse perspectives – has traditionally had a place in and still cuts across key areas within foreign language education

research and teaching practice, e.g. when it comes to teaching literature or teaching about culture. To illustrate this line of thought further, I will now briefly sketch out how the engagement with difference and Otherness is posited as a constitutive element of foreign language education by looking exemplarily into two established didactic concepts, namely Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and *Fremdverstehen*. I will then continue to move to the level of educational guidelines, in particular the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEF), to show how this normative document also highlights an engagement with Otherness and difference as key issues of foreign language education.

An in-depth engagement with Otherness and difference resounds in concepts of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which were pre-dominantly developed in the 1990s when “the interest in intercultural learning and culture pedagogy really took off”, as Risager (2013: 147) puts it, and “foreign language teachers and researchers all over the world began to see intercultural learning as an integral part of language learning” (ibid.). In European foreign language pedagogy, intercultural communicative competence is closely linked to the multidimensional model of ICC that was proposed by Byram (1997) in *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* (cf. also Freitag-Hild 2010a: 123). This model was preceded by initial foundational considerations for an ICC model that were put forward by Byram and Zarate (1996) a year earlier, and later found its way into the recommendations for foreign language education issued by the Council of Europe in the Common European Framework of References for Languages (cf. Council of Europe 2001: 43).² Notwithstanding a detailed description of the *savoir*-dimensions of this model here, it suggests that learners develop “a more demanding relationship to cultural difference” (Byram/Zarate 1996: 241), including, for example, “an affective capacity to abandon ethnocentric attitudes and perceptions vis à vis otherness” (ibid.) and a willingness to open up to and engage with cultural difference in a process of what is called de-centering in the ICC model (cf. Byram 1997: 34). Even though this ICC model has time and again been criticised for (re)producing a clear-cut self-other-binary between seemingly distinct cultures (e.g. Blell/Doff 2014), the importance of this model for highlighting the necessity of engaging with cultural difference and Otherness in intercultural learning processes should not be underestimated. Indeed, it needs to be noted that – in spite of current critique against this model or in view of its ‘updated’ versions (ibid.) – an opening up to cultural difference and a critical engagement with Otherness as constitutive elements of cultural learning have not become obsolete or been calculated out of the equation.

The traditional concept of *Fremdverstehen* – a didactic cornerstone of cultural and literary learning³ framed by hermeneutic approaches to understanding – is also in its core concerned with making accessible difference to learners in processes of understanding the other

² The model of ICC, however, was not completely incorporated into the CEF as a basis for developing scaled quantified levels of intercultural competence similar to the scales for linguistic competences, as this proved too difficult (cf. Byram 2009: 215). What entered the CEF, then, reads more like a preamble of intent to promote a learner’s interculturality than a detailed description of the dimensions ICC entails (cf. Council of Europe 2001: 43).

³ *Fremdverstehen* cuts across both cultural and literary learning, precisely because *Fremdverstehen* can be developed at the example of literary texts, and proponents of this approach see parallels between literary understanding and cultural understanding.

or understanding the foreign. The concept of *Fremdverstehen* was originally developed in the Gießen graduate school ‘*Didaktik des Fremdverstehens*’ between 1991 and 2001, from which a wide array of publications emerged (e.g. Bredella/Christ 1995a; Bredella/Christ 2007; Bredella/Christ/Legutke 1997a; Bredella/Meißner/Nünning/Rösler 2000a). The richness of this approach cannot be summarised here, but will be focused on in chapter 2. But in principle, the research of *Fremdverstehen* showed that foreign language learning is simultaneously also intercultural learning (Bredella 2010b: 75), therefore Bredella suggests using *Fremdverstehen* and intercultural understanding synonymously (Bredella 2010a: 120). The philosophical and epistemological key question that lies at the heart of *Fremdverstehen* is how and in how far, or if at all, individuals from different cultural backgrounds can understand each other in a situation of encounter⁴, in other words how the ‘Self’, i.e. the foreign language learner, can understand the Other, i.e. an individual from a foreign cultural background (Volkmann 2010: 129). Bredella argues that the foreign culture is not immediately accessible to the learner, therefore it has to be approached gradually through interpretation and reflection, which in turn mirrors the hermeneutic nature of *Fremdverstehen* (2010a: 123). Two aspects of this growing understanding are considered important:

Intercultural understanding [...] implies that we become aware of the underlying value system of the foreign culture and learn to understand why the people in the foreign culture act as they do. This further implies that we resist the tendency to perceive and interpret the opinions and behaviour of other people by using our own cultural frame of reference. (Bredella 1986: 5)

These aspects of intercultural understanding are epitomised in the key precept of the didactic concept of *Fremdverstehen*, the interplay of perspectives (cf. Bredella 2010a; Bredella 2010b; Volkmann 2010). In adopting an inner perspective (*Innenperspektive*), the learner leaves their own cultural frame of reference, resists interpreting the foreign culture with their own culture-bound interpretative patterns, and instead tries to understand the foreign culture through their own culture-bound norms and standards, i.e. seeing the foreign culture through the eyes of the other. At the same time, however, learners are also required to adopt an outer perspective and also see the foreign culture with their own eyes so that they are enabled to see aspects of the foreign culture critically without neither fully agreeing with everything that is encountered as foreign nor fully giving up on their own cultural frameworks. Both perspectives need to be coordinated (*Perspektivenkoordination*), which indicates that *Fremdverstehen* is a dialogic and reflective process that has the potential to transform the learner. Volkmann sums up this notion of *Fremdverstehen* as follows:

Es geht bei der Begegnung mit dem Anderen nicht alleine um eine folgenlose, neutrale Interaktion in einem interkulturellen Vakuum, sondern um einen Prozess, in dem das Ich Veränderungen ausgesetzt ist. (Volkmann 2010: 130)

Such transformative changes can include that one’s own cultural frames of reference become tangible and are hence called into question or challenged in view of the other culture, but also

⁴ Here, the important question of the ‘where’ of intercultural encounters springs to mind. On one level, *Fremdverstehen* and ICC seek to prepare students for intercultural encounters in the real world. In German EFL contexts, however, such encounters normally do not occur on a daily basis, therefore, intercultural encounters can also be initiated via literary texts, non-fictional texts or media as transmitters of cultural content into the classroom.

that the learner changes their own position by increasing the readiness or willingness to critically open up to new cultural frames of reference (cf. Volkmann 2010: 132). Interestingly, it is the Otherness or the foreignness of the other culture or its individuals that is considered to be the central impulse from which any learning and understanding develops, again reflecting the hermeneutic paradigm of the concept of *Fremdverstehen* (cf. Volkmann 2010: 135). Similarly, Bredella argues:

Interkulturelles Verstehen vollzieht sich als Veränderung des eigenen Vorverständnisses. Daher ist die Differenz zwischen Eigenem und Fremdem die Voraussetzung des Verstehens. Könnten wir nicht zwischen eigenen und fremden Auffassungen unterscheiden, wäre Verstehen sinnlos. Es beruht auf dieser Differenz. (Bredella 2010a: 122)

From this point of view, the existence of differences is conceptualised as a central pre-condition for any intercultural learning or *Fremdverstehen*, i.e. it is the difference recognised by the learner that would logically trigger processes of understanding and engaging with aspects of foreign cultures. This point of view also resounds centrally in Hunfeld's (2004) position. He highlights that the experience of difference has become normal ("Normalität der Differenz", *ibid.*: 493, or also "Normalität des Fremden", *ibid.*: 487) in today's multicultural societies and that it is exactly this *Normalität der Differenz* which provides a continuous impulse for learners to broaden and challenge their horizons and worldviews when encountering cultural differences ("Fremdheit als Lernimpuls", *ibid.*: 483, or "Verschiedenheit als lebenslanger Lernimpuls", *ibid.*: 493). Assuming, however, that difference is an important pre-condition or impulse for intercultural learning is not an unproblematic position, as this assumption hinges centrally on the question of how difference is conceptualised. While Volkmann (2010: 130) argues with Furnham and Bochner that the experience of Otherness or difference can also entail a "shock of the new" (Furnham/Bochner 1994 [1986]: 47) as an almost normal reaction of learners (which probably makes the experience of difference a very powerful learning opportunity as it is from this 'shock' that new learning can evolve), Bredella (2010a: 122) argues that what is 'own' and what is 'foreign' (*Eigenes und Fremdes*) must not be viewed as ontological absolutes, but as relational and dynamic terms that are transformed during the processes of understanding. Thus one can conclude that difference may indeed be a precondition for intercultural understanding, but that this initial perception of difference is bound to change so that difference does not remain an *absolute* difference.

Admittedly, the concept of *Fremdverstehen* has also been met with skepticism in foreign language education research. Typical critical issues include whether a complete understanding of the other is actually possible or even desirable, how the complexity of the other as an individual with multilayered identities can be acknowledged rather than reducing the individual to being a representative of a particular culture only, what types of Otherness *Fremdverstehen* is actually concerned with, and if each act of understanding the other might in fact happen in the service of appropriating, dominating or de-valuing the other (cf. e.g. Alter 2014 and 2015a; Bredella 2010a and 2010b; Lütge 2013a; Volkmann 2010). Certainly, these critical interventions need to be taken seriously and should ideally be interwoven into the theory and classroom practice of *Fremdverstehen*. I wish to point out, however, that the principle merit of this concept still lies in its potential to 'get a grip' on the learners' experience of cultural

Otherness in foreign language education, provide a hermeneutic frame to discover Otherness and difference in intercultural situations, and to initiate dynamic processes of voicing and reflecting on this experience in teaching and learning contexts.

I will now move on to the level of educational policies: the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEF) as a highly influential international curricular document is a further valuable anchoring point to show in how far an engagement with Otherness and difference is - normatively - constituted within foreign language education (cf. Lütgea 2012: 33-34). Indeed, a close look at the CEF reveals that a focus on Otherness is central to this key document that regulates the teaching and learning of foreign languages and cultures in Europe and also in Germany. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to see that “[t]he Common European Framework supports the notion that a language learner needs to possess the ability to learn about and to relate to otherness” (Lütge 2013b: 97). This becomes clearer if one looks in detail at those positions in the CEF text that mention Otherness. Right at the outset of the CEF, the document clearly endorses a focus on Otherness: “In an intercultural approach, it is a central objective of language education to promote the favourable development of the learner's whole personality and sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture” (Council of Europe 2001: 1). Another view on Otherness is presented in the second chapter, where the CEF maps out the general competences of an individual: knowledge, skills and know-how, existential competence and the ability to learn (ibid.: 11). The ability to learn – a comprehensive ability that mobilises existential competence, knowledge and skills – is described “as 'knowing how, or being disposed, to discover 'otherness' – whether the other is another language, another culture, other people or new areas of knowledge” (ibid.: 12). This ability to learn is specified later (in chapter 6.1.4.1) to include “greater openness to what is new, awareness of otherness, curiosity about the unknown” (ibid.: 135). In chapter six, when the CEF moves into focus plurilingual and pluricultural competences and promotes the respect for the diversity of languages in general, it is upfront to suggest that learning foreign languages helps learners “to construct their linguistic and cultural identity through integrating into it a diversified experience of otherness” (ibid.: 12). This is the last explicit mentioning of Otherness in this curricular document.

These dealings with Otherness in the CEF show clearly that Otherness is part and parcel of this key educational document. Most prominently, Otherness is located in the contexts of intercultural learning: vis-à-vis the experiences of Otherness in language and culture that learners encounter, language education must promote learners in developing their overall personality and constructing their sense of identity. It becomes clear here that language education needs to initiate these intense and diversified experiences with Otherness and to create the disposition for on-going and independent discoveries of Otherness. In general, it can be said that the CEF subscribes to, or endorses, an agenda of respect for sociocultural diversity. It emerges as a key value of the CEF that learners are able to acquire knowledge about and relate to Otherness, which cuts across the development of the learner as “social agent” (ibid.: 9) and “whole human being” (ibid.: 1). This holistic view of language learning might seem surprising, especially in view of the frequent criticism directed against the CEF for focussing

primarily on functional communicative competences in a pragmatic and utilitarian way and thus reducing the educative potential of foreign language education at large merely to language acquisition (cf. Quetz/Vogt 2009; Volkmann 2014: 45). But it is this endorsement of Otherness, combined with the learners' development of their sense of identity as a "central objective" (ibid.: 1), that – if taken at face value and transferred to teaching practice – can provide stimulating content for the classroom and enhance the educational relevance of foreign language education that the CEF is time and again criticised to be neglecting (cf. e.g. Zydatiś 2008).

Even though the CEF posits the engagement with and experience of Otherness as a central component of foreign language education that should not be underestimated, it needs to be said that the CEF lacks a detailed theoretical conceptualisation of what is meant by Otherness. It seems that the term Otherness is used rather inadvertently and uncritically in the CEF without referring to established notions of research on the Other as they have been put forward, for example, by de Beauvoir (1957) or Said (1978). It can, however, be assumed that the way in which the term Otherness is used in the CEF points to a general agenda of openness towards cultural diversity and an explorative engagement with Otherness, as the discussion above has shown. Yet at the same time it cannot be desirable that this endorsement of Otherness in the CEF may lead to an 'othering' that perpetuates any type of difference as essentially Other. Notwithstanding this critique and the detailed conceptualisation of Otherness that the CEF seems to lack, the CEF generally states that Otherness can be experienced on different levels and may have several dimensions – as cultural Otherness, as linguistic Otherness, as a person being other, or as new knowledge that has been unknown before. Interestingly, this indicates that the CEF does not foreclose or prescribe the types of Otherness that should be moved into focus, and it indeed has a broad and open-inclusive approach to Otherness that is not narrowed down *prima facie* to an ethnic-national perspective, as Lütge emphasises (2012a: 34). First of all, this shows that foreign language education can make productive use of this broad openness by establishing various lines of difference and Otherness in research and practice. Additionally, Lütge's viewpoint also hints at the problem that foreign language education research and practice might reduce the multiplicity of differences to ethnic or national Otherness only, thus canonising certain types of Otherness while blocking other potentially interesting and promising types of Otherness from view. The epistemological challenge that derives from this for foreign language education is to be careful not to be reductive in view of the types of Otherness and difference that are focused on in research and represented in the classroom, while at the same time remaining careful in critically legitimising the value of those types of Otherness that are still the blind spots in research and practice.

1.2 Theorisations of Difference and Otherness

In the previous section, I have focused the on difference and Otherness as constitutive elements in TEFL theory. As this dissertation hinges centrally on difference and Otherness as the main lens through which to investigate and renegotiate the field of TEFL towards a queer focus on sexual and gender diversity, it is necessary to shed more detailed light on these complicated theoretical terms, describe and distinguish their meanings and scope, and to determine what a

perspective on difference and Otherness can possibly entail for TEFL. Difference and Otherness as critical terms have received extensive attention across a wide array of disciplines. Given my aim to develop conceptual clarity of difference and Otherness so as to substantiate my TEFL-specific research interest, it is necessary to draw on these disciplines as link disciplines of TEFL. As Friederike Klippel (2006: 284) argues, accessing various research domains as link disciplines of TEFL can yield valuable impulses to enrich research foci pursued in the research of foreign language education. At the same time, however, Klippel calls to mind that detecting TEFL-specific anchoring points in link disciplines poses a severe challenge, as the wealth and density of differentiated insights these disciplines have produced and are frequently producing is often too broad to be surveyed in total, or too specific to be easily understood from an 'outsider' TEFL perspective. In acknowledging the necessity to interrogate link disciplines regarding their value for TEFL *and* in accepting the pragmatic limitations this engenders, I constantly moved between potential link disciplines, existing TEFL research and my own line of argumentation that I sought to establish in order to determine what stances on the concepts of difference and Otherness emerging from these link disciplines might be useful. Therefore, the theoretical overview I will develop in this section only provides a snapshot-like selection of the vibrant discussions that surround the concepts of difference and Otherness, but whose trajectories I nonetheless consider valuable to enrich my research into the status of 'other Others' and 'different differences' in TEFL.

To set the tone for arriving at an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the concepts of difference and 'Otherness' that are relevant for this study, the following quote by Mark Currie is an ideal starting point to map out the critical potential and theoretical scope of these terms. For Currie, employing the critical terms of difference and otherness can have two implications:

The first is that the opposition is seen as a basic unit of cultural difference, and the critic's interest lies either in the analysis of the way that opposition works to produce identity, or in the voicing of otherness that is consigned to silence and ineffability, that is to say, actually giving voice to underrepresented points of view and identities normally excluded from representation. The second is to liberate the multiplicity of forces and differences that the opposition reduces to a mere dyad: to do away with the opposition and understand difference in more complex and multifarious ways. (Currie 2004: 87)

On one level, Currie's position entails a description of the dynamic modelling of difference and Otherness in theoretical discourse. Cultural difference can be analysed as an opposition that, for example, produces identity categories such as 'woman' or 'man', or 'homosexual' or 'heterosexual' along the difference lines of gender or sexuality, as clearly articulated binary pairings. Such a pairing can also be modelled as uneven so that particular identities can become the marginalised or silenced 'Other' of an opposition. The critical outcome of such an 'Other'-oriented analysis of difference is then concerned with following a liberatory and emancipatory agenda to bring the Other into consciousness and representation. Another theoretical impulse that Currie points at is to employ a deconstructive mode to set free the numerous cultural expressions, identities and experiences so as to diversify binary difference into differences thought of in the plural. Transferred to contexts of education at large and TEFL in particular, Currie's position is useful as a heuristic to articulate the fundamental epistemic stakes of

engaging with difference and Otherness in research and in practice. Firstly, it is a viable research focus to analyse what types of difference are ‘active’ in TEFL and how difference plays out in contexts of research and practice (e.g. whether there is a tendency to articulate difference as a binary opposition, or whether there is an interest in identifying the status of ‘Others’ in TEFL). Secondly, there is also a clearly detectable normative implication for TEFL, connected with the impetus to move into view and initiate an engagement with those differences or ‘Othernesses’ that have hitherto only had a marginal position or were entirely absent in TEFL discourses. Now it needs to be acknowledged that *Fremdsprachendidaktik* as a discipline is also normative in nature in that it seeks to define or propose what should be learnt and taught, and why (cf. Decke-Cornill/Küster 2014: 4). The critical challenge here is to lay open and legitimise the assumptions about the relevance of one’s demands and find convincing reasons for establishing their integration into TEFL theory and practice, rather than simply demanding – perhaps following an activist impulse – that something must be done in the classroom or in research just because it is not yet focused on. This makes it necessary to carefully conceptualise cultural difference and Otherness and then to investigate and scrutinise these concepts in view of their productive and critical potential for the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

Against the backdrop of these considerations, my theoretical engagement with the concepts of difference and Otherness will come in four parts. I will first employ a structuralist perspective influenced by Saussurean linguistics by retracing the tradition of articulating difference in terms of binary oppositions, and then extrapolate these findings to a social level where difference is a powerful tool to structure human existence qua difference categories such as class, gender, ethnicity or sexuality. I will round off this structuralist perspective with a critique on the limitations of viewing difference primarily through the lens of the binary opposition. Secondly, I will turn to the Foucauldian understanding of discourse in order to tease out how the contested force field of difference is deeply enmeshed in power-soaked discursive practices and formations that can both produce and dissipate the meanings that circulate around difference in society. Thirdly, I will extend the critique against a binary understanding of difference by drawing on the poststructuralist response to the structuralist concept of difference. Here, I will discuss the pivotal role of Jacques Derrida’s critical strategy of deconstruction, coupled with a turn to the concept of ‘transdifference’, and then also consider his concept of *différance* with its specific focus on the constant shifts in meaning in what Derrida terms the play of differences. Ultimately, I will conceptualise the critical terms of the Other and Otherness as a particular and radical form of difference, i.e. difference as located on the margins of society. At the example of feminist, postcolonial and philosophical thought, I will shed light on the conceptual insights researchers such as Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, and Emmanuel Levinas have put forward in their critical work. Each of these theoretical vistas will be sounded out in view of their implications for engaging with the concepts difference and Otherness in TEFL.

1.2.1 Difference and Binary Oppositions: Structuralist Accounts

In *Course in General Linguistics*, originally published in 1915, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1966 [1915]) developed a structuralist account of the relationship between language, the meaning of words and concepts, and difference. Given my aim to gradually build up an understanding of the theoretical concept of difference, Saussure's structuralist position is an indispensable point of departure. An introduction to his thinking lays an important conceptual and terminological basis on which to mount the exploration of difference as a critical concept that will unfold in this chapter, and it is a crucial prerequisite to understand how scholars that came after Saussure subsequently critiqued and developed further the concept of difference. To begin with, in Saussure's analysis "[l]anguage is a system of signs that express ideas" (1966: 17). He is interested in how words and concepts ('signs') in language receive their meaning, or in Saussure's terms, come to 'signify' (Saussure 1966; also: Hall 2013a: 16-17). For one, the basic insight derived from Saussure's theory is that a linguistic sign is an entity with two sides – the *signifier* as the form of the sign (the actual word) and the *signified* as the mental concept behind the signifier. Even though both sides are linked by an associative bond, fixed by linguistic conventions, this link is understood to be arbitrary, i.e. there is no inevitable or natural link that forges a signifier and a signified together (cf. Hall 2013a: 16). What is more interesting here, however, is that the meaning of a sign is generated by its difference from other signs and does not reside in the sign itself (cf. Currie 2004: 9). To quote Saussure,

in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language, there are only differences without positive terms. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. (Saussure 1966: 120)

In evaluating Saussure, Currie says that "language is not merely a nomenclature for entities that exist in the world" (2004: 85) and Hall concludes that "[s]igns do not possess a fixed or essential meaning" (2013a: 16) in themselves. What follows is that it is the relational difference between signs that becomes crucially important to constitute their meaning, which Hall explains with an example:

We know what *black* means, Saussure argued, not because there is some essence of 'blackness' but because we can contrast it with its opposite – *white*. Meaning, he argued, is relational. It is the '*difference*' between white and black which signifies, which carries meaning (Hall 2013b: 224; emphasis in the original).

Accordingly, what signifies – what gives a sign its meaning – is not its inner essence, but its difference from other signs. In order to signify, signs have to be organised into "a system of differences" (Hall 2013a: 17). By conclusion, a first key premise of the concept of difference is the understanding that difference is essential for the creation of meaning, or to speak with Hall, that meaning could not exist without difference (cf. Hall 2013b: 224).

To refine this aspect, Saussure's structuralism rests on the assumption that the creation of meaning is not only based on difference as such, but more properly speaking on the difference between two *opposites*, as the example of 'black' and 'white' above has illustrated (cf. Hall 2013b: 225). Accordingly, Saussure describes language not just as a system of signs,

but more specifically “as a system based entirely on the opposition of its concrete units” (1966: 107). As such, Saussure’s structuralism centralises the notion of the opposition, and in a rigidly structuralist sense, the difference between two opposing entities – a binary opposition – is the simplest way to mark out difference and produce meaning. This line of thought highlights that, according to Currie, “the basic unit for the structuralist is the binary opposition, so that one’s sense of the entities existing in the world is a product of the oppositions whose structures we use to interpret reality” (Currie 2004: 85-86). This interpretation of reality links with two major roles binary oppositions play in language, as Pilcher and Whelehan (2004: 24) point out. On the one hand, a binary opposition embodies a division into two, establishing a clear distinction between two entities or categories. The two poles of such binaries are posited as being exclusive and absolute, i.e. the properties of A can by default not be the properties of B, and vice versa, which mirrors a strong tendency to articulate existing differences in terms of a clear-cut binary opposition (cf. *ibid.*). On the other hand, each component of the binary opposition is dependent on the other part for its position. If the binary opposition is the basic unit to generate meaning, the generation of meaning is relational and emerges from the difference between the units that make up the binary opposition (cf. *ibid.*; also: Currie 2004: 17; Breinig/Lösch 2006: 107). The meaning of pole A does only make sense in view of a different pole B against which A is defined, and vice versa. What follows is that the binary opposition has a twofold logic that encapsulates the relationship between difference and binary oppositions as a central cornerstone of structuralist thinking: the meaning of each pole depends structurally on the other pole for its existence, while at the same time both entities appear to be distinct opposites without any overlap.

Before I intervene with a critical evaluation of the structuralist perspective on difference and the binary opposition, I would like to expand on this perspective by following both Hall (2013b) and Currie (2004) who argue that the structuralist theory of difference “holds for broader concepts too” (Hall 2013b: 224) and can be moved beyond its original “linguistic provenance” (Currie 2004: 17) to understand how social realities and identities are structured. Currie highlights that not only linguistic signs are embedded in a system of differences, but also social identities in that they are defined in particular against their opposites (2004: 86). To give examples of what Hall means with ‘broader concepts’, it can be said that the identity category of ‘women’ comes to signify as being different from ‘men’, ‘upper class’ as different from ‘lower class’, or that national identities such as being ‘British’ come to signify as being different from other nationally defined identities such as ‘German’ or ‘Japanese’. In *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), an influential text for Queer Theory, Sedgwick points out that in spite of the “self-evident fact” (1990: 22) that “[p]eople are different from each other” (*ibid.*) in various ways, the “human social landscape” (*ibid.*: 23) is mapped out by

[a] tiny number of inconceivably coarse axes of categorization [that] have been painstakingly inscribed in current critical and political thought: gender, race, class, nationality, sexual orientation are pretty much the available distinctions. (Sedgwick 1990: 22)

While this quote illustrates that available categorisations of difference may conceal the multiplicity of differences that are actually out there, and are hence ‘inconceivably coarse’, it also shows that *some* categories have become so powerful that they are now “significant

markers of difference in society” (Ramji 2007: n.p.). To give an example, the gendered categorisation of ‘women’ and men’ is probably more relevant in society than the categorisation of people according to shoe size – although it would theoretically be possible to imagine a society in which shoe size is exactly a type of difference that does matter. What happens on a social level, then, is that *certain* forms of difference are marked and organised through classificatory systems. “A classificatory system”, according to a definition offered by Woodward, “applies a principle of difference to a population in such a way as to be able to divide them and all their characteristics into at least two, opposing groups” (Woodward 2009b: 29). The effect is that a distinction becomes possible between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ or ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ when a certain principle of difference is applied to groups of people, and that such difference is often articulated in clearly oppositional terms, which propels the structurally linguistic viewpoint described above into the realm of the social. In this sense, the binary opposition can be conceptualised as a meaning-making human tool that operates powerfully to structure society and to grasp social stratifications in terms of distinguishable entities.

In picking up on the basic understanding of difference and binary oppositions established so far, I will now transfer this structuralist account to a level of critical evaluation and reflection. The strict formal eye of structuralism “with [its] law-like precision of a science”, as Hall (2013a: 19) puts it, suggests bringing neatness and tidiness to the study of language, but also to the study of how identities are mapped onto the social sphere. While this sense of stability and security of the binary opposition cannot easily be rejected in total, it is exactly this reductionist simplicity that earned structuralist approaches to difference in the Saussurean tradition a considerable amount of criticism. To provide a differentiated critical evaluation of the way difference is organised in binary oppositions, I turn to Hall who stresses the ambivalent character of difference and take up this notion of ambivalence as a scaffold on which to mount the subsequent critique. Rather than favouring a wholesale rejection of difference and binary oppositions, Hall (2013b: 224) argues that difference is both *necessary* and *dangerous*, which hints at the interplay of positive and negative effects regarding the workings of difference. In the following section, I will shed light on both perspectives to illustrate the ambivalent nature of difference.

Hall argues that difference is necessary because it is crucial for the construction of meaning in language, but also for the formation and perception of culture and social identities (2013b: 225). This viewpoint underlines that categories of identity and difference are mutually dependent in that they are constructed in relation to each other. Often, a certain linguistic sign or a social identity is defined by what it is not, deriving its meaning through a sense of difference from the entity it is opposed to (cf. Woodward 2009a: 2; Currie 2004: 3). For example, a gay identity takes on meaning primarily in relation to a heterosexual identity against which it is established and defined, and several other examples can serve to illustrate what Currie calls “the relational context for identity” (2004: 13), e.g. woman/man, Scottish/English, or night/day. It can be argued that difference – in particular if it is articulated as a binary opposition – is an important basis for human sense-making and a powerful, albeit simple, rubric for structuring human thought that captures the diversity of the world in either/or extremes as clear-cut

opposites (cf. Hall 2013b: 228). Breinig and Lösch also point out that perceiving of difference in terms of binary oppositions is “one of the most fundamental operations of the human mind” (2006: 106). They go on to write that

the tendency towards binary systems of inclusion and exclusion in the effort to reduce world complexity, the tendency to linear thinking and causal logic seems as strong as ever and probably has to be accepted as an anthropological given. (2006: 107)

It appears that the human mind heavily relies on binary oppositions to understand and structure the world and that it is difficult not to think in terms of binary oppositions. Woodward (2009a: 2) points out that binary oppositions operate powerfully and productively in society because they provide a sense of social order and a safe haven into which people can locate their identities. In effect, the classificatory systems that emerge from structuring difference in terms of binary opposition at the social level may provide a way of orientating oneself in the world and offer a legitimate basis for people to articulate a clear sense of individual or collective identities. Pilcher and Whelehan locate the perseverance of understanding difference as a binary opposition in Western philosophy at large, where it is deeply enshrined:

In the seventeenth century, Descartes based his philosophy of knowledge on the idea of a fundamental difference between mind and body, a distinction that has become known as ‘Cartesian dualism’. This philosophical principle is widely regarded as having a crucial influence on the development of Western theories of knowledge, where reality is understood as if it were comprised of sets of ‘either/or’ pairings. (Pilcher/Whelehan 2004: 24)

With the binary opposition being an anthropological given for human sense-making, a powerful tool to conceptualise identity, and a highly influential legacy of Western philosophy, it almost comes as no surprise when Hall argues that “we do not seem to be able to do without them” (2013b: 225) as they provide a very fundamental starting point for people to experience the world and to arrive at clear and unambiguous meanings in language and in the social sphere (cf. also Breinig/Lösch 2006: 106). If this is understood to be the *necessary* side to the ambivalent nature of difference, I wish to point out that the apparent inescapability of the binary opposition must not function as an excuse for thinking about and interpreting difference *only* in terms of binary opposition, let alone for foreclosing any further critique. Therefore, I will now introduce what Hall calls the dangerous aspect of difference with the aim to provide a counterweight to an understanding of difference as necessary.

The first critical aspect that needs to be mentioned is voiced by Currie who says that a binary opposition is not “an innocent dyad [...] without heed to questions of power and hierarchy” (2004: 49). Similarly, Pelcher and Whelehan stress that “the habit of thinking in dichotomies is not a neutral or benign way of understanding the world” (2004: 25). What they do highlight is that a binary opposition is usually ordered as a hierarchy with one pole enjoying a privileged and superior status over its inferior and weaker counter-pole. This means that a binary opposition is marked by power relations that regulate the privilege of one part of the binary at the cost of the other. Currie points out that “this dimension of an opposition is certainly not given in nature, but is actively produced in discourse, in the process of signification” (2004: 49). A critical look at the discursive context in which difference is produced, negotiated and also contested can serve to identify how power and hierarchy in a

dichotomy are established in discourse, which - if transferred to educational and ELT contexts - can give teaching and learning a decidedly critical impetus, especially when learners are deliberately encouraged to grapple with discourses in order to explore and understand how it operates and functions, e.g. in establishing a hierarchy between two seemingly distinct social groups, or how a privileged identity maintains dominance over its 'Other'. Ramji cautions us to recognise that hierarchical power relations in a binary opposition can also have severe effects and real-life consequences. She writes that

[t]he creation of difference on the basis of race, gender, or class at social, economic or political levels is crucial, not as individual characteristics but insofar as they are primary organizing principles of a society which locates and positions groups within opportunity structures. (Ramji 2007: n.p.)

Ramji's position indicates that difference can be at the heart of creating social inequalities or be the cause of discrimination experienced by individuals or collective groups, which depends on being included or excluded from what Ramji calls opportunity structures. This concerns, for example, having access to material, symbolic or cultural resources (e.g. food, education, art, healthcare), being granted legal rights and privileges (e.g. the right to marry and raise children), or the experience of emotional and physical violence (e.g. hate speech or hate crimes directed against LGBT people). Also, the non-representation of marginalised identities ('Others') in education, denying them voice and visibility, can be considered a structural inequality (e.g. the exclusion of LGBT or lower-class people from coursebooks, cf. Gray 2016). What emerges from this criticism is to recognise that the binary opposition is not an innocent tool to structure difference, and to remain sensitive to those instances in which a binary opposition produces and reproduces power relations and social inequalities. Consequently, a critical engagement with binary opposition necessarily entails thematising, interrogating and intervening into such power relations and inequalities.

Taking Currie's viewpoint into account – namely that “the world is not a singularity” (Currie 2004: 85) and, as a result, that words and concepts in language, but also people, personal or collective identities, or other entities such as culture, can in principle differ from each other in many possible ways – it follows that the remarkable power of binary oppositions to streamline a vast set of possible differences into two distinct poles and to define and demarcate meaning in their function as basic meaning-generating units. What needs to be criticised is “the assumption that, between them, the dichotomous pair encapsulate and define a whole” and that “together they sum up the range of possibilities” (Pilcher/Whelehan 2004: 24). With allowing no other possible meanings, binary oppositions embody “pervasive attempts to ‘exorcize’ alternative possibilities in order to fix meaning”, to speak with Breinig and Lösch (2002: 24). This shows that the binary opposition operates to conceal or preclude all other distinctions that do not fit neatly into the logic of its two-part structure (cf. Hall 2013b: 225; Ramji 2007: n.p.), but that nonetheless exist outside of the binary opposition in a world marked by plurality and complexity. If, then, from a structuralist viewpoint the binary opposition is the basic meaning-generating unit, this does not necessarily mean that meaning can only be generated on the basis of a clear-cut opposition, and that existing binary oppositions per se implicitly point to what is not included in its rigid structure. With binary oppositions being “a

reductive or oversimplified paradigm for difference” (Currie 2004: 17), what is called for is “a preference for a liberation of difference from the confines of opposition, and for the multiplication of difference into ever more complex configurations” (ibid.). This liberation and multiplication can, for example, reach out towards recognising a diverse range of gendered identifications and expression exceeding the feminine/masculine binary in order to make thinkable what a homogenising understanding of gender as a classificatory system blocks from view.

Furthermore, difference has a powerful “authority to demarcate” (Sedgwick 1990: 26) and set up oppositional boundaries between groups. This divisive character of the binary opposition is invoked by producing seemingly universal identity categories or generalisations and by fixing and stabilising distinct meanings in either of the two poles (e.g. defining clearly how *all* women or *all* men are or have to be). On one level, this can create “a potential stereotype” (Currie 2004: 4), often about the supposedly ‘weaker’ pole of the binary (e.g. all ‘lesbians’ do this, all ‘gays’ behave like that). Such stereotyping can lead to misrecognising or misrepresenting certain identities, with a coercive force at play that serves the subordination or vilification of one set of people to another (cf. Barker 2012: 10). On another level, the universalising tendencies of a binary opposition often involve essentialist claims about identity, where identity and its aligned meanings are seen as unchanging and fixed (cf. Woodward 2009b: 12). In other words, the sense of stable identity positions is invoked at the cost of hiding differences *within* each category and also of concealing possible similarities *between* distinct categories. Currie pointedly summarises this effect when saying that the binary opposition “asserts a difference at the same time as it denies a universality of differences” (Currie 2004: 4). In challenging this clear-cut demarcation, Woodward stresses that the secure sense of identity offered by categories such as ethnicity or nation might be “illusory and often problematic because of its rigidity and constraint in establishing absolute and fixed divisions between peoples” (Woodward 2009a: 6). Such a viewpoint connects well with Ramji’s stance on the critical concept of difference, i.e. one which prefers not to use it as a means to stabilise, but indeed as a means to problematise and challenge seemingly universal categories. Hence, difference can serve to uncover “the multi-layered and fractured construction of collective and individual identities” (Ramji 2007: n.p.) and make visible numerous other *differences* within difference. Such an endeavour is supported by Hall (2013a) who argues that fixed meanings can become fluid and change. He explains that Saussure’s rigid structuralism looks at a system of difference (e.g. language) only at a given point in time, and therefore seems to suggest that the meaning encompassed by binary difference cannot change. Hall, however, argues that the relationship between the two ends of a binary opposition can change over time, being produced and (re-)made in specific social contexts and moments across time. Furthermore, if the meaning residing in a sign is arbitrary and not a natural essence that is inevitably given, meaning can become ‘unfixed’ through new social conventions and definitions. The insight that “[t]here is no single, unchanging, universal ‘true meaning’” (Hall 2013a: 17) forever embossed in a binary opposition potentially opens the opposition up for new or alternative meanings that were once neatly packaged and made invisible in its rigid structure.

Let me now extrapolate the discussion outline so far to the context of TEFL and suggest several anchoring points that link the theoretical insights developed above with TEFL-specific considerations. This extrapolation will revolve around a reflection on the status of the binary opposition in TEFL and address the issue of what types of difference actually find their way into the classroom. With reference to the first aspect, the foregoing discussion has shown the insufficiency and reductiveness of difference articulated in terms of a binary opposition. In view of the cultural diversity and the richness of cultural expressions and experience that become tangible in both individual identities and in contemporary societies of a globalised and media-saturated world, the tendency of the binary opposition to universalise difference and to swallow up all distinctions in its rigid two-part structure has become the most virulent target of critique (cf. Hall 2013b: 225). Not surprisingly, the notion of the binary opposition has recently harnessed a considerable amount of criticism and skepticism in TEFL theory, in particular so in the field of cultural and literary learning (e.g. Alter 2014, 2015a; Blell/Doff 2014; Doff/Schulze-Engler 2011a; Eisenmann/Grimm/Volkman 2010a; Lütge 2013a; Volkman 2013). In these discussions, the simplicity that is suggested by thinking in terms of binary oppositions is severely at odds with attempts to reconfigure cultural learning with a sensitivity to the heterogeneous make-up of culture, and to transport such cultural heterogeneity into the EFL classroom via literary texts. To date, the most pertinent and (in)famous binary opposition seems to be the one that clearly distinguishes an allegedly homogeneous learner's home culture from a so-called target culture – similarly construed as homogeneous and traditionally located in TEFL's 'popular' core countries, the UK and the USA (cf. chapter 2.1). While this is sometimes dismissively claimed to be the fault that intercultural learning has wrought (cf. Blell/Doff 2014), more recent tendencies, in particular those that work from a transcultural vantage point, seek to dismantle and overcome clear-cut binary representations of culture by ushering learners into the discovery of cultures and identities as complex, fluid and shifting (e.g. Freitag/Stroh/von Reinersdorff 2008 and Freitag-Hild 2010b for new explorations of 'Britishness'). The critical challenge for TEFL lies in finding ways to represent culture, or more properly speaking cultural difference, in non-dichotomous terms and to work against reproducing binary conceptions of cultural difference by, to speak with Volkman, "mov[ing] beyond simplistic and reductive polarities" in order to initiate an "unlearning of binarisms" (2013: 177). From this, one can derive the normative impetus to bring a broader and subtler range of difference(s) into view that learners can engage with in the classroom, which in turn makes it necessary to rethink the selection of (literary) texts that reflect this multiplication of differences, and to develop teaching techniques that can serve to work against, rather than to reproduce, universalising and binarising understandings of difference. Yet at the same time, however, the function of the binary opposition to structure human existence and to operate powerfully in the human mind – an aspect that I have pointed at above while discussing the necessity of the binary opposition as one of the inherent characteristics of its ambivalent nature – raises the question if the binary opposition can or should be rejected *per se* or if there is a possibility, maybe even necessity, for retaining the binary opposition in principled and critically informed ways. This particular aspect will be explored in further detail after I have introduced the Derridean deconstructive stance on difference and the binary opposition in chapter 1.2.3.

A further implication of the discussion of difference for TEFL can be articulated as follows: If the call is to represent cultural difference in terms of greater diversity and cultural heterogeneity, the inevitable question emerges what types or lines of difference – referred to above as ‘organising principles of society’ or ‘axes of categorisation’ – are actually part and parcel of theoretical conceptualisations and practical implementations of cultural and literary learning. In other words, what differences are already active and visible in research and in the classroom, and what differences can still be said to be the blind spots of TEFL. Even though TEFL as a discipline frequently employs a rhetoric of diversity that might indeed suggest that the EFL classroom is the natural habitat of all sorts of cultural differences, it is a justifiable question to ask in how far TEFL actually lives up to this rhetoric of diversity or whether this mirrors more of a “politically correct lip-service” (Volkmann 2013: 171) than a substantial and fundamental concern to truly pluralise the scope of differences covered in EFL education. While national and ethnic axes of difference, and increasingly and more recently also the difference category of gender (although with a less wide-ranging outreach, as I will show in chapter 4), are (more or less) established reference points from which to engage difference in the EFL classroom (cf. chapter 2.1), researchers such as Lütge (2013a) or Alter (2014) suggest turning to broader and more nuanced representations of cultural differences in the contexts of identity constructions in *Fremdverstehen* and cultural and literary learning. This reflects, in principle, a general openness towards ‘new lines of demarcation’ in TEFL, but also generally in foreign language education, that can enter what Wolfgang Hallet (2002) so famously called ‘the interplay of texts and cultures’ (*das Spiel der Texte und Kulturen*). I do wish to call to some caution, however, that rather than providing each ‘new’ type of difference with a space in the EFL classroom *in medias res*, it is worthwhile to take the detour of legitimising and theorising their potential, but also their possible inherent pitfalls and epistemological stakes, for foreign and English language education so as to substantiate the position of newly emerging differences through research, on the basis of which it becomes possible to develop approaches and concepts for classroom practice. Furthermore, while the introduction and consideration of ‘new’ lines of difference in TEFL, e.g. in cultural or literary learning, can serve to diversify the representation of culture in a more heterogeneous light, I consider it crucial that for each line of difference that is activated, one must not re-tap into the pitfalls of binary representations and instead apply the same awareness of and skepticism towards binary opposition so as to avoid their limiting rigidity and universalising and homogenising tendencies. In the following section, I will now elaborate on the essential role of discourse to construct difference and then continue to map the relationship of discourse and difference onto TEFL, in particular by reflecting on the notion of ‘*fremdsprachige Diskursfähigkeit*’ (Hallet 2012), i.e. the ability to understand and participate in foreign language discourses.

1.2.2 The Discursive Construction of Difference

The creation of difference at the social level cannot only be mapped onto the existence of somewhat inert classificatory systems that are simply there in their function to demarcate. Rather, the creation of difference is closely linked to the social production and constitution of

meanings that are subsequently attached to certain types of difference. In order to ‘divide’ a population into a social order of, say, two genders (women and men) or two sexualities (heterosexuality and homosexuality), each individual pole must necessarily be distinguishable from its counterpart to be recognisable as such, and is therefore dependent on specific meanings that mark out its distinction from the respective other pole. For example, what meanings are attached to femininity or masculinity, and what meanings are attached to people who defy the easy categorisation of femininity or masculinity? What other meanings spring to mind if we insert other categories of difference into this line of thought (e.g. gay, upper class, old, disabled)? Barker points out that these are shared social meanings that people use to make sense of the world, and adds that such meanings are produced symbolically in signifying practices, for example by using language as a signifying system (cf. Barker 2012: 7; also Woodward 2009a: 4). As such, meanings are produced, enacted and understood through the way cultural differences are talked about, thought about, or are represented textually or visually, with the result that the meanings pertaining to cultural differences become embedded in sounds, words, objects, images, conversations, books, magazines, advertising, TV programmes, clothing etc. (cf. Barker 2012: 8) – or in short, everything that can signify. When Barker writes, however, that meanings are socially shared, a reservation must be made that meanings are not necessarily shared unanimously and invariably by everyone, which indicates that the meanings attached to cultural differences are not eternally fixed, but open to contestation and renegotiation.

To understand how the meanings pertaining to difference are produced, maintained, and possibly dissipated, I will now centralise the role of discourse in these processes and draw on the work of Michel Foucault, whose rich thought is inseparably linked with the concept of discourse. To define the word ‘discourse’ in any conclusive sense resembles a walk on a slippery road, and even Foucault himself writes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that the word ‘discourse’ has “[a] rather fluctuating meaning” (1972: 80). To approach the meaning of ‘discourse’ nonetheless, I refer to Barker who provides a very general attempt of a definition and says that “[d]iscourses provide ways of talking about a particular topic with repeated motifs or clusters of ideas, practices and forms of knowledge” (Barker 2012: 91). This brief and general definition is helpful to delineate three aspects that I consider central for an understanding of discourse. On one level, discourses must in some way be uttered to become tangible in and through language (‘talking’ in Barker’s definition). The word discourse then is not understood, for example, as a single-event conversation, but instead as the sum of all such spoken, written, or otherwise signifying events that constitute discourse, making the single conversation a snapshot of discourse. On another level, discourses are about something or refer to something (‘a particular topic’) and accordingly, can be said to convey and produce meanings about a given topic – for example a specific category of cultural difference (e.g. gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation). Furthermore, discourses seem to be marked by convention and regulation, providing certain ‘ways’ of talking about a topic (and maybe not other ‘ways’) and embodying certain ideas, motifs and forms of knowledge that are repeated and clustered in discourse (while maybe not recognising alternative ideas, motifs or knowledges). All of these

aspects are intertwined, but will be separated for the purpose of achieving clarity in the following description of these three dimensions.

To understand where discourses can be ‘found’, Foucault writes in ‘The Order of Discourse’ that discourse has a “material reality as a thing pronounced or written” (Foucault 1981 [1970]: 52) and adds that “discourse is no more than a play, of writing in the first case, of reading in the second, and of exchange in the third, and this exchange, this reading, this writing never put anything at stake except signs. In this way, discourse is [...] put at the disposal of the signifier” (Foucault 1981 [1970]: 66). What follows is that discourses come into being by drawing on available signifying systems, which most obviously include language, and hence can be written and read, but also listened to or talked about (all of which can in principle be encompassed by Foucault’s notion of ‘exchange’). In addition, discourse has a ‘material reality’, which means that discourses become attached to ‘materials’ that make use of ‘signs’ to convey meaning. If we understand both ‘materials’ and ‘signs’ in a broad sense – with ‘signs’ including language, but also visual or multimodal ways of meaning-making, and with ‘materials’ referring to a broad variety of texts, images or material objects – then discourses are located and locatable in an almost innumerable array of ‘materials’ that communicate with ‘signs’, for example, a newspaper article, a legal text, a Facebook post, a painting, a scientific report, a novel, a soap opera, or a wedding ring (cf. Hall 2003: 65). In conclusion, this suggests that the meanings pertaining to cultural differences can circulate in discourse through a complex web of what one might call ‘sign-based materials’, and that such meanings can both be articulated in, but also retrieved from, the material reality of discourse.

As a second aspect, it is essential to understand discourses as developing along the lines of certain themes or topics, which Foucault calls “discursive formations” (1972: 31; cf. also Barker 2012: 91), i.e. patterns of discursive practices that produce a discourse about a common theme (e.g. gender). With an interest in historic specificity and contingency, Foucault shows how certain discourses at certain times produced knowledge about a certain subject, and how certain ways of thinking and speaking about a subject have been regulated, organised and ordered in discourse (Foucault 1981 [1970]: 54). In an approach that Foucault himself calls “genealogical” (ibid.: 70), he explores how series of discourses came to be formed over time, and under what norms and conditions they appear and grow. The specific topics Foucault retraced genealogically include mental illness in *Madness and Civilization* (1973 [1964]), medical care, health and disease in *The Birth of the Clinic* (2003 [1973]), sexuality in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (1978)⁵, or disciplinary power in penal systems such as the

⁵ *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (1978) will be discussed in chapter 6 as an influential text for Queer Theory. In this work, Foucault retraces “the way in which sex is ‘put into discourse’” (ibid.: 11). Going beyond the question of how sexuality was repressed and prohibited since the 17th century, he also shows how the “veritable discursive explosion” (ibid.: 17) that occurred around sexuality regulated how people spoke about sexual acts and desires (e.g. in Christian confessions), or how people perceived of themselves as sexual objects, which is closely linked to the categories of sexuality discourse offers them (cf. Gutting 2005: 93). *The History of Sexuality* also includes a section that unearths how “peripheral sexualities” (Foucault 1978: 42) were viewed and regulated in discourse: What was once seen as a forbidden or sinful act developed into a system of specifying individuals based on their sexual preferences within medical discourse, which constituted the homosexual as “a personage” or “a species” (Foucault 1978: 43), whereas “[t]he sodomite had been a temporary aberration” (ibid.) only.

prison in *Discipline and Punish* (1977a). The following example taken from *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) serves to illustrate how discourse functions and shows how Foucault interwove his exploration of discourse with a certain topic or subject, in this case, the constitution of mental illness:

mental illness was constituted by all that was said in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it, traced its developments, indicated its various correlations, judged it, and possibly gave it speech by articulating, in its name, discourses that were to be taken as its own. (Foucault 1972: 32)

What emerges from this example is that a discourse can be understood as a grid into which the experience of a certain subject (e.g. mental illness) is articulated (cf. Foucault 2003 [1973]: 64). A topic is “put into discourse” (Foucault 1978: 11) by the statements that are made about it, thus bringing it into discursive existence. Barker uses the metaphor of discourses as “maps of meaning” (2012: 91) to show how discourses can also provide orientation in view of the meanings that accumulate around a certain topic in a ‘discursive formation’. The example of mental illness, as well as Foucault’s other focal points such as sexuality or health that are central to the titles mentioned above, pointedly illustrate how cultural difference is constituted on the level of discourse. They are reminiscent of what Foucault himself calls “dividing practices” (1982: 777), i.e. practices by which certain individuals are divided from other individuals, and thus objectivised and categorised into a “bipolarity” (Foucault 2003 [1973]: 41), for example, as “the mad and the sane” (ibid.: 778) or “the sick and the healthy” (ibid.). Barker understands these dividing practices to embody the power of discourse to follow a rationality of normalisation that distributes individuals around a norm (cf. 2012: 92), which effectively installs lines of demarcation around cultural differences and positions people within discourse as being deviant from, or as complying with, a given ideal. Consequently, discourse plays a central role in establishing an effective binary opposition.

The gravity of discourse to produce and circulate meanings of cultural differences becomes particularly evident when the notion of ‘truth’ is introduced into the discussion. Cultural differences that are given meaning in discourse are prone to following what Foucault calls “the will to truth” (Foucault 1981 [1970]: 55) or “regimes of truth” (Foucault 1977b: 13) that continuously perpetuate legitimate knowledge about a certain topic within a discursive formation. More properly speaking, Barker cautions that the regimes of truth actually define “what counts as truth” (2012: 92) so that certain knowledges are valorised and distributed in society as accepted truths, while other knowledges are hidden from view. This is encapsulated by Foucault, who writes that, on the one hand, “all that appears to our eyes is a truth conceived as a richness, a fecundity” (1981 [1970]: 56), but at the same time, this truth can also be “a gentle and insidiously universal force, that prodigious machinery designed to exclude” (ibid.). This results in a widely shared and approved type of discourse in which only certain ideas, concepts or knowledges circulate as ‘truth’, forming what one could call a dominant discourse that relegates all other impossible or unthinkable ideas, concepts or knowledges to a marginal position. Such a dynamic is enabled by the regimes of truth, and the choice of the word ‘regime’ links semantically well with the idea of dominant discourse. According to Foucault,

[e]ach society has its regimes of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse it harbours and causes to function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true from false statements, the way in which each is sanctioned [...]. (Foucault 1977b: 13)

To specify this at the example of sexual identity, it is helpful to view discourse in a more differentiated way "sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualisable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements" (Foucault 1972: 80). The general domain of all statements could be seen as the sum of all statements that in some way relate to sexual identity and that can possibly be expressed in discourse. The individualisable groups of statements could be thought of as those statements that relate to heterosexuality, or bisexuality, or homosexuality, which work towards producing possible sub-discourses revolving around specific sexual identities. When discourse, however, becomes a regulated practice in which only a certain amount of statements is accounted for, then this is where the power of discourse becomes evident to define what counts as proper, legitimate and valorised 'true' sexual identity. This does not mean, in turn, that other types of sexual identity become completely invisible or even 'die' in discourse. Rather, such 'false' sexual identities do not find entrance into the mainstream discourse that represents 'the truth'.⁶ When Foucault adds that 'the truth' "circulates in apparatuses of education and information" (1977b: 13), including schools and universities, this stresses the significant role of education in reproducing and valorising a certain type of discourse, while excluding other possibilities. If, for example, an educational system as a whole, or the individual school or classroom, never mentions or represents any other sexual identity than heterosexuality in its discourse, this perpetuates a 'regime of truth' that regulates the discourse within a specific educational context in view of what it includes ('proper' sexual identity) or excludes ('deviant' sexual identity). Consequently, educational systems are potentially complicit in regulating and reproducing discourse as endorsed or dominant discourse, which points to the enhanced awareness that educational systems need to have of their crucial role in circulating *certain* meanings of cultural difference (and not others) in their discourse.

In view of this rather pessimistic portrayal of the relationship between truth regimes and discourse, where the range of statements that are possible within discourse simply becomes irrevocably cemented in the face of an all powerful regime of truth, a necessary intervention needs to be made. Foucault stresses that what counts as 'truth' in a society can become the source of political debate and social confrontation, turning discourse into a field of contestation about what counts as 'truth' (Foucault 1977b: 13). Even though discourse can powerfully function to maintain a certain social order by perpetuating meanings about the available

6 The notion of finding entrance into discourse is mirrored in Foucault's essay 'The Order of Discourse', in which he emphasizes that "not all the regions of discourse are equally open and penetrable; some of them are largely forbidden (they are differentiated and differentiating), while others seem to be almost open to all winds and put at the disposal of the speaking subject, without prior restrictions" (Foucault 1981 [1970]: 62). What becomes apparent here is the necessity to reflect on the quality of a certain topic, i.e. whether it has the status of a taboo that is simply unsayable or unthinkable, or whether it is an all-agreeable topic without any restrictive conventions, or whether it falls somewhere within the continuum marked by these two ends. How penetrable or forbidden a certain region of discourse is would ultimately depend on the specific nature of the topic in question.

categories of difference, this does not at the same time mean that discourse is forcibly bound to constantly reproduce a certain status quo of a given social order into infinity. When Foucault writes that discourse has a “transitory existence” (1981 [1970]: 52) and does not constitute its theme for once and for all to preserve it (cf. 1972: 32), this means that discourse can also change or become effaced, and that certain meanings circulating in discourse are only temporarily stabilised, historically contingent (differing, for example, from century to century) and contextually bound (legal or medical contexts might look differently at the same theme). Hence, meanings can become destabilised or unfixed through changing discursive practices, e.g. in view of how a certain cultural difference such as homosexuality is discussed, valued, and renegotiated, causing the alleged ‘regime of truth’ to shift.

What is crucial here is to introduce the notion of power, a central component of Foucault’s conceptualisation of discourse. Like much of Foucault’s terminology, the meaning of ‘power’ is also hard to pin down conclusively. To begin with, power can be understood as the force that regulates the production of discourse by controlling or selecting what statements are sayable and thinkable in discourse through procedures of exclusion, ordering, classification or valorisation (cf. Foucault 1981 [1970]: 52). From this vantage point, power is distributed through social relations in a *repressive* way, maintaining systems of domination and suppression, e.g. along the lines of specific cultural differences (cf. Barker 2012: 93). Viewed in this repressive way, discourse is “an effect of power” (Foucault 1978: 101), but Foucault also emphasises a productive notion in that discourse can become “an instrument [...] of power” (ibid.) and subsequently “a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy” (ibid.). In contrast to the pessimistic vista of dominating regimes of truth, the productive notion of power envisions the repressions and silences in a dominant discourse as “a shelter for power” (ibid.) from which alternative meanings and discursive practices can emerge that cause cleavages in a society to shift about, or that fracture given unities, or that effect regroupings of what is sayable and thinkable in discourse (cf. ibid.: 96). If such a subversion is carried to its extremes, it is at least theoretically imaginable that a discourse completely ‘flips around’, turning the tables of silenced alternatives and endorsed truths around. This would, however, only install a new regime of truth to replace a former one. Therefore, in following Foucault, it might be preferable not to think of silenced and endorsed discourses as completely separate from each other:

[T]he fact that there are systems of rarefaction⁷ does not mean that beneath them or beyond them there reigns a vast unlimited discourse, continuous and silent, which is quelled and repressed by them, and which we have the task of raising up by restoring the power of speech to it. We must not imagine that there is a great unsaid or a great unthought which runs throughout the world and intertwines with all its forms and all its events, and which we would have to articulate or think at last. Discourses must be treated as discontinuous practices, which cross each other, are sometimes juxtaposed with one another, but can just as well exclude or be unaware of each other. (Foucault 1981 [1970]: 67)

⁷ Rarefaction describes a procedure of discourse to regulate who is permitted to have access to discourse, and who is excluded from discourse (cf. Foucault 1981 [1970]).

Foucault's position might caution against intuitive impulses to simply restore the suppressed and excluded to voice and visibility in discourse in an attempt to 'repair' the havoc that a regime of truth has caused. Not only does this position raise the inevitable questions of who gives power to whom, who allows whom to have power, or who can claim power and resistance on their own terms (possibly only perpetuating the binary logic of domination/privileged vs. suppression/unprivileged), but it also points to the complex and dynamic relationship between seemingly separate discourses. Rather than seeing silenced and endorsed discourses only as diametrically opposed and as always unaware of each other, Foucault highlights that they constantly interfere with each other, challenge each other and potentially interrupt each other, so that power can intervene in many instances to shift existing constellations of discourses.

Admittedly, now, a contentious issue remains where power is located within discourse. In a Foucauldian sense, power does not reside in a centralised locus from which it is exerted across the social sphere. Rather, Foucault remarks that "[p]ower is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault 1978: 93), which Barker translates into the image of power forming "a dispersed capillary woven into the fabric of the entire social order" (2012: 93). If power is everywhere, this means that power can be exercised "from innumerable points" (Foucault 1978: 94), which in turn leaves room for the empowering implication that discourse, and the knowledge that counts as true in discourse, can be (re)defined, (re)written and (re)negotiated by those who are traditionally believed to hold power, but indeed by everyone. Such a potentially liberating and emancipatory view on power poses an immediate challenge to fixed and established binaries. Such a view is pointedly expressed by Gutting:

Each of us is – and in a variety of ways – the subject of modern power. Correspondingly, there is no single centre of power, no privileged 'us' against which a marginalized 'them' is defined. Power is dispersed throughout society, in a multitude of micro-centres. This dispersion corresponds to the fact that there is no teleology (no dominating class or world-historical process) behind the development. Modern power is the chance outcome, in the manner of genealogy, of numerous small, uncoordinated causes. (Gutting 2005: 87)

In evaluating Gutting's position, Foucault effectively creates an epistemic space in discourse for everyone, including the marginalised who are often conceptualised as being powerless, to hold up discourse to scrutiny and participate in the contestation about meaning. The potentiality of such an epistemic space becomes immediately relevant for the conceptualisation of cultural difference, in particular so because power – exerted from various 'micro-centres' (and not just a dominant pole) – can change the social order that maintains cultural differences as clearly distinct binary oppositions. Moreover, if power is only a 'chance outcome', this points to the inherent instability of any given discourse, because any social order that is produced by the power in which discourse is soaked could always as well be otherwise. On a critical note, it needs to be said that such a view on power in discourse might project too optimistic a horizon onto the social landscape, assuming that everyone has simple access to power and only needs to embrace it to achieve change. Power might not be readily and equally available to everyone, and even though discourse and its inherent regimes of truth and power constellations are not necessarily and infinitely embossed in stone, I do argue that one must not lose all attention to

marginalised positions. Rather than expecting that they can and will liberate themselves anyway given the logic of an all-accessible power, one might need evermore attentive eyes and ears to remain sensitive and aware of the 'still-excluded' or the 'still-silent' positions in discourse and seek out ways of achieving their representation.

Doubtlessly, the relationship between discourse and cultural difference yields relevant connecting points to the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language. In what follows, I will sketch out this relevance along the lines of research carried out in TEFL and of the role of discourse in the EFL classroom, including a consideration of learning objectives linked to the notion of discourse. In view of the first aspect, I argue that one can consider research in the field of TEFL and the theoretical insights generated here as a discursive formation in its own right. Hence, when it comes to researching how difference is (or can be) approached and conceptualised in TEFL theory, it is a legitimate question to ask what actually circulates in the discourse TEFL as a discipline produces for and about itself. This question can be differentiated (cf. Barker 2012: 91) with regard to the statements about a certain topic (in this case, cultural difference) that circulate in TEFL to provide knowledge about this topic, which includes an analysis of how cultural difference is conceptualised in TEFL discourse and what types of cultural difference are actually considered and talked about, e.g. in research literature or at conferences. This ties in with an interest in identifying what is sayable and thinkable in TEFL discourse about cultural difference (i.e. what ways of talking and thinking in TEFL discourse have acquired authority), and whether there are blind spots that regulate and prescribe what types of difference are not (yet) discussed, e.g. those differences that might be perceived as controversial or taboo (cf. Alter/Merse 2014). At the same time, it needs to be acknowledged that discourse is never static and that the power operating within it can cause a discourse to change, indicating that new topics and new or different ways of thinking and speaking about cultural difference in the field of TEFL can enter the discourse and gradually gain recognition. The suggestion by Alter and Merse (2014) to move topics that are culturally coded as taboo into the realm of plural education and literary learning in foreign language education provides a telling case in point for the possibility to shift grounds in discourse. Furthermore, the emerging interest in sexual diversity and LGBT issues in English Language Teaching (cf. chapter 5.3) also calls to mind that the way cultural difference is approached in discourse can be reconceptualised and renegotiated over time.

Importing a Foucauldian understanding of discourse into classroom practice is valuable to legitimise the selection of texts for classroom usage and to conceptualise the engagement of learners with these texts and the discourses they represent (cf. also Hallet 2012). Given the broad notion of discourse developed by Foucault, discourse materialises into an almost endless amount of texts that represent the varying ways a topic is spoken and thought about in a discursive formation. These texts, or rather a selection of these texts, can constitute the material and textual basis that serves to represent a certain discourse (or rather, selected snapshots of a discourse) in the classroom and make that discourse accessible and available to learners. The didactic challenge lies in constructing and organising a representative text ensemble that contains varying, multiple and certainly also contradictory perspectives circulating in a

discursive formation (cf. Decke-Cornill 1994). This text selection ultimately constitutes what Decke-Cornill (ibid.; also: 2004) calls the larger ‘didactic text’ that learners come to engage with in the classroom, and that learners also contribute to with their own textual productions or through voicing their opinions and reflections. For one, such a didactic text ensemble can serve to bring still-silent or oppressed voices (e.g. LGBT voices) into classroom visibility and representation. Just aiming at representation, however, would embody a reductive understanding of what a text ensemble can offer and what a Foucauldian notion of discourse entails. What I consider equally, if not more important, is therefore to harness the critical potential of discourse delineated by Foucault (1981 [1970]: 70) and to usher learners into exploring how meanings pertaining to cultural difference are produced, circulated, contested and shifted in discourse. Such an approach highlights the understanding of discourse “as an arena of cultural struggle” (Volkmann 2013: 176) so that learners can become sensitised to the power issues that regulate what is voiced in discourse, what is excluded from discourse, and how power can work towards challenging, evading or redoing ‘regimes of truth’. To speak with Foucault, the call is

to search [...] for instances of discursive production (which also administer silences, to be sure), of the production of power (which sometimes have the function of prohibiting), of the propagation of knowledge (which often cause mistaken beliefs or systematic misconceptions to circulate). (Foucault 1978: 12)

If learners learn to engage and grapple with discourse in such a critical way as Foucault envisions, then this can contribute to the development of what Hallet conceptualises as ‘*fremdsprachige Diskursfähigkeit*’ (2012: 8-10). He suggests ‘*fremdsprachige Diskursfähigkeit*’ as a broad and superordinate learning objective that empowers learners to understand, communicate about and actively participate in discourses by putting to use the complex web of competences they develop in EFL education. According to Hallet, a sound and careful organisation of input materials that model a meaningful and relevant discursive formation into the classroom serve as a basis for a complex task environment in which learners come into contact with the discourse in question. In line with Foucault’s notion that power can also have a positive epistemic role in discourse (cf. Gutting 2005: 51), it is to be welcomed that Hallet also envisions learners as active and critical participants in discourse so that they can contribute to the ongoing renegotiation of discourse in which cultural meanings, for example about central categories of cultural difference, can become unfixed and redefined.

1.2.3 Poststructuralism and Difference: Derrida, Deconstruction and *Différance*

I continue and further the critical exploration of the concept of difference that has unfolded in the sections above by now turning to the insights on difference put forward in poststructuralist thought, most notably by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Poststructuralism marks a departure from structuralist accounts of difference, especially in that it problematises the structuralist heed to dichotomous thinking in opposites and the impulse to arrive at clear-cut and stable meanings in the analysis of difference. It is from the vantage point of poststructuralist theory that I seek to offer an understanding of wider conceptualisations of difference that go beyond the limitations of binary oppositions. In this subchapter, I will move into focus central

positions proposed by Derrida and couple the investigation of his texts with responses from other critical sources and commentary. This focus on Derrida is called for as he assumes a leading and central role in the development of poststructuralist thought and critique, and his work is at the forefront when it comes to engaging critically with the structuralist way of thinking in fixed binaries. In particular, I will use this section to explore Derrida's critical method of deconstruction and his concept of *différance*, developed in influential texts such as 'Différance' (2004 [1968]), *Writing and Difference* (2001 [1967]), *Positions* (1981 [1972]) or *Of Grammatology* (1974 [1967]), all of which were first published in the span of the 1960s and 1970s. I will round off each of these concepts by extending them to a reflection on their value and potential for the context of TEFL.

Of Grammatology serves as a prominent example of how Derrida challenges binary oppositions through deconstruction – in the case of this work, the very specific opposition between speech and writing. Derrida develops a detailed account of how a distinct binary is set up between the difference of writing and speaking, with speaking being conceptualised as superior over writing. In particular, Derrida challenges Saussure's preference of the spoken word for linguistic analysis and his stance on writing only as derivative of the spoken word, with the spoken word being described "the first signifier, representation of the self-present voice, of the immediate, natural, and direct signification of the meaning" (Derrida 1974: 30). It is the superiority of speech that "debases writing [...] as mediation of mediation and as a fall into the exteriority of meaning" (Derrida 1974: 12-13). Speech is established as being closer to the mind and therefore more immediate and original, a direct symbol of mental experience, whereas the written word is only a symbol of the spoken word, and hence comes secondary:

it is because the voice, producer of *the first symbols*, has a relationship of essential and immediate proximity with the mind. Producer of the first signifier, it is not just a simple signifier among others. It signifies 'mental experiences' which themselves reflect or mirror things by natural resemblance. [...] between mind and logos, [there would be a] relationship of conventional symbolization. And the *first* convention, which would relate immediately to the order of natural and universal signification, would be produced as spoken language. (Derrida 1974: 11)

Here, Derrida illustrates how speech as one end of the binary opposition is conceptualised as superior, coming first in a sequence of meaning-making, relegating writing to an inferior position that only comes second. Derrida, however, continues to deconstruct this alleged inferiority of writing as opposed to speech:

it seems as though the concept of writing—no longer indicating a particular, derivative, auxiliary form of language in general (whether understood as communication, relation, expression, signification, constitution of meaning our thought, etc.), no longer designating the exterior surface, the insubstantial double of a major signifier, *the signifier of the signifier*—is beginning to go beyond the extension of language. In all senses of the word, writing thus *comprehends* language. Not that the word 'writing' has ceased to designate the signifier of the signifier, but it appears, strange as it may seem, that 'signifier of the signifier' no longer defines accidental doubling and fallen secondarity. (Derrida 1974: 6-7)

In this thought experiment, Derrida carves out a space for writing in which this form of language is not necessarily and per se devalued or debunked compared to speech. Thus, the power of Derrida's work in *Of Grammatology* lies in his showing the "explicit and

unmistakable privilege assigned to speech over writing” (Currie 2004: 50), which forms an opposition that Derrida unmasks and identifies as hierarchical. In order to invert this very hierarchy, Derrida shows that “writing is just as capable of occupying the dominant position in the hierarchy” (ibid.: 51), so that this thought experiment shows that there is no natural supremacy of one pole of the binary over the other, and hence that this hierarchical binary is inherently instable because it could always be thought of otherwise, “so that the very opposition of origin and supplement breaks down” (ibid.: 52).

Even though the distinction between writing and speech as such is not immediately relevant as content for this study, what *is* relevant is the critical deconstruction of oppositions that Derrida pursues. In *Positions*, Derrida maps out a more general critique that is not restricted to speech and writing. He emphasises “th[e] necessity [...] to recognize that in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a *vis-à-vis*, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other [...], or has the upper hand” (Derrida 1981: 41). What follows is that oppositions are normally not neutral, let alone peaceful, and that relations of power operate within the opposition, resulting in a necessary imbalance of power between two opposing terms. These terms are then weighted, with one pole of the binary being more valued and powerful than the other (cf. Woodward 2009b: 36; Hall 2013a: 225). The pressing question then becomes how such a binary opposition can be critically approached. In *Positions*, Derrida describes “a kind of *general strategy of deconstruction*” (Derrida 1981: 41) to deconstruct binary oppositions, that is, to dismantle them and take them apart (cf. Barker 2012: 88). At first, Derrida stresses what such a strategy of deconstruction is intended to avoid, “namely both simply *neutralizing* the binary oppositions [...] and simply *residing* within the closed field of these oppositions, thereby confirming it” (Derrida 1981: 41). What he means by this becomes clearer when Derrida explains how a binary opposition can be deconstructed as soon as it has been identified as such. Derrida writes:

To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. To overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition. Therefore one might proceed too quickly to a *neutralization* that *in practice* would leave the previous field untouched, leaving one no hold on the previous opposition, thereby preventing any means of *intervening* in the field effectively. (Derrida 1981: 41)

Rather than “*immediately jumping beyond* oppositions”, as Derrida (1981: 41) cautions, this phase of deconstruction requires careful analysis. The aim is to expose the hierarchy and “the assumed superiority of one term over the other” (Currie 2004: 50). In this phase, one still “operate[s] on the terrain of and from within the deconstructed system” (Derrida 1981: 42), but “brings low what was high” (ibid.) to achieve “the irruptive emergence of a new ‘concept’, a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime” (ibid.). This would mean, according to Currie (2004: 50-51), to think through the promotion of the derivative term to the superior and privileged position of the binary in order to show that the second or derivative term would just be as capable of holding the dominant position (which Derrida shows at the example of speech and writing). At the same time, however, this does not mean to show that there is something inherently truer in the second than in the first term. Rather, this reversal seeks to show that the first superior term relies on the second inferior term for its position,

“using the banished and secondary term to explain the nature of the privileged and prior term” (Currie 2004: 51). In undoing and taking apart the binary opposition in this way, the very opposition that originally stabilised the binary of the two terms becomes unstable, allowing one to look beyond the opposition and critically understanding how the hierarchy of the opposition functions, which makes it increasingly difficult or impossible to confirm the opposition in its original state. Barker also adds that deconstruction can serve the purpose to expose the blind spots that the clear-cut opposition has previously and structurally excluded, and thus to liberate other differences that cannot be contained in a simple binary opposition. As a result of deconstruction comes “the reinscription of that opposition, which involves the disruption or reconfiguration of the difference” – one is inclined to actually say differences here – “between the two terms” (Currie 2004: 50). On a more critical level, one could ask what remains after a previously stable opposition has been thoroughly deconstructed and if the reversal of the two poles would not produce another, albeit converted, binary. By turning to Sullivan, who uses the opposition between heterosexuality and homosexuality as an example, we can note that

deconstruction is not synonymous with destruction: [...] a deconstructive approach to the hierarchised binary opposition heterosexuality/homosexuality would not consist of reversing the terms or of attempting to somehow annihilate the concepts and/or the relation between them altogether. Rather, a deconstructive analysis would highlight the inherent instability of the terms, as well as enabling an analysis of the culturally and historically specific ways in which the terms and the relation between them have developed, and the effects they have produced. (Sullivan 2003: 50-51)

What emerges from Sullivan’s position is that deconstruction is not just an imaginative thought experiment in which a given binary opposition is dismantled and reversed. Rather, she suggests taking the contexts into account in which an opposition functions, and looking at the effects this opposition has in view of regulating and privileging certain sociocultural differences over others. Consequently, the merit of a deconstructive approach is that it allows for an in-depth analysis of the nature, the contexts and the effects of binary oppositions. Such an analysis could then be carried out at the example of texts, e.g. literary texts, to illustrate how an opposition can powerfully operate and function, e.g. by producing exclusions and blind spots within the text itself (cf. Barker 2012: 88-89).

Transferred to the field of TEFL, the usefulness and applicability of Derrida’s complex poststructuralist theory of the deconstruction of binary oppositions must be viewed with a careful and differentiated eye, depending on whether one approaches Derrida from the perspective of classroom practice or research. Regarding actual classroom practice, Lütge (2013a) calls to caution that complex poststructuralist theories might not be immediately applicable to concrete teaching scenarios, which indicates that Derrida’s strategy of deconstruction might not lend itself directly as a step-by-step technique learners can simply and fully employ to approach and dismantle binary oppositions. Also Hallet and Nünning (2007) give rise to the concern that TEFL’s link disciplines (e.g. cultural studies) must not be conceptualised in terms of what they call an ‘*Abbilddidaktik*’, i.e. a concept for TEFL that projects – in a one-to-one relationship – the techniques, methods and insights of academic disciplines without any intermediation into the classroom so that learners come to think and act as if they were academics in these disciplines. Much might be won already, and here Sullivan’s

position introduced above comes into play, if learners are gradually enabled to grasp consciously what a binary opposition is, to identify if a binary opposition is at work (e.g. in a literary text they are engaging with or in a sociocultural context they are exploring) and to describe and understand the effects of powerful and maybe violent cultural oppositions (in that they exclude, for example, transgender identities from a clear-cut binary gender system). In view of TEFL research rather than practice, however, Derrida's strategy of deconstruction is of more immediate value and relevance. Here, I consider it vital that researchers employ the lens of deconstruction in order to detect and dismantle the binary oppositions that TEFL as a discipline itself produces and maintains. Such a viewpoint might be helpful in detecting if privilege (e.g. the privilege of being represented) only extends to certain types of cultural differences, with the effect of silencing or marginalising other types of difference. Furthermore, exposing the superiority of certain differences over other differences (e.g. heterosexuality over homosexuality or bisexuality) could be helpful to think through the valorisation of excluded or allegedly inferior differences, e.g. by developing strategies for achieving their representation. Another valuable impetus of Derrida's deconstruction for research is to develop concepts for teaching practice that work against reproducing reductionist meanings that reside in binary oppositions and instead bring to view subtler and finer, more differentiated 'in-between' meanings that are otherwise hidden.

Derrida's radical deconstruction of the binary opposition also challenges the epistemological function of the binary opposition to structure human thought and experience, so that the question emerges if the binary opposition must be rejected *per se* or if there is a possibility of retaining it in some principled way. To answer this question, valuable impulses can be drawn from the theoretical concept of 'transdifference'. This concept was developed by the Erlangen graduate school *Kulturhermeneutik im Zeichen von Differenz und Transdifferenz* (founded in 2001) and initially put forward in a seminal essay by Breinig and Lösch (2000) (cf. also Allolio-Näcke/Kalscheuer 2005; Schulze-Engler 2006). On the one hand, transdifference is conceptualised as a heuristic that

allows us to inspect phenomena that do not neatly fit models of clear-cut difference, thus defying – at least to a certain extent – explanation on the basis of binary logic. Highlighting the moments of uncertainty, indecidability, and contradiction that difference adumbrates, it enables us to discern what eludes the cognitive grasp of thinking in terms of difference.” (Breinig/Lösch 2002: 22)

This shows that transdifference mirrors poststructuralist thinking in that it is deeply concerned with problematising and interrogating the validity of reductive and simplifying binary constructions of difference and has the potential to disturb what Lösch calls the purity of the arrangement (2005: 29). Yet on the other hand, the concept of transdifference acknowledges that binary logic is “an indispensable, yet intrinsically problematic tool for human constructions of order” (Breinig/Lösch 2002: 23). This means that that transdifferential theory does not fully follow the poststructuralist move towards radical deconstruction. The sense of orientation offered by the binary opposition is “retained as a point of reference” (Breinig/Lösch: 2002: 23). What emerges from this as a realistic vista for TEFL is that the field of cultural differences can still be navigated without losing grip completely of what might be perceived as a powerful

thought pattern. This makes it possible to conceptualise the binary opposition as an experiential and discursive basis – a point of reference – from which a critical reflection and interrogation of difference can unfold in the classroom. It is thus permissible both for learners and teachers to speak about and think in terms of binary difference initially, and then complement the original binary difference with moments of transdifference (cf. Lösch 2005: 28; Allolio-Näcke/Kalscheuer/Manzeschke 2005b: 10). The binary opposition can, however, only ever be a starting point for further investigation. It is not a sacrosanct unit, and in the rhetoric of transdifference, it is “cause[d] [...] to oscillate” (Breinig/Lösch: 2002: 23)⁸. In the context of TEFL, this oscillation can be engendered by bringing learners into contact with “whatever runs ‘through’ the line of demarcation drawn by binary difference” (2002: 23). This ‘whatever’ does not only entail cultural phenomena in which ‘cultural’ is equated with ‘nation’ or ‘ethnicity’, but indeed a wide range of “microsocietal phenomena” and “value systems, forms of behavior, social organizations and forms of symbolic expression, interaction and self-definitions” (Breinig/Lösch 2002: 17), including gender, sexual orientation, and class (cf. *ibid.*). Such a broad understanding of culture is ultimately helpful to legitimise the inclusion of a vaster set of differences into cultural learning in TEFL and to achieve the ‘oscillation’ of binary oppositions from diverse angles.

To continue the discussion of poststructuralist understandings of difference and shed a more nuanced light on the relationship between difference and meaning, I will now turn to the concept of difference (in French: *différance*)⁹ that also takes on a central position in Derrida’s work. As a starting point, I turn to Derrida’s statement that “from the moment that there is meaning there are nothing but signs. *We think only in signs*” (Derrida 1974: 50). In writing this, Derrida stresses that meaning is generated through signs, and he understands that meanings “are neither fallen from the sky nor inscribed once and for all in a closed system” (Derrida 1981: 27). With this, Derrida calls into question the notion of a fixed meaning that is essentially inscribed into a given sign and

accepts Saussure’s argument that meaning is generated by relations of difference between signifiers rather than by reference to an independent object world. However, for Derrida, the consequence of this play of signifiers is that meaning can never be fixed. Words carry meanings, including the echoes or traces of other meanings from other related words in other contexts. Meaning slides down a chain of signifiers abolishing a stable signified. (Barker 2012: 18)

8 For example, transdifferential thinking would not deny that gendered concepts of femininity or masculinity do exist as experiential ‘truth’, but it would move beyond this categorical either/or-distinction and pay attention to other gender expressions that cannot simply be captured within a feminine/masculine-binary. From a transdifference perspective, the interest would, for example, lie in analysing how gender can be socially organized in alternative ways, or in how far diverse symbolic expressions or self-definitions of gender run counter to value systems, and thus challenge fixed notions or norms of how gender should ideally be expressed.

9 Difference, or in French: *différance*, is a neologism coined by Derrida. It includes an unusual and deliberate (mis)spelling of the word difference by replacing the second ‘e’ with an ‘a’. Currie writes that this intrusion of the ‘a’ to make strange an existing word is Derrida’s “little graphic joke” (Currie 2004: 52). With this neologism being notoriously difficult to pin down in its meaning, Currie suggests that Derrida illustrates well the unpindownability of meaning in general (Currie 2004: 45). For a detailed account of difference and an explanation of the usage of the letter ‘a’, may I refer the interested reader to Derrida’s essay “Différance” (Derrida 2004 [1968]) or to *Positions* (Derrida 1981 [1976]: 15-36).

This shows that Derrida draws on the insights put forward by structuralist thinking in that meaning is produced relationally and differentially, but departs from structuralism in that he intervenes with his concept of *différance* to point out that meaning is constantly sliding. In proposing *différance*, Derrida explores and critically challenges the assumption that meaning can ever have a full presence in and of itself (cf. Glendinning 2011: 61). To understand what the concept of *différance* entails, it is crucial to disentangle its two component meanings: *différance* combines the meanings of the verbs ‘to defer’ (to postpone, to put off in time) and ‘to differ’ (in space), playing on both meanings at the same time rather than functioning as either of the two (Derrida 2001: xvii-xviii; 2004: 283).

‘To differ’ covers what Derrida calls the spatial dimension of *différance* (cf. 2004: 291). For a sign to attain meaning, it is necessary that “spacing” (ibid.: 283), i.e. a certain interval, a certain distance, occurs among different signs so that they gain a sense of not being identical (cf. ibid.). This spacing between signs (or concepts, ideas, etc.) initiates what Derrida calls the play of differences:

The play of differences supposes, in effect, syntheses and referrals which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that a simple element be *present* in and of itself, referring only to itself. Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving results in each ‘element [...] being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system. (Derrida 1981: 26)

This position suggests that no element has a pure, easily available and complete meaning in itself. If meaning is constituted by the play of differences, then each element can be said to be ‘contaminated’ by other elements, which in turn refer to other elements in the system, and so forth, with each element bearing traces of other elements. In a way, any attempt to circle in the meaning of one element necessarily requires to look at the meaning of other elements – and not at that element’s inner essence, that is, its true identity. Rivkin and Ryan encapsulate this when writing that

if all things (all objects, ideas, and words) are produced as identities by their differences from other things, then a complete determination of identity (a statement of what something ‘is’ fully and completely ‘in itself’) would require an endless inventory of relations to other terms in a potentially infinite network of differences. Truth, as a result, will always be incomplete. (Rivkin/Ryan 2004: 258)

The incompleteness of meaning is further complicated by Derrida’s method of deconstruction that seeks to dismantle binary oppositions. When elements gain their identity by differing from each other, then the binary opposition posits a maximum spacing or interval between two elements, suggesting that both identities are clearly distinguishable. As I outlined above, the various phases of deconstruction cause the opposition to become unstable, showing that there is nothing inherently true in the meaning this opposition originally seemed to define. By way of summarising this line of argumentation, *différance* in the sense of ‘to differ’ departs from the assumption that any object or any idea can have a complete presence and a pure meaning in itself (cf. also Rivkin/Ryan 2004: 259).

‘To defer’ adds the dimension of what Derrida calls “temporalizing” (2004: 291) to the concept of *différance*. With this, Derrida stresses that meaning never has a fixed sense of

closure as it will always be deferred, that is, postponed until later (cf. *ibid.*). He elaborates on the temporal dimension of meaning and argues that each present moment in which the meaning of an element or idea is produced necessarily assumes past present moments as well as future present moments that have constituted, or will constitute, similar meanings. In this sense, the meaning established in a present moment is related to its difference from other presents in the past and in the future (cf. Rivkin/Ryan 2004: 258). Accordingly, ‘to defer’ encapsulates

the detour and postponement by means of which intuition, perception, consummation—in a word, the relationship to the present, the reference to a present reality, to a *being*—are always *deferred*. Deferred by virtue of the very principle of difference which holds that an element functions and signifies, takes on or conveys meaning, only by referring to another past or future element [...]. (Derrida 1981: 29)

As such, the play of differences also has a strong temporal component that defers the establishment of a true and pure meaning over time. To refine this notion, I turn to Glendinning who explains that even though the same word or concept is repeated over time, it does not have a persisting presence because it is involved in different interpretive contexts that constantly remake the meaning of a word or concept (2011: 65). As a word or concept is embedded in changing configurations where it frequently encounters other words and concepts that co-constitute its meaning anew, meaning can at best only have a preliminary character – although Glendinning admits that the use of a certain word or concept in a new context assumes that there is at least some kind of identity at issue, opening up the same concept and its assumed identity to new interpretations in new contexts of use.

In conjoining both the specific aspects of ‘to differ’ and ‘to defer’, *différance* can be understood as “a simultaneous process of deferment in time and difference in space” (Rivkin/Ryan 2004: 258) in which the meaning of a sign or idea is constituted both by spatial differences and temporal postponements. Hence, the concept of *différance* challenges the long-held and fundamental philosophical assumptions that “the essence of a thing consisted of its being fully present to itself”, as Rivkin and Ryan (2004: 258) note. But if an element does not have a true identity or a pure meaning in itself, then neither can its meaning or identity ever be determined in any final, determinable or complete sense – the possibility of which is rejected by Derrida (cf. Hall 2013a; Currie 2004: 60). Such a conclusion might leave one with the discouraging feeling that it might be futile altogether to attempt at understanding the meaning of a word, a concept, or an individual and collective social identity. Transferred to the engagement with cultural differences in the teaching practice of EFL, this severely calls into question any endeavour to circle in the meanings that are attached to a specific line of cultural difference, which might leave both learners and teachers with the frustrating feeling of not ‘fully knowing’ or ‘fully understanding’. Furthermore, the concept of *différance* also points to an inherent problem of representation through indicating that a single representation of cultural difference in the EFL classroom can never accurately tell ‘the whole story’.

To rehabilitate the value of Derrida’s thought regarding this rather pessimistic stance, Glendinning dispels the myth around Derrida “that he is a kind of skeptic or nihilist who doubts or denies that we ever mean anything or affirms that our words mean nothing” (2011: 75). Hence, Derrida does not turn against any meaning as such. But if meaning is neither fallen from

the sky nor fixed in an element's pure essence, then *différance* is Derrida's alternative source that makes meaning possible in that it sets the creation of meaning in motion in the first place. A close look at his essay 'Différance' reveals that he uses this term to designate

the movement by which language, or any code, any system of reference in general, becomes [...] constituted as a fabric of differences. [...]. Différance is what makes the movement of signification possible only if each element that is said to be 'present' [...] is related to something other than itself but retains the mark of a past element and already lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to a future element. (Derrida 2004: 286-287)

With such a viewpoint, Derrida effectively contrasts the fixity of meaning with a rhetoric of movement. In the play of differences, meaning appears as fluid, contingent and constantly shifting, never producing a final moment of absolute truth. What is important for TEFL is that Derrida does not discourage any attempt to discuss or reflect on meaning, but rather endorses a general openness for the interpretation of meaning that makes it possible to introduce alternative viewpoints and understandings into the analysis of a sign's meaning. This is mirrored in Tong's approach to *différance* who describes it as "the inevitable, meaning-creative gap between the object of perception and our perception of it" (Tong 1989: 223). Rather than shutting down a productive discussion of difference altogether in the EFL classroom, it can be argued that Derrida breathes new life into such discussions, offering new vistas from which to explore difference by filling the gaps that *différance* leaves open. The concept of *différance* further hints at the epistemological stakes of representing cultural difference in EFL education. In my reading of Derrida, *différance* suggests the necessity to include multiple representations of difference into teaching. As one single representation can never convey a fixed truth, multiple representations might actually set the process of reflecting on meaning in an open and fluid way into motion. What would become present to the learners' conscious experience and perception is described by Rivkin and Ryan as "a kind of ghost effect, a flickering of passing moments that are differentially constituted by their relations and their interconnectedness" (2004: 258). Such a view on the understanding of meaning should make it increasingly difficult "to establish hard and fast boundaries" (Currie 2004: 57) around binary oppositions when, in fact, meaning is relational and interconnected, rather than neatly packed (cf. Woodward 2009b: 38). Also, Derrida writes that "[a]t the point at which the concept of *différance* [...] intervenes, all the conceptual oppositions [...] become nonpertinent" (1981: 29), which pointedly sums up the liberatory potential of his rich intellectual thought and his effective theoretical intervention into structuralist thinking about difference that can also be harnessed in TEFL.

1.2.4 Othering and the Other: Feminist, Postcolonial and Philosophical Positions

A basic premise of the critical concept of difference, the binary opposition, has been sketched out above and critiqued for its function to reduce, simplify and hierarchise diversity into two distinct poles. Building upon this understanding of the binary opposition, I will now turn to Otherness or the Other as a very distinct stance towards the binary opposition and follow Pericles Trifonas' view who considers Otherness the most radical form of difference (cf. Pericles Trifonas 2003a: 5). This radical understanding is taken up by Currie who suggests three main characteristics that are indicative of Otherness, which entail "the sense of quasi-

oppositonality, the sense of implicit inferiority or secondariness, and the sense of unknowability and ineffability” (Currie 2004: 95). They provide a welcome scaffold to guide the exploration of Otherness in this sub-chapter:

- the characteristic of **quasi-oppositonality** draws on the notion that social identities are embedded and organised in systems of differences; with the specific case of Otherness, quasi-oppositonality simultaneously highlights that a maximal difference is cast between the Other and its opposite pole, but that this maximal difference is, in fact, an artificial social construct and not the effect of nature or true essences that would in any way legitimise the unjust or hierarchical opposition; even though the notion of artificiality is not meant to imply that the condition of being ‘Other’ has no real-life or material consequences, it is empowering in that it enables one to critically challenge and intervene into the constructedness of Otherness and the Other (cf. Currie 2004: 86);
- the aspect of **inferiority and secondariness** picks up on the ‘quasi-ness’ of the opposition in which one pole is cast as the Other and stresses that difference is constructed negatively as the exclusion, silencing or marginalisation of the Other in contrast to a superior and dominant pole; who or what is ‘Other’ is usually attached with adjectives such as suppressed, degraded, rejected, unprivileged, deviant, abnormal or abject (e.g. Bauman 1991: 14; Woodward 2009b: 23; Tong 1989: 219); here, the idea that Otherness “is not a logical relation as much as a power relation” (Currie 2004: 86) becomes highly transparent, as the superior pole of the binary necessarily has to diminish, de-value or suppress the inferior pole only to legitimise its own dominant position as pure, healthy, or rightful; at the same time, however, the dominant pole relies on the existence of its suppressed pole to become charged with meaning (cf. Hurtado 1999: 230), which points to the relational logic of dependence between the dominant and the suppressed pole.
- **unknowability and ineffability** is not so much concerned with Otherness as a structural feature of binary difference or identity, but refers to “a kind of other-worldliness, to an ungraspable or ineffable quality of the Other” (Currie 2004: 94-95), calling into question in how far the Other or Otherness can actually be grasped and understood in a situation of dialogue or encounter.

While these foci on Otherness tend to highlight its status as the ultimately negative or inferior pole of the binary opposition, I will also look into more optimistic or encouraging views on Otherness that see the state of being ‘Other’ as an advantageous viewpoint from which to critique and contest the normative centre, or – by following Levinas (1979, 1987) – as a site of ethical responsibility in face-to-face encounters with the Other. Typically, these characteristics resound to differing degrees in the specific academic discourses of Otherness or the Other that I will turn to in this chapter.

I will begin by drawing on feminist and post-colonial studies of ‘Otherness by referring to Simone de Beauvoir’s seminal feminist text *The Second Sex* (1957) and two influential post-colonial texts, Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) and Gayatri Spivak’s essay ‘Can the Subaltern

Speak' (1988). All of these positions address and analyse questions of the relationship between marginalised and dominant positions, e.g. women and men, or coloniser and colonised. Central tenets that will be interwoven into this discussion are the establishment of the Other as a secondary being (in Beauvoir's text), the notion of 'Othering', i.e. the discursive construction of difference as Otherness (in Said's text), and the question of in how far suppressed and silenced 'Others' can (not) gain voice and agency in the face of oppressing power discourses (in Spivak's essay). Furthermore, I seek to round off this discussion by shedding light on the specific position on Otherness developed in Levinas' philosophy. In view of the epistemological interest that I am pursuing in this study, this detailed account of the concept of Otherness is crucial. On one level, it needs to be stressed that I am *not* suggesting to cement, reinforce or reproduce fixed notions of Otherness in TEFL settings and thereby contribute to discourses of 'Othering' in either TEFL practice or research. Yet on another level, I strongly believe that both EFL classrooms and research can be or become sites for engaging with Otherness from a critical point of view, and for unmasking (or deconstructing) the mechanisms by which the Other or Otherness is produced in discourse. This, however, requires an awareness of the delicate stakes of the controversial concept of Otherness. Therefore, each position I will introduce here will be reflected on regarding their potential and value for TEFL.

Within feminist theory, the concept of the Other was initially put forward by Simone de Beauvoir in her influential work *The Second Sex*, originally published in French in 1949, and then published in English in 1953. In her work, she explores the relationship between men and women and the position of women as 'the' Other in patriarchal societies (cf. Antor 1995: 324, Pilcher/Whelehan 2004: 90). For de Beauvoir, the two poles of this binary are weighed differently:

The terms masculine and feminine are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity. (de Beauvoir 1957: xv)

De Beauvoir moves on to argue that the asymmetry between women and men that casts women as negative and inferior relates strongly to the authority for definition exercised by men over women:

[M]an defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded an autonomous being. [...] She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other. (de Beauvoir 1957: xvi)

Both statements pointedly illustrate how the opposition between men and women is set up as a hierarchical opposition, with women being 'the Other, "a secondary being" (de Beauvoir 1957: xxvii), whereas men are "the One" (ibid.: xviii). De Beauvoir's further remarks then read like a blueprint for the dynamics that potentially organise any opposition into a superior and an inferior pole: "No subject will readily volunteer to become the object, the inessential; it is not the Other, who, in defining himself as the Other, establishes the One. The Other is posed as such by the One in defining himself as the One" (de Beauvoir 1957: xviii). What emerges from this remark is that "the masculine principle is always the favoured 'norm'" (Pilcher/Whelehan 2004:

57), causing women to become “the continual outsiders” (ibid.) in a society that is “masculine to its very depths” (ibid.). Furthermore, this remark also highlights that the status of being the Other is not a voluntary act, but infused by power relations in which the dominant and privileged norm exercises power to assign the Other its position in society. In a very sharp comment, Tong emphasises that “women are Other not because they lack penises but because they lack power” (1989: 204), showing clearly that the hierarchical opposition between women and men is not a biological given, but a product of power relations.

Another strength of de Beauvoir’s work, Tong writes, is that it invites the reader “to ponder her analysis of *how* woman became the Other, not only different and separate from man but also inferior to him” (1989: 202; my emphasis). The central question then revolves around the ‘how’, i.e. how are women assigned their position as the Other. For explaining woman’s Otherness, de Beauvoir looks into biology, psychology, and Marxism – which she explores at great length in *The Second Sex* – and finds these positions disappointing for finding an answer. She does “no longer admit the existence of unchangeably fixed entities that determine given characteristics, such as those ascribed to woman” (de Beauvoir 1957: xiv). In other words, she highlights that woman’s position as the Other is not an unavoidable and inescapable biologically given fact. Rather, de Beauvoir “specified social roles as the primary mechanisms the self, or subject, uses to control the Other, or the object” (Tong 1989: 206). What follows from this is de Beauvoir’s famous conclusion:

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female represents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as an *Other*. (de Beauvoir 1957: 267)

It turns out that a woman’s state in society as the Other is not predetermined by any certain way of being, and that her alleged inferiority or secondariness is the product of human making or intervention, shaped by society. With the important distinction between being and becoming a woman, de Beauvoir paved the way towards the powerful distinction between biological sex and gender as a social construct. If gender is understood as a social construct, this opens up the potentiality that the opposition between the (masculine) norm and the (feminine) ‘Other’ could also always be constructed differently. As Tong writes in evaluation of de Beauvoir’s work,

because woman, like man, has no essence, she need not continue to be what man has made her to be. Woman can be a subject, can engage in positive action in society, and can redefine or abolish her roles as wife, mother, career woman [...]. Woman can create her own self because there is no essence of eternal femininity that prescribes a readymade identity for her. All that is holding woman back from self-creation is society [...]. (Tong 1989: 210)

This notion of possible change and intervention apparent in Tong’s voice is also suggested by de Beauvoir herself, who demands that “[i]f we are to gain understanding, we must get out of these ruts; we must discard the vague notions of superiority, inferiority, equality which have hitherto corrupted every discussion of the subject and start afresh” (de Beauvoir 1953: xxvii). With this fresh start emerging from de Beauvoir’s distinction between becoming and being a certain gender, it is possible to argue that femininity (or masculinity) is neither a readymade identity, nor is there a deterministic ‘fate’ that demands how a certain gender must be lived

‘correctly’, or that gender must be aligned to a matching sex. This opens up a space for various gender identifications freed from essentialising notions of how a certain gender has to ‘be’.

On a more critical note, I should like to add in common with Pilcher and Whelehan that de Beauvoir’s work follows the tendency towards universalism, “convey[ing] the view that the Other is the experience of all women, at all times” (Pilcher/Whelehan 2004: 100), thus blocking from view the differences of diverse women’s experiences, e.g. lesbian, working-class or women of colour, which might produce particular other ‘Othernesses’ that cannot be simply mapped onto a man-woman-dichotomy. Furthermore, de Beauvoir can be charged for reproducing a binary category between men as ‘the One’ and woman as ‘the Other’ (cf. Pilcher/Whelehan 2004: 100). Even though it can be said that de Beauvoir’s merits lie in drawing attention to women’s Otherness and offering an analysis of her Otherness based on socially informed thinking, she does not escape the binary as such, thus, in a way, foreclosing the possibility of existences between woman and man. Also Tong refers to positions which criticise that “[t]here is no in between” (1989: 213) in de Beauvoir’s analysis, but instead of interpreting this in view of alternative gendered existence outside the woman/man binary, Tong points out that the missing in-betweenness makes it difficult for women to find a position outside of her femininity, especially if she does not want to become ‘the One’ and merge with the masculine traits that trap her in her domain in the first place (ibid.). Still, de Beauvoir’s work must be taken seriously for the liberating message it entails, causing women to understand the full significance, causes, and effects of their alleged Otherness (cf. Tong 1989: 195; 213) and offering new impulses to imagine alternative ways of being – also beyond the distinct binary opposition between women and men which de Beauvoir herself did not dismantle.

De Beauvoir’s in-depth theorisation of the relationship between oppositions, norms and power developed at the specific example of women as the Other can also be transferred fruitfully to conceptualising the critical engagement with Otherness in TEFL contexts. To establish this transfer, I first of all wish to point out that de Beauvoir’s analysis can also be thought of in terms of other categories of human existence that are enmeshed in the force field of norms defining who or what counts as superior and primary, or inferior and secondary (e.g. sexuality, class, age, ethnicity). A fundamental critical impetus deriving from de Beauvoir’s work is, according to Tong, to stop seeing woman’s Otherness – and by extension also the Otherness of ‘other Others’ – as “an inherently defective mode of being” (1989: 213), encouraging and challenging those involved in TEFL not to perceive of ‘the Other or Otherness as deficit and to replicate such perceptions in research and classroom practice. While certainly no TEFL theory would deliberately endorse viewing the Other as a deficitary and defective mode of being or suggest that such an understanding be developed in the classroom, I consider it necessary for teachers and researchers alike to embrace a fine-tuned sensitivity to detect how ‘Others’ are actually talked about and represented – e.g. in classroom discourse, in reading material, in course books or in research – and, if necessary, to intervene and challenge such representations and ways of talking. This sensitivity is also important in that it offers a critical mind-set to constantly and relentlessly question the situation and (in)visibility of alleged ‘Others’ in TEFL (cf. Simons/Benjamin 1979: 336). When de Beauvoir writes about the

authority (of men) to define ‘the Other’ and ‘the One’, I suggest that also TEFL as a discipline takes its authority seriously to define and redefine what ‘Othernesses’ are voiced in classroom practice or research, and to identify what ‘Othernesses’ are still marginalised or relegated an inferior status in view of dominant and all-pervasive norms. I consider such constant and careful attention paramount in order to be able to identify, theorise, challenge, and reflect on how far-reaching Otherness is (not yet) negotiated in ELT contexts, and in what ways Otherness is grappled with as a social construct so as to make understandable – and to overcome – its quasi-oppositionality and status as inferior or negative. De Beauvoir’s work is valuable here in that it provides a substantial basis to enter such reflections and (re)negotiations.

In furthering the engagement with Otherness from a feminist viewpoint, I will now turn to the insights put forward by poststructuralist and postmodern theorists such as Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. Whereas in de Beauvoir’s work women’s Otherness is connoted negatively throughout, these theorists interpret Otherness differently in comparison to de Beauvoir’s original theory (cf. Tong 1989: 219; Pilcher/Whelehan 2004: 91). They still subscribe to the difference between women and men as a central figure of thought, but do not interpret this difference and the Otherness emanating from that difference as something negative, but instead as a positive and advantageous position (cf. Antor 1995: 324; Schößler 2008: 78). As such, these nuanced approaches to Otherness or the Other provide a refreshing angle to complement the extreme notion of Otherness solely as a condition of suppression, silencing, diminishment and abjection, but to see something positive in that very condition. Even though the theorists I seek to discuss here might differ in the details of their positions, Tong establishes a common ground between them in capturing the particular stance on Otherness they develop:

Postmodern feminists take de Beauvoir’s understanding of Otherness and turn it on its head. Woman is still the Other, but rather than interpreting this condition as something to be transcended, postmodern feminists proclaim its advantages. The condition of Otherness enables women to stand back and criticize the norms, values and practices that the dominant culture (patriarchy) seeks to impose on everyone, including those who live on its periphery—in this case, women. Thus, Otherness, for all of its associations with oppression and inferiority, is much more than an oppressed, inferior condition. Rather, it is a way of being, thinking, and speaking that allows for openness, plurality, diversity, and difference. (Tong 1989: 219)

It is difficult not to read Tong’s summary as empowering women – and also ‘other Others’ – as well as an encouragement to make use of their Otherness in order to launch a thorough criticism on the very norms that makes them ‘Other’ and to imagine alternative possibilities to be, think and speak outside of, or against, oppressive norms. What I do wish to point out, however, is not to read such an empowering position as a pedagogic concept in which those students who are in some way ‘Other’ become, qua being ‘Other’, *the* experts in a classroom on which the sole ‘burden’ of calling into question and criticising dominant and violent norms exclusively rests. Rather, I consider it crucial that all students learn to unmask and stand back from norms, irrespective of their own affiliations, and recognise the close relationship between norm and Otherness, instead of exploring only Otherness.

To add some depth to the discussion of how feminist positions after de Beauvoir dealt with the issue of Otherness, I will now provide a brisk walk through the thought of Cixous,

Irigaray and Kristeva. This selection of authors can be legitimised with the prominent and influential role they have played in poststructuralist and postmodern feminist theory (cf. Tong 1989; Antor 1995; Pilcher/Whelehan 2004; Schöblier 2008). Kristeva develops a particular engagement with the Other that is psychological in nature. In *Powers of Horror* (1982), she describes the central role of what she calls 'abjection' in constituting a person's subjectivity. 'Abjection' describes the process of expelling from oneself what is deemed as 'Other' to oneself; it is a means of drawing borders to develop a sense of a concrete 'I' by rejecting what one despises in oneself (cf. McAfee 2004: 46, 57, 129). McAfee notes, however, that "[w]hat is abjected is radically excluded but never banished altogether. It hovers at the periphery of one's existence [...]. It remains as an unconscious and conscious threat to one's own clean and proper self" (2004: 46). Transferred to a social level, Kristeva's theory can explain that the exclusion and banishment of certain groups from the dominant order (e.g. women, homosexuals, ethnic minorities) is grounded in the abject, the irrational fear or sense of disgust in view of the Other that is experienced as a threat to oneself (cf. Tong 1989: 230). In their reading of Kristeva through the lens of *Fremdverstehen* in foreign language education, Decke-Cornill and Küster (2014: 229-230) call to mind that accepting or understanding the Other is a difficult process because it confronts the self with the despised, foreign and 'Other' aspects of one's personality. In particular, Kristeva explores this position in *Strangers to Ourselves*: "Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder" (1991: 1). But rather than giving in to the impulse to reject the Other from society, Kristeva urges us to accept the foreigner within ourselves as a way toward accepting the Other in society (cf. McAfee 2004: 131). In view of the economic and political integration to be observed on the scale of the planet, Kristeva asks: "[S]hall we be, intimately and subjectively, able to live with the others, to live *as others*, without ostracism but also without leveling?" (1991: 2). Even though she admits that this might be a utopic matter (ibid.: 1), she nonetheless urges us to relentlessly have that question "mature within each of us" (ibid.: 2) and to gradually develop "our ability to accept new modalities of otherness" (ibid.). For the field of TEFL, it might be helpful to draw a distinction between understanding and accepting the Other. While it might be difficult to achieve an understanding of the Other, Kristeva highlights that it is a minimum requirement to opt at least for an acceptance of the Other in a globalised and diversified world and come to terms with what she calls 'the new modalities of otherness' or 'the abject' (cf. Tong 1989: 230).

While the categorisation of Kristeva as a feminist thinker might be ambiguous, especially as her work is not exclusively concerned with feminist ideas (cf. Tong 1989: 229-231), Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray engage more explicitly and expressly with feminine difference. Cixous is primarily a novelist, thus interweaving theoretical discourse with literary discourse to put forward her critical thought. In her literary style, she experiments with feminine writing (*l'écriture féminine*) in which she makes visible binary oppositions and their pairing as polar or hierarchical opposites that – from a feminist viewpoint – are the result of masculine, i.e. phallogocentric, thinking and writing (cf. Tong 1989: 224). For Cixous, masculine writing embodies "a locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated, [...] where a woman

has never her turn to speak” (Cixous 1976: 879). For Cixous, then, feminine writing “is precisely the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures” (ibid.). It is Cixous’ achievement to challenge women to put into words “the unthinkable/unthought” (Tong 1989: 224), bring “the nonexistent into existence” (ibid.) and to find ways of articulating Otherness without simultaneously excluding other differences from view (cf. Schöblier 2008: 82). In effect, Cixous aims at affirming and acknowledging feminine difference beyond the corset of binary thinking (cf. Antor 1995: 324-325), which she pointedly explains in an essay titled ‘Sorties’ that she wrote together with Catherine Clément: “It is in writing [...] that woman will affirm woman somewhere other than in silence [...]. May she get out of booby-trapped silence! And not have the margin [...] foisted on her as her domain!” (Cixous/Clément 1986: 93). In a similar way as Cixous, Irigaray criticises the degrading of women as negativity and as ‘Other’ from men and instead celebrates feminine Otherness as a way of opening up new possibilities for women and to reinscribe the feminine ‘Other’ back into the discourses that are dominated by the masculine subject to achieve equality (cf. Antor 1995: 325). This is explored in texts such as *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974), *This Sex Which is Not One* (1985), or *Je, Tu, Nous. Toward a Culture of Difference* (1993). For example, Irigaray stresses that “[i]n order to obtain a subjective status equivalent to that of men, women must therefore gain recognition for their difference. They must affirm themselves as valid subjects, [...] respecting the other within themselves and demanding that same respect for society” (1993: 46). Also in Irigaray’s writing, the role of language moves centre stage in that she “urge[s] women to join together in order to find the courage to speak in the active voice” (Tong 1989: 228).

Even though Irigaray and Cixous are sometimes charged for essentialising the experience of women by asserting and celebrating their difference from men (cf. Schöblier 2008: 83), their approach is also arguably aligned to the deconstructionist move within poststructuralism, mirroring Derrida’s general strategy of deconstruction explained above. First, it aims at exposing the hierarchy of the gendered binary order so as to be able to criticise, from a norm-critical viewpoint, the dominance and privilege of the superior pole (men/masculine) over the inferior pole of the binary (women/feminine). Second, it aims at uplifting the assumed debased pole of the binary to a higher state of being, thus valorising female difference and Otherness, and providing a challenging counterweight to the originally valorised dominant pole. And as a third point, such an approach is deconstructionist in that it thematises what has been left unthematized, thus posing an immediate irritating challenge against the exclusion of women from the symbolic order (cf. also Tong 1989: 219, 223). Building on what has been said, I draw on Tong who points out that feminist theorists arguing from this vantage point are generally critical towards “social injustices as well as the structures upon which they are based, the language in which they are thought, and the systems in which they are safeguarded” (Tong 1989: 219). What becomes evident here is the central role of language, also literary language, in Cixous’ and Irigaray’s work (cf. Currie 2004: 91), which makes their positions also relevant for foreign language education. By closely attending to language, it becomes possible and thinkable to articulate one’s own voice, which can be realised in the EFL classroom through encouraging

students to attempt at creative and also literary writing, so that students are given the opportunity to express and affirm ideas, thoughts and identities that might otherwise have remained silent. Furthermore, the close attention to language can include to scrutinise how language can work to safeguard systems of oppression and exclusion, e.g. through the articulation of pervasive stereotypes or prejudices about what is perceived to be culturally different or ‘Other’.

In continuing the critical discussion of Otherness that has been developed so far, I will now move on to the field of postcolonial theory and tap into its specific contextualised perspectives on Otherness. The colonisation of a large proportion of the world through western powers is a telling case-in-point for how the binary separation of the coloniser and the colonised is established to assert the primacy and normalcy of the colonising culture and world view, while the colonised subjects are constructed and characterised as ‘Other’ by the colonisers (cf. Ashcroft/Griffiths/Tiffin 2007: 154-155). This specific and contextualised perspective on Otherness and its aligned notions of binary thinking, hierarchy, power, and norms will be explored at the example of two specific texts or positions that have become highly influential within postcolonial theory. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) is the first position I will address to highlight how the colonisers used the power of discourse to construct a divisive way of seeing the world in which the colonised were constituted as ‘Other’ to legitimise their domination and subjugation (cf. McLeod 2000: 21-22; Barker 2012: 273). The second text I will focus on is Gayatri Spivak’s essay ‘Can the Subaltern Speak’ (1988), in which she investigates in how far what one could call the ultimate ‘Other’, i.e. subaltern subjects who are at the most inferior rank within a hierarchical colonial power system, are in a position to claim a voice for themselves within the discourses of colonialism (cf. Barker 2012: 286-287; Ashcroft/Griffiths/Tiffin 2007: 198-201; Morris 2010). The aim is to integrate these perspectives on Otherness productively into the larger theoretical framework developed in this chapter so as to arrive at a nuanced understanding of how the engagement with Otherness in ELT practice and research can be conceptualised and problematised further.

Said’s work *Orientalism* (1978) is a convincing and valuable illumination of the power of discourse to establish and maintain difference as a binary opposition that is marked out by an unequal dichotomy. More specifically, Said examines the discursive processes by which the Orient has been constructed in European or Western thinking as inferior to the West (cf. Ashcroft/Griffiths/Tiffin 2007: 153; Barker 2012: 273). Said uses the term Orientalism to describe “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and [...] ‘the Occident’” (Said 1978: 2). In effect, Orientalism served (and still serves) as a remarkable example of how a dominant power is capable of constructing geographical, cultural and historical entities as its Other, and thereby simultaneously defining itself. To speak with Said, “[t]he Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also [...] one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (Said 1978: 1-2). It is an important starting point for Said to emphasise that the Orient is “not just an inert fact of nature” (ibid.: 4), but an invention, a discursive product that only exists within the

representations made about it by the West, rather than reflecting a ‘true reality’ of how the Orient actually is (cf. McLeod 2000: 41; Barker 2012: 273-274). In his study, Said draws on the Foucauldian notion of discourse with the aim of understanding “the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively” (Said 1978: 3). This indicates that Orientalism as a style of thought and as a mode of discourse is accompanied by an enormous material investment and congeals over time into a wide variety of material artifacts and texts where it becomes tangible in novels, travel books, or paintings, only to name a few. From this discursive fabric, Said unearths the assumptions, images and stereotypes that the West has produced to construct and naturalise their mode of knowing the Orient as “a manifestly different [...] world” (ibid.: 12) that represents everything the West is believed not to be.

The ‘Othering’ of the Orient, i.e. its discursive production as such a manifestly ‘Other’ world, relies on the Western techniques of representation that make the Orient visible in discourse and available to Western consciousness (cf. Said 1978: 22). Said takes the 18th century as a starting point and moves through a wide variety of texts and cultural artefacts to shed light on the construction of the clear-cut binary between the allegedly superior qualities of the West, and the allegedly inferior qualities of the Orient. He collects a wide variety of stereotypical and homogenising assumptions about the Orient, infiltrated with much racial and gender prejudice, that are summarised by McLeod (2000: 40-46) and also by Volkmann (2010: 139) in a concise overview. For example, the Orient is constructed or ‘othered’ as peculiar, strange, eccentric and bizarre, and this “radical oddness” (McLeod 2000: 44) stands in stark contrast to the Occident’s rationality, normality, and sensibility. Racial stereotypes include the gruesome and violent Arab or the lazy Indian, which automatically construct Western people as civil, reliable, and industrious. Gender stereotypes depict Oriental women as sexually promiscuous and immodest, and Oriental men as effeminate, failing to live up to Western norms and codes of ‘proper’ masculinity. Assumptions and stereotypes like these were invented in discourses about the Orient and resulted from representations of the Orient, e.g. in paintings or literature, leading to a clearly homogeneous image of ‘the’ Orient, cementing the distinction between a superior ‘Us’ and an inferior ‘Them’. By way of summary, I use Said’s conclusive definition of Orientalism “as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said 1978: 3). This definition pointedly illustrates the uneven power relations distributed between the West as the superior pole and the Orient as the inferior pole, and it highlights the centrality of discourse and its power to effectively produce an ‘Other’.

Even though Said’s study is restricted to the discursive production of the Orient by the West, the insights he generated with his study, and here I follow Volkmann’s position (2010: 139), are also transferrable to processes of intercultural understanding that might be saturated with hegemonic thinking, and are therefore of immediate relevance for TEFL. Volkmann’s view is as follows:

Der orientalistische Diskurs steht damit stellvertretend für westliche polarisierende Rhetorik, hegemoniale Metaphorik und Projektion von zugkräftigen Stereotypen auf das nicht-westliche Andere. Er setzt sich im Wesentlichen im postkolonialen Denken fort, bei dem bestimmte weltanschauliche Doktrinen überliefert und verfestigt werden. Die Überlegenheit der eigenen kulturellen Identität etabliert sich durch die stereotyp abgewertete kulturelle Andersartigkeit des imaginierten Anderen. (Volkman 2010: 139)

While Volkman's position remains closely within a Western and non-Western distinction and, in my reading, locates the problematic cultural dynamics of 'Othering' firmly within postcolonial, ethnic or national discourses, I would suggest going one step further and point out that Said's study is *generally* applicable to all those discourses that construct a dichotomy along the lines of *any* sociocultural category, for example sexual orientation, gender, class, (dis)ability, or age. When Said shows that discourse is capable of producing a superior Occident over an inferior Orient, then it can arguably be said that an in-depth engagement with discourse can also bring to the fore the mechanisms by which 'other Others' are produced and constructed through – to refer back to Volkman – polarising rhetoric, hegemonic metaphors or compelling stereotypes (e.g. deviant homosexuality in contrast to the righteousness of heterosexuality). I claim that Said's scrupulous extraction of discursive stereotypical patterns of 'Othering' from texts is a highly valuable template for TEFL. Here, a Said-informed approach to texts and discourse can be used to invigorate a close reading of texts to unearth the thick fabric of 'Othering' and to understand how difference, Otherness and norms are discursively constructed in texts, including literary texts, non-fiction, images, films, or online resources, only to name a few.¹⁰ In critically engaging with such texts, learners could come to understand how discourse can function "to know, to name, to fix the other" (Ashcroft/Griffiths/Tiffin 2007: 154) for the sake of maintaining control and authority over the Other. In sharing Said's (1978: 12) vision, I propose that an understanding of how cultural domination works can lead to an 'unlearning' of the dominative mode that combines both a critical interrogation of norms and a move away from othering the Other.

In moving on to another key text of postcolonial theory in which the discussion of the Other is central, I will now turn to Gayatri Spivak's essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988), in which she explores and complicates the possibilities and impossibilities of articulating one's voice from the position of being excluded from, or silenced and marginalised within, dominant discourses. Generally speaking, Spivak mounts her essay on "a critique of European ethnocentrism in the constitution of the Other" (Spivak 1988: 293) and expresses a thorough skepticism of Western discourses in their production of subjects as 'Other'. More specifically, she explores how the so-called 'third world' subjects in the former colonies, and the colonial subject during the time of colonialism, are represented in western discourses and intellectual thought *about* these subjects (cf. Spivak 1988: 271; Chatterjee 2010: 84). Spivak's position

10 When I say texts, I follow the broad notion of texts that is currently being popularized in TEFL, e.g. through the German educational standards for foreign language education on the upper secondary level, *Bildungsstandards für die fortgeführte Fremdsprache (Englisch/Französisch) für die Allgemeine Hochschulreife*, which were agreed on by the German Kultusministerkonferenz in 2012 and published in 2014. These guidelines endorse, or call for, a wide variety of texts to be used in the foreign language classroom, e.g. fictional and non-fictional written, audiovisual and spoken texts, photography, images, statistics, or hypertexts (cf. Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 2014: 25).

hinges centrally on Gramsci's concept of the subaltern where it denotes the inferior rank of those social groups who are suppressed by the ruling classes (cf. Ashcroft/Griffiths/Tiffin 2007: 198), but gives it a very specific meaning in her analysis to refer to female colonised subjects in general and Indian woman in particular:

Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced. [...] both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. (Spivak 1988: 287)

With this specification, Spivak emphasises a double Otherness that locates the subaltern at the lowest end of the social strata. Her 'subaltern' combines colonised subjects who did not belong to the colonial or indigenous elites with the issue of gender, pointing out that women in colonial contexts are additionally suppressed by male, and not only imperial, dominance (cf. Spivak 1988: 284-287; McLeod 2000: 191-193; Barker 2012: 285). Spivak's ensuing analysis of the subaltern subject unfolds along two lines of argumentation. On the one hand, with the interest in colonialist historiography on the agenda, she explores the representation of subaltern subjects in colonial discourse and the possibility of retrieving, or making accessible, the subaltern voice from the colonial archive. On the other hand, she challenges contemporary western intellectual thought and the space western intellectuals allegedly provide for the subalterns as subjects of political insurgency to insert their voices into (western) discourse. What unites both lines of argumentation is Spivak's skepticism of the direct and transparent representability of a centred and homogeneous subjectivity, when in fact human subjectivity is the effect of discourse, and not of a true essence that can simply be unearthed (cf. McLeod 2000: 191).

Regarding the first line of argumentation, Spivak engages with the "efforts to give the subaltern a voice in history" (Spivak 1988: 296), hence the question, "Can the subaltern speak? and Can the subaltern (as woman) speak?" (ibid.) in colonial historiography, especially when she is "confined in the shadows of colonial history and representation" (McLeod 2000: 193). Spivak analyses two particular cases, the Indian ritual of widow burning and its representation in colonial records, and the suicide of a female political activist in Calcutta in 1926. Her answers to the question if the subaltern can speak are conclusive: "One never encounters the testimony of the women's voice-consciousness. [...] one cannot put together a 'voice'" (Spivak 1988: 297); "There is no space from which the sexed subaltern can speak" (ibid.: 307); "The subaltern as female cannot be heard or read" (ibid.: 308). Morris explains that the silence of the subaltern must not be understood as, or confused with, their simple absence in the record (2010: 2), nor does it mean that subaltern women cannot literally communicate (cf. Barker 2012: 285). Rather, as Barker notes,

poor women in colonial contexts have neither the conceptual language nor the ear of colonial and indigenous men to listen. [...] there are no subject positions within the discourse of colonialism which allow them to articulate themselves as persons. They are thus condemned to silence. (Barker 2012: 285-286)

This quote illustrates why Spivak's answer to the question if the subaltern can speak is 'no'. To unearth 'original' subaltern female voices from colonial text is impossible because these voices are filtered through masculine imperialist discourse that constitutes colonial texts, rather than

emerging from subaltern women themselves. Therefore, subaltern speech is never audible or legible as such (cf. Morris 2010: 2-3). In particular, as McLeod (2000: 193-194) highlights, Spivak takes issue with those intellectuals who search for an originary, sovereign and concrete female consciousness and expect that it can be easily discovered and readily represented in colonial texts. She problematises the assumption that there exists an essential subaltern voice and “insist[s] that the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous” (Spivak 1988: 284). What follows is that any attempt to retrieve a unique female subaltern voice from colonial texts that operate within dominant discourses will actually only disfigure her speech (cf. McLeod 2000: 193). Therefore, one could conclude that intellectuals must be critical of their own discourses that try to arrive at an understanding of an unproblematically constituted true form of subaltern identity, and in doing that, might contribute to producing the subaltern as ‘Other’ while attempting to rescue the subaltern’s voice (cf. Ashcroft/Griffiths/Tiffin 2007: 201; McLeod 2000: 193-194; Chatterjee 2010: 83).

In her second line of argumentation, Spivak engages with similar concerns, but moves away from retrieving subaltern voices from the colonial archive to the question of how the subaltern is represented, or can become represented, in contemporary western intellectual discourse and its aligned political struggles. In particular, Spivak explores the role of “the first-world intellectual [...] who lets the oppressed speak for themselves” (Spivak 1988: 292). Thus, Spivak points to a critical issue of representing the Other in discourse: either do intellectuals speak on behalf of the subaltern, or they provide a space in discourse that the subaltern can use to insert their voice. Here, Spivak in particular criticises Foucault and Deleuze as radical intellectuals in their assumption that “the oppressed, if given the chance [...], and on the way to solidarity through alliance politics [...] *can speak and know their conditions*” (Spivak 1988: 283; emphasis in the original). Again, Spivak asks if the subaltern can speak, and answers that, in Western intellectual discourse, “the subject of exploitation cannot know and speak the text of female exploitation, even if the absurdity of the [...] intellectual making space for her to speak is achieved” (Spivak 1988: 288). What follows is, according to McLeod’s reading of Spivak’s essay, that the writing of intellectuals such as Foucault or Deleuze cannot serve “as a transparent medium through which the voices of the oppressed can be represented”, and indeed, the intellectual cannot be “a mouthpiece through which the oppressed can clearly speak” (McLeod 2000: 192). Spivak’s text points to several problematic aspects that are at stake when attempting to include and represent marginalised or silenced voices of the ‘Other’ in discourse. The first problematic issue is that it is not the Other who takes on a powerful agency, but rather the intellectuals who, in a benevolent gesture, ‘allow’ the Other to speak, albeit with good intentions in mind. This marks an odd power asymmetry, with the “intellectuals as our best prophets of [...] the Other” (Spivak 1988: 272) on the representing side, and the subaltern Other on the other side, waiting for their chance to speak. In such a constellation, the Other would have to use the discursive space offered to them within dominant Western discourse, rather than speaking one one’s own terms using one’s own discourse. Furthermore, Spivak (1988: 288) criticises that Western intellectuals strangely construct a homogeneous, monolithic and collective ‘Other’ and follow, to use her words, “the clandestine restoration of subjective

essentialism” (Spivak 1988: 279). In evaluating this line of Spivak’s argumentation, Birla (2010: 90) notes that even though oppressed subjects are seemingly valorised in discourse, one must still recognise that they are embedded within relations of power against which they have to work and speak, and that one must not wrongly assume that they simply articulate themselves “without [...] messiness, as a Self (a Subject with agency)” (ibid.), which makes it a necessity to acknowledge the heterogeneity of the oppressed subjects’ voices. While I do not read Spivak’s criticism as a defeatist rejection of any attempt to give a voice to the Other and achieve their representation, it nonetheless points to the intricacies of representation: When the Western ethnocentric subject selectively defines an ‘Other’, Spivak argues (1988: 275, 292), this maintains the continuous power relation between, and reinscription of, who is defined as ‘Self’ and who is defined as ‘Other’.

Spivak’s position yields insightful impetuses for TEFL in that it can serve to problematise the intricacies of attempts of representing the Other or ‘Otherness in the classroom and bringing marginalised ‘subaltern’ voices into visibility. The first issue that is at stake is whether the transfer of the concept of the subaltern into today’s EFL classrooms is appropriate. Spivak cautions that “the Indian case cannot be taken as representative of all countries, nations, cultures, and the like that may be invoked as the Other” (1988: 281) and also Birla admits that the Indian case “cannot speak for all cases of Othering” (2010: 95). To my mind, however, Spivak’s theory can be transferred to the TEFL context. In picking up on Spivak’s question, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak’, I suggest that the following two questions are relevant for TEFL:

- Can the subaltern speak in the classroom, i.e. can subaltern learners gain a voice?
- Can the subaltern be represented in and retrieved from texts through which they speak?

If the Other is automatically approached and conceptualised as subaltern that is deeply in the shadows, doubly othered, and firmly buried under dominant discourses, this might lead to a distorted perception of the Others (as fellow learners or as textually mediated positions) as weak and in dire need of help, which might reinforce seeing them as eternal Others. While I am not suggesting that one should become insensitive to exclusions or social injustice that the Other experiences, I do want to point out that the Other might also take on a more powerful position either when they claim their own voice in the classroom, or when there are textual representations of the Other that are less problem-laden and more optimistic than Spivak’s view on the subaltern might suggest.

Nonetheless, simply including the Other to work against their silencing and to give them a voice, especially in reparative attempts to fill the gaps of non-representation, might have limited outreach. As Messerschmidt (2013: 57) stresses, with each instance of representing the Other, one potentially gets involved in practices of Othering, precisely because the ‘advent’ of the Other in representation can simultaneously reinforce the normalcy of existing relations in which those who are not ‘Other’ appear as normal in light of the newly visible ‘Other’ (cf. also chapter 1.3). Both concerns are inextricably linked, as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin highlight:

Her [Spivak’s] point is that no act of dissent or resistance occurs on behalf of an essential subaltern subject entirely separate from the dominant discourse that provides the language and

conceptual categories with which the subaltern voice speaks. (Ashcroft/Griffiths/Tiffin 2007: 201)

What follows from this statement is that a simple representation of the Other is too one-sided a focus (e.g. by choosing a short story with a gay protagonist). Ideally, it is to be supplemented with a thorough interrogation of normalcy to enable a critique and an awareness of the norms that produce the Other in dominant discourses. Also McLeod emphasises that inserting subaltern voices into discourse can only ever be “a cosmetic exercise” (McLeod 2000: 194) if, at the same time, the representational systems that render the subaltern mute and marginalised *in the first place* are not also brought into crisis (ibid.). This train of thought is also relevant when it comes to the question whether the Other can speak from their position and represent themselves as themselves in the classroom. It must be acknowledged that they potentially have to draw on, and speak against, prevailing dominant discourse and use its conceptual language. While it is difficult to avoid using existing language in order to make one’s voice heard, the critical impetus that becomes apparent here is first of all to create discursive conditions in the classroom that are not felt to be oppressive or normative (e.g. by avoiding sexist or homophobic language, or by constantly challenging stereotypes) so that the Other can feel safe to speak (if they wish to do so), and secondly, to make the existing conceptual language a point of investigation and critique in the classroom. Even though the concerns raised here show that there is no easily palatable way of simply representing the Other in the classroom, I find Birla’s position useful in that she urges us to accept the necessity of representation and to remain open towards constantly confronting, engaging, negotiating and responding to difference, and come into relation with other ways of being and living (cf. Birla 2010: 98). Ultimately, Birla explains that “Spivak asks us to supplement the benevolent intention of ‘speaking for’ with an ethics of responsibility—in the sense of cultivating a capacity to respond to and be responsive to the other, without demanding resemblance as the basis of recognition” (2010: 93). This stress on responsive dialogue reinforces the necessity that the subaltern or the Other can speak or becomes represented in the classroom, but that each responsive dialogue must also include a reflection on one’s own norms and position within (dominant) discourses.

To conclude the exploration of Otherness, I will finally turn to the philosophy of Levinas, who is not so much concerned with otherness as a structural feature of binary difference or identity, “but as a site of exchange or encounter with another person” (Currie 2004: 95). This rests on Levinas’ assumption that the ‘I’ does not inhabit the world in solitude, but that there are other people who the ‘I’ experiences and is confronted with (cf. Morgan 2007: 42). In such an encounter with another person, Levinas writes in *Time and the Other* (1978), the ‘I’ recognises that “[t]he Other as Other is not only an alter ego: the Other is what I myself am not. The Other is this, not because of the Other’s character, or physiognomy, or psychology, but because of the Other’s very alterity” (Levinas 1987: 83). What is of importance here is Levinas’ position that the possibility of fully understanding the Other, whose presence is referred to by Levinas as the presence of the “the face” (1979: 197), is called into question, which links the discussion of Otherness to “a kind of other-worldliness, to an ungraspable or ineffable quality of the Other” (Currie 2004: 94-95). Although the face of the Other is present, Levinas emphasises that “[t]he face is present in its refusal to be contained. [...] it cannot be comprehended, that is,

encompassed” (1979: 194). A further reading of Levinas reveals that “[t]he knowledge that absorbs the Other is forthwith situated within the discourse I address to him” (Levinas 1979: 195), which indicates that the Other cannot be fully grasped *in his own right* or *on his own terms*¹¹, but that the Other is always filtered through the frameworks the ‘I’ uses to comprehend the Other, by which the presence of the Other’s face “turns into total resistance to the grasp” (ibid.: 197). The idea that the Other cannot be fully understood because it cannot be fully appropriated by the ‘I’ is also highlighted in Peperzak’s detailed account of Levinas’ philosophy:

When I am confronted with another, I experience myself as an instance that tries to appropriate the world by labor, language, and experience, whereas this other instance does not permit me to monopolize the world because the Other’s greatness does not fit into any enclosure - not even that of theoretical comprehension. This resistance to all integration is not founded on the other’s will; *before* any possibility of choice and *before* all psychological considerations, the mere fact of another’s *existence* is a ‘surplus’ that cannot be reduced to becoming a part or moment of the Same. The Other cannot be captured or grasped and is therefore, in the strictest sense of the word, incomprehensible. (Peperzak 1993: 21; emphasis in the original)

Such a view appears to posit a fundamental difference between two persons. But even though the other resists full understanding, Levinas writes that “[t]he ‘resistance’ of the other does not do violence to me, does not act negatively; it has a positive structure: ethical” (Levinas 1979: 197). The other person, whose presence is referred to by Levinas as the presence of “the Face” (1979: 194), and the ‘I’ can still enter a relation, and this relation does not have to be ineffectual. What Levinas calls “the face-to-face with the Other” (Levinas 1987: 78) is hence understood to be an ethical event that can transform the ‘I’. The notion of the encounter with the Other as an ethical event is summarised by Morgan:

What she [the Other] imposes is dependence and need, integrity and demand. Her presence, before it says anything else to me, says ‘let me live,’ ‘let me be here too,’ ‘feed me,’ ‘allow me to share the world and be nourished by it too.’ I am imposed upon, called into question, beseeched, and commanded, and thereby I am responsible, Levinas say. (Morgan 2007: 43)

Levinas himself writes that “I welcome the Other who presents himself in my home by opening my home to him” (1979: 171), which stresses the need to acknowledge the Other, to reach out to him and engage with him, even though a full grasp of the Other is impossible. In such a situation of encounter, “the other calls upon us to see things we had not seen before” (Morgan 2007: 90), and Levinas argues that “the indiscreet face of the Other [...] calls me into question” (Levinas 1979: 171). This clearly hints at the transformative potential that an engagement with the Other has on the individual, so that the acknowledgement and acceptance of the Other also relates back to the ‘I’ and how the ‘I’ sees him- or herself.

Levinas’ philosophy poses a severe epistemological challenge to hermeneutic attempts to understanding the Other, and also to the very question whether any representation of the Other is at all possible: If this notion of incomprehensibility is transferred to the context of TEFL, the whole concept of *Fremdverstehen*, of understanding the ‘Other’, would become futile. Furthermore, this notion of incomprehensibility also calls into question any attempt to

¹¹ Here, I follow Levinas’ use of pronouns (his/him/he) for the Other.

represent the Other in the classroom, e.g. in textbooks or in the literature that is read, precisely because that which is incomprehensible is also unrepresentable (cf. Currie 2004: 95). By drawing on Decke-Cornill (2007), Lütge (2013a) and Volkmann (2010), I will now sketch out possible solutions to this dilemma. Firstly, Decke-Cornill (2007: 254) stresses the principle of not aiming at appropriating the Other to the self, but trying to pay close attention to how the Other perceives of themselves, i.e. to understand them from their own frame of reference. In this sense, one can still attempt to understand the ‘surplus’ of meaning that emerges from the Other as long as the Other is not subsumed under the self’s frame of reference. Also Volkmann highlights that the responsibility in such an encounter does not lie in appropriating the Other, but to open up to the Other, even though this can make the ‘I’ vulnerable (2010: 132). Still, if the Other has an ungraspable or ineffable quality, one might be advised to step back from the high claim of aiming at a *full, complete* and *correct* understanding or representation of the other and instead become aware that each attempt to represent or understand the Other is necessarily partial and can never draw a complete picture of the Other. Therefore, a second path is suggested by Lütge, who sees pedagogic value in the very fact that a complete understanding of the Other is, in Levinas’ terms, impossible:

Selbst wenn man ein solches “Verstehen des Anderen” mit Levinas [...] gar nicht für möglich hält (und auch unterrichtspraktisch nicht immer als realistisch erreichbar ansieht), so ist anzunehmen, dass auch schon die Reflexion über diesen Prozess und seine Widersprüchlichkeiten zentral für die Identitätsbildung ist. (Lütge 2013a: 165)

Lütge’s position also supports the notion that one should not give up on approximating an understanding of the Other in the classroom. But she realistically acknowledges that this approximation is marked by contradictions and limitations, which, however, can be harnessed in the classroom as a source of further thought to reflect on the impossibility of fully understanding the Other. Such a reflection can also unfold a transformative potential in that it operates to have an effect on the learners’ constitution of their identities.

1.3 Otherness and Difference in Education: Pedagogic Perspectives on Diversity

Arguably, pedagogic research and theory can become an important backbone to substantiate the development and the negotiation of concepts and theories for the field of TEFL. In the context of the discussion of difference and otherness that lies at the heart of this chapter, I am particularly interested in accessing pedagogy as a link discipline to TEFL in order to gain insights into how pedagogy conceptualises the engagement with difference and otherness in education. Actually, otherness and difference are key themes that are critically reflected in a variety of pedagogic fields such as critical and anti-oppressive pedagogy, diversity pedagogy, and also the pedagogy of inclusion. A brief and cursory glance at these fields shows that the discussion of otherness and difference oscillates between a radical affirmation of all types of differences in the classroom on the one hand, and highly critical positions that fear a reproduction of Othering and exclusion when categories of otherness and difference are named, and hence reiterated, in the classroom. The intermediary between these two radical positions would agree with the necessity to affirm otherness and difference, but juxtapose this affirmation

with a critical exploration of socially dominant and privileging norms that are closely related to the status of someone or something being perceived as different or ‘Other’. The necessities to affirm difference and the absurdities of tiptoeing around difference altogether can also be mapped out against the question of whether or not to use, or move beyond, available social categories such as ‘gay’, ‘disabled’, ‘woman’ or ‘of colour’, which calls for a critical look into pedagogic debates that opt for either ‘categorising’ or ‘de-categorising’ difference in education. At the same time, pedagogic considerations of difference and otherness revolve around the actual participants of education, i.e. ‘different’ or ‘other’ learners who are part of school communities and classrooms, and the possibilities and intricacies of affirming their existence so that they gain a voice and visibility as ‘themselves’ in the classroom. Other pedagogic considerations are concerned with otherness and difference as a sociocultural phenomenon and suggest using the opportunities of education at school to engage learners in understanding, critically exploring, and reflecting on difference and otherness as explicit themes – often combined with the ultimate goal to achieve social change through education. In what follows, I will extract central positions from pedagogic literature that I consider relevant for getting to the bottom of understanding the pedagogic trajectories of discussing issues of otherness and difference in education and also in TEFL. I will begin with delineating diversity-oriented approaches to pedagogy that are positively affirmative of differences, and then continue with those positions that take a critical stance towards such an affirmative diversity pedagogy. I will then turn to Kevin Kumashiro’s seminal conceptualisation of an anti-oppressive pedagogy, whose four-partite typology provides a sound framework to think through the stakes of engaging with otherness and difference in education.

1.3.1 Diversity in Education: Affirmative and Critical Pedagogic Perspectives

Affirmative pedagogy can be regarded as a response to the phenomenon of sociocultural diversity and its ramifications in educational settings and institutions. Its fundamental premise is to recognise, acknowledge, and remain sensitive to the myriad of differences that constitute the whole leaning community as such and that also converge in individual learners and their multiple identities. Tying down the exact number of ‘axes of difference’ (Klinger/Knapp 2005) that affirmative pedagogy is concerned with proves difficult and possibly even undesirable, as such a specification would produce categories that are securely included in what counts as diversity, while at the same time producing exclusions and blind spots that are not covered by diversity. Traditional approaches revolve around the triad of ethnicity, class, and gender (ibid.), while Degele and Winkler (2007) as well as Perko (2015) discuss several other categories such as age, religion, sexual orientation, body, or disability, which indicates that the ‘list’ of categories that can potentially be grouped under the umbrella of diversity is almost, at least theoretically, unlimited. On the one hand, such an openness has, in principle, to be welcomed so as to avoid shutting down this ‘list’ in an act of epistemic violence to hitherto unacknowledged or unthought-of categories of difference. On the other hand, however, the range of differences can also be numbing in the sense that not all possible differences can be focused on at the same time, although some categories might intersect and lead to overlapping

forms of inequality or discrimination. Furthermore, the diverse categories cannot easily be lumped together, as each category can play out differently in educational contexts, demanding specific requirements or pedagogic approaches and concepts. This becomes evident in current pedagogic debates and discourses that revolve around the inclusion of physically, mentally or cognitively challenged learners into 'regular' schools and classrooms, but also in various other 'pedagogies of difference' (e.g. in Pericles Trifonas 2003b, or in de Castell/Bryson 1997) that highlight (and one can also say claim) that the pedagogic specificities of individual categories be paid attention to in educational settings, e.g. queer or gay and lesbian pedagogies, or feminist pedagogies.

In spite of this possibly startling array of difference categories, what needs to be stressed is that affirmative pedagogy is deeply concerned with providing an equitable participation in education to all learners, no matter on how many axes of difference they might be located, or how many axes of difference become relevant in a particular educational setting. Before I move on to a criticism of affirmative pedagogy, I consider it helpful to recall what misconceptions within education affirmative pedagogy sought to overcome in the first place. Pericles Trifonas describes that

[e]ducational institutions have traditionally not tolerated the value of subjective differences among student populations. For the sake of securing the reproduction of the 'cultural capital' of a society and its normative ideals and models, the institution of education in the West has promoted the vision of a relatively homogeneous community of learners working toward an idea of 'academic excellence' narrowly defined according to standardized levels of progress and achievement. (Pericles Trifonas 2003a: 2)

At the heart of Pericles Trifonas' description lies a critique of the relationship between educational institutions, schooling, and diversity. It emerges that schools have traditionally imagined their student populations to be homogenous, while at the same time reproducing normative knowledges and normative modes of being. In countering this misconception, affirmative pedagogy seeks to acknowledge what has been silenced, marginalised or unacknowledged and in doing so, affirm the very existence of students who might be Other and move beyond homogenising imaginations of learner cohorts (cf. Redecker 2016: 59; Budde 2013: 29; Messerschmidt 2013: 54). Furthermore, affirmative pedagogy turns against viewing difference as a problem that needs to be solved or removed by streamlining any form of difference into normative ideals, as Rosenstreich (2011: 232) emphasises. Ultimately, affirmative pedagogy seeks to acknowledge the Other in its Otherness (Ketelhut 2013: 69).

For the German context, it is Prengel in particular who invigorated the discussion of difference in education by articulating a radical vision of affirmative pedagogy in her 1995 publication *Pädagogik der Vielfalt*:

Radikale Pluralität bildet sich aus der unhintergehbaren Eigenart differenter Lebensweisen und Wissens- und Denkformen, diese genießen jede in ihrer Eigenart hohe Wertschätzung. Indem aber jedem dieser Entwürfe das gleiche Recht auf Eigenart zukommt, wird das Gleichheitspostulat durch die Anerkennung von Verschiedenheit eingelöst. Die aus der Entfaltung des Verschiedenen auf der Basis gleicher Rechte, also aus egalitärer Differenz sich bildende Pluralität realisiert auf radikale Weise Demokratie. Sie ist der Vision der Gerechtigkeit verpflichtet und ihre Anstrengungen sind ethisch motiviert. Von der Position radikaler Pluralität aus ist nicht etwa alles beliebig möglich und gleichgültig betrachtbar, sondern sie stellt klare

Kriterien der Urteilsbildung zur Verfügung: Alle jene Tendenzen, die monistisch, hegemonial, totalitär die Gleichberechtigung der Differenzen zu zerstören trachten, können aus pluraler Sicht nur bekämpft werden. Insofern ist Vielfalt nicht verwechselbar mit positionsloser Beliebigkeit, sie realisiert sich vielmehr erst in klarer Stellungnahme gegen herrscherliche Übergriffe. Die Wertschätzung von Pluralität bedeutet nicht eine Haltung der Indifferenz sondern der Wertschätzung von Differenz! (Prenzel 2006 [1995]: 49)

Enshrined within the rhetoric of affirmative pedagogy is the inalienable right to be different and the emancipatory objective to provide equal access and opportunities for education to everyone, irrespective of their difference (cf. also Ketelhut 2013: 69). Furthermore, Prenzel makes it very clear that affirmative pedagogy seeks to uproot any form of inequality, discrimination or suppression from educational settings and is upfront to detect any form of hegemony or powerful domination exerted against learners who are Other. As such, affirmative pedagogy does not subscribe indifferently to an abstract concept of plurality or diversity, but is sensitive towards the myriad of differences that only in sum make up diversity. While it appears impossible to step back behind this deeply democratic and egalitarian vision, what needs to be seen critically is that affirmative pedagogy can all too easily become nothing more than a hollow commitment, or a politically correct lip-service paid to what is now fashionably called ‘diversity’. Through benevolent declarations of intent following the positive and aspirational rhetoric of affirmative pedagogy, the intrinsic difference of people is articulated as something wonderful and enriching, which inscribes diversity into educational settings as a value in its own right that needs to be welcomed (cf. Messerschmidt 2013: 47, 52). Ketelhut pointedly summarises the hoped-for result which might as well also be a shortcut that has too quickly been taken: “[A]us der sozial problematischen Lage ‘Ungleichheit’ [wird] die scheinbar positive Lage ‘Vielfalt’ her[ge]stell[t]” (2013: 73). In other words, just because diversity is summoned as something positive does not automatically turn an educational setting into a Garden of Eden where problems of invisibility and inequality simply disappear, which makes it necessary to challenge affirmative pedagogy with critical skepticism so as to hint at its contested nature and inherent ambivalences and dilemmas. While I want to make it very clear that I do not propose to fall back into a state where education constantly reproduces silences and invisibilities of differences, and while I also believe that affirmative pedagogy is a required precondition to achieve a more egalitarian educational system as it provides a mindset that makes it difficult to turn a blind eye of indifference towards difference, I do agree with Redecker (2016: 59) in that the purely positive rhetoric of affirmative pedagogy is over-simplifying and reductive. Therefore, I want to use the following section to add a layer of critique to the discussion of affirmative pedagogy and point out its inherent intricacies.

The key critical issue centralises around what I call in common with Budde (2013: 39) the ‘reification dilemma’ of affirmative pedagogy. In affirming the existence of the Other, and in perpetuating a pedagogy that centrally revolves around, even necessarily relies on, the Other, affirmative pedagogy is prone to stereotyping and essentialising existing categories of difference *and* to keeping those norms intact and uninterrogated that produce certain differences as Other in the first place (cf. also Ketelhut 2013: 71). As such, affirmative pedagogy does not only affirm and reify the Other, but also the hegemonic order and the dominant discourses that stabilise the relationship between various normativities and their respective Others. What is

more, affirming the Other can also run counter to the ambitious aim of creating a *positive* status of diversity. As Redecker (2016: 60-61) critically remarks when referring to the context of including disabled students into ‘regular’ schools (*Inklusionspädagogik*), the respect that is necessary to affirm the Other can also always be accompanied by disrespect, neglect, indifference, misrecognition and disapproval. Thus, the reification of the Other as a clearly distinguishable category – which is already in itself considered to be problematic – can also result in negative and stigmatising views on the Other, so that the positive logic of affirmative pedagogy is not automatically a self-fulfilling prophecy that simply elevates existing differences into a positive mind-set. The key problem of the reification dilemma is pointedly summarised by Messerschmidt: “Mit jedem Sprechen über Verschiedenheit bin ich involviert in Praktiken des Othing, die mit der Adressierung von Diversity zugleich die Normalität von Verhältnissen bestätigen, in denen einige nie als ‘Andere’ betrachtet werden” (2013: 57). She adds, rather pessimistically: “Weder das Berücksichtigen noch das Ignorieren von Differenzen bieten einen Ausweg” (ibid.: 54). Ultimately, the question emerges if there is a viable path to take that still makes it possible to talk about and with the Other, and even more importantly, to provide a space in which Others can speak as themselves, without reproducing stigmatisation, marginalisation and invisibility.

Finding such a viable path requires to grapple with the notion of ‘category’ as such. As the discussion has shown, available categories such as ‘gay’, ‘woman’, ‘migrant’ or ‘disabled’ can be limiting, exclusive and essentialising. In the logic of this criticism, whenever such a category is activated, so is the status of being a clearly defineable Other. This often results in the radical claim to decategorise, i.e. not to use such categories at all, which Kiel observes for discussions within *Inklusionspädagogik*: “Dekategorisierung heißt in der Terminologie der Inklusionsproponenten, man müsse jede ‘Besonderung’ einer Gruppe von Menschen vermeiden, da die Kennzeichnung eines oder mehrerer Menschen als ‘besonders’ andere ausschließe” (2016: 106). To give an example, activating the category of ‘women’ excludes ‘men’, using the label ‘lesbian’ reproduces stereotype and stigma. Even though Kiel subscribes to the affirmative character of inclusion, I read his view as a critique of an over-sensitive, maybe even pedantic caution not to use categories at all. Here, I follow Kiel’s skepticism that encompasses both the inherent problem, but also the value, of using categories:

Diese Dekategorisierungsdebatte ist mit einem interessanten Paradox verknüpft. Auf der einen Seite werden Kategorisierungen abgelehnt, weil sie zu sozialer Exklusion führen können. Auf der anderen Seite sind Kategorien ein zentrales Mittel bei der Organisation von Wissen, Kontrolle und Intervention sowohl in den Wissenschaften als auch in der Praxis. (Kiel 2016: 108)

Tying in with Kiel’s perspective, I argue that a complete decategorisation in pedagogic contexts is problematic for two reasons. First, not naming or using a category at all would defy that such categories still exist in people’s heads and that some people find these categories useful as an important reference point to self-affirm their own identities. Not naming, or being forbidden to name, certain categories might then also be understood as a way of making that category disappear, thus reproducing the invisibilities that affirmative pedagogy seeks to overcome (cf. also Perko 2015: 77). Second, following normative claims to abandon categories altogether

could destroy any discursive basis on which to mount a critique and problematisation of social categories. I argue that available categories form a shared form of (normative) knowledges that learners bring to class, and whenever a category is activated, the classroom offers a space to critically intervene into such shared knowledges.

The idea of critical interventions taps into the critical and reflective potential of diversity, which for Messerschmidt forms an essential component of diversity-oriented approaches in education next to the affirmative orientation of diversity pedagogy sketched out above (cf. 2013: 47). In an attempt to conceptualise such an intervention, I propose that available categories can be used as a reference point to critically explore both the normativities that a category necessarily entails, but that often remain unvoiced as they constitute the ‘natural’ way of being, and also the power of categories to clearly demarcate identities and to produce essentialist and stereotypical notions of the Other, with a hierarchy at work that assigns the Other a place in the margins. In doing so, existing categories can become a vehicle for problematisation and critical thinking that seek to move beyond an understanding of the Other as a fixed and unambiguous ontological entity that simply ‘is’ (cf. Budde 2013: 29-30; Ketelhut 2013: 68), and instead arrive at an understanding of available categories – especially if construed in binary terms – as social constructs or discursively produced phenomena that are ‘made’ (cf. Redecker 2016: 60). Thus, instead of dropping categories altogether, I follow Ketelhut (2013: 63) who argues that it might indeed be more advisable to harness the inherent potential for critical analysis that resides in categories and in the very moments whenever a category is activated. On the one hand, such a critical analysis or intervention can be located in the pedagogic praxis of the classroom where both teachers and learners can critically interrogate the functions and limitations of using categories. On the other hand, also educators can critically engage with such categories to closely examine the affirmative diversity policies operating in their contexts, thus shifting from simply affirming difference in a positive manner towards accessing a more complex web of concerns covering issues of normalisations and normativities as well as inequalities, exclusions and hierarchies. To exemplify this, both learners and educators could come to grapple with the following questions:

- Does a certain category adequately represent the whole group it seeks to encompass? Does a category maybe homogenise the understanding of a certain group or enhance stereotypical assumptions?
- Are categories used to ‘fix’ or consolidate the Other in a dogmatic way, or is there a possibility to resist what Redecker (2016: 61) calls ‘dogmatische Festschreibungen’? Is it, to speak with Ketelhut (2013: 74), possible to keep categories open and make liquid what is categorically fixed, rather than seeing categories as deterministic?
- Do we use categories to define Others and talk about Others, or would it also be possible to ‘allow’ people to wait and identify themselves, in case they want to do that, and choose their own ‘label’ (cf Ketelhut 2013: 74)?

- What is the norm in contrast to its Other? In how far does the norm turn certain differences that exist among people into Otherness? What are the effects of norms that operate to regulate the contested field of diversity (cf. Messerschmidt 2013: 59)?
- What inequalities and types of discrimination result from available categories? What privileges does the norm enjoy? In how far does a purely positive ‘proclamation’ of diversity perhaps block from view the creation of inequalities based on difference (cf. Ketelhut 2013: 67; Perko 2015)?

I suggest that engaging with such questions can provide access to the critical impetus that a diversity-oriented approach to education *also* entails. In embracing such a critical perspective, both educators and learners can move beyond positive affirmation as the sole imperative of diversity pedagogy. This does not call into question the necessity to affirm diversity and its aligned differences and Othernesses, but it adds a crucial dimension of critical engagement that can serve to overcome the pitfalls of romanticising commitments to diversity by raising awareness of the intricacies and challenges that arise from following a diversity agenda in education (e.g. the reification dilemma, the use of demarcating categories, or the attention paid to normalisation processes and inequalities related to affirming the Other). I follow Messerschmidt (2013: 52) and Redecker (2016: 61), both of whom highlight the necessity to implement a diversity praxis in education that is constantly critical and reflective of its own scope and that needs to be crafted attentively, sensibly and responsibly. I will now turn to Kumashiro’s concept of anti-oppressive education to exemplify how such a praxis can be grounded on a solid basis.

1.3.2 Kumashiro’s Anti-oppressive Education

From the vantage point of anti-oppressive education, Kumashiro (2000; also: 2002¹²) conceptualises a pedagogy that seeks to understand the myriad dynamics of oppression, articulate ways of working against oppression in educational contexts, and, ultimately, to bring about social change. Anti-oppressive education rests on the assumption that “oppression is a situation or dynamic in which certain ways of being (e.g. having certain identities) are privileged in society while others are marginalized” (Kumashiro 2000: 25). At once, such a viewpoint brings to mind the structuralist account of difference and the poststructuralist sensitivity to the workings and effects of clearly demarcated systems of difference, most prominently the power dynamics that are at play when assigning certain identities a superior position and certain identities a marginalised position in society and, from a pedagogic perspective, also in education. Inherent in Kumashiro’s pedagogy is also a poststructuralist influence that aims at deconstructing oppressive systems based on difference markers to achieve effective change. Considering “the multiplicity and situatedness of oppression and the complexities of teaching and learning” (ibid.), Kumashiro’s pedagogy is probably disappointing

¹² Kumashiro’s model of anti-oppressive education was initially conceptualized in an essay titled ‘Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education’ that was published in 2000. In a book from 2002, Kumashiro recapitulates this theory without making many changes. Therefore, I will only draw on his initial essay from 2000 in this chapter.

to those who look for easy recipes when it comes to engaging with otherness and difference in education, but powerful to those who seek to conceptualise a well-founded approach to education that responds to the complexities of engaging with otherness and difference. In particular, Kumashiro suggests four approaches to anti-oppressive pedagogy, which are called “Education for the Other, Education about the Other, Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering, and Education that Changes Students and Society” (ibid.). Other than such a system or typology might suggest, these approaches are inextricably linked with each other and are intended to be used as “an amalgam” (ibid.) in education, although each approach highlights a specific perspective. What also needs to be said is that Kumashiro’s pedagogy is not exclusively tailored to a certain type of ‘Other’, but is generally concerned with “the term ‘Other’ to refer to those groups that are traditionally marginalized in society, i.e. that are *other than the norm*” (ibid.: 26; emphasis in the original). This terminological specification points out well that Kumashiro is not just interested in the ‘Other’ only, but is also sensitive towards norms, which means that he projects any engagement with the ‘Other’ into a relational force field that also moves into view social norms and privilege.

To begin with, the approach that is called ‘Education for the Other’ “focuses on improving the experience of students who are Othered, or in some way oppressed, in and by mainstream society” (Kumashiro 2000: 26). It rests on the assumption that the Other can be treated in harmful ways at school and experience discrimination, exclusion, harassment, and violence, but it is also interested in the sometimes normative expectations that educators have for the Other and that have an effect on how the Other is treated (ibid.: 26-27). ‘Education for the Other’ centrally focuses on those participating in education and is highly reminiscent of the pedagogy of affirmation I have sketched out above. Kumashiro writes that “school needs to be an *affirming* space, where Otherness (such as racial difference or queer sexuality) is embraced, where ‘normalcy’ (cultural or sexual) is not presumed, where students will have an audience for their Othered voice(s), and where the Other will have role models” (ibid.: 28). In initially recognising instead of ignoring the inherent diversity of their schools, educators should teach in equitable ways to all students alike and, if necessary, “tailor their teaching to the specifics of their student population” (ibid.: 29). The problem with this approach when applied on its own, as Kumashiro argues, is that it clearly overemphasises difference, focuses only on the Other and singles out their negative experiences. Hence, it is a pedagogy that is conceptualised “in terms of the marginalization of the Other (and not in terms of the privileging of the ‘normal’)” (ibid.: 29-30). Furthermore, such an approach requires a clear categorisation of certain learners as the target group of such a pedagogic praxis, which is highly difficult when in fact “identities and boundaries are difficult to define because they are fluid, contested and constantly shifting” (ibid.: 30). Additionally, it is also difficult to assess the alleged needs of learners who are Other and to delineate the support they need when oppression can take on many different forms and mean different things to different people in different contexts. Given these critical issues, it becomes clear that ‘Education for the Other’ is in itself limited and must be supplemented with the other approaches Kumashiro develops and which I want to therefore sketch out below. Its strength, however, is to lay a first cornerstone for a pedagogy that embraces difference and to

challenge educators to keep an attentive eye on how difference plays out in their respective educational contexts.

The second approach, 'Education about the Other', moves away from singling out certain learners as Other within a learning community and turns critically towards the topics covered by a school curriculum. This approach asks in how far a curriculum specifies what *all* learners should learn and know about the Other (Kumashiro 2000: 31). Such a view can unearth that the types of thinking and the types of knowledge a curriculum seeks to foster are restricted to "the knowledge about (only) what society defines as 'normal' (the way things generally are) and what is normative (the way things ought to be)" (ibid.). Often, this is not necessarily taught explicitly, but the effect of a hidden curriculum that assumes, for example, that there are only two genders or only heterosexual relationships. Furthermore, this approach illuminates the intricate link between questions of representing the Other, and the knowledge and perceptions of the Other that might ensue from such representations. While accepting that knowledge can never be complete and fully true, Kumashiro cautions against partial knowledge about the Other that is distorted, misleading, and one-sided, based on stereotypes or myths, or on sensationalist and exoticising accounts of Otherness. This is particularly problematic if there are only a few rare, if any at all, representations of the Other, which might then be taken to be the only valid knowledge of the Other (ibid.: 31-32). Kumashiro opts for changing the curriculum not only by including a few specific units about the other in the curriculum every now and then, but rather by integrating a focus on the Other throughout the curriculum and connecting this with topics that are covered by the curriculum anyway. Here lies a particular challenge for teachers, as they would have to identify possible 'hooks' in a given curriculum to which a focus on Otherness can be 'anchored', e.g. by discussing the gay liberation movement when learning about the civil rights movement in the US in the 1960s and 1970s. Such a regularisation or normalisation of the Other appearing in the curriculum can help to move away from the impression that lessons about the Other are a special add-on, which would perpetuate the status of being Other qua being a very special topic, to an integrative understanding of what a curriculum actually covers.

'Education about the Other' can counter invisibility that often still surrounds the Other in the curriculum, Kumashiro stresses that 'Education about the Other' can achieve visibility qua thematisation and enrich students' understanding of various and different ways of being alongside developing empathy for the Other. Since the focus is on *content* and *themes* that mediate the Other into the classroom, this approach does not single out the Other *as learner*, but reaches out to all students equally (Kumashiro 2000: 33). Even though the integration of a focus on the Other is generally to be welcomed – especially since the alternative, silence and invisibility, is no option either – Kumashiro gives rise to a few concerns that bring the expectations linked to such a curriculum change on a more realistic and moderate level. First of all, integrating the Other into the curriculum is an organisational and temporal challenge, as "there is only so much time in the school year, and it is literally impossible to teach adequately about every culture and every identity, especially given the multiplicity of experiences within any cultural community" (ibid.: 34). In accordance with Kumashiro, I argue that such a reservation has to be taken seriously, causing one to step back from possibly unrealistic

demands that, say, a queer perspective literally has to be ‘all over the place’. This might sound frustrating to those who demand a radical inclusion of queer perspectives into the curriculum. I want to point out, however, that it might be more sensible to seek out opportunities in the curriculum where a queer focus is arguably justified. In this way, coming across as an artificial, unnecessarily foregrounded or even intrusive attempt to include queer themes can be avoided. Next to issues of curriculum design, the question of selecting themes and content that represents the Other in the classroom also gives rise to a range of concerns. For one, the way the Other is represented might reproduce dominant narratives of the Other and their experiences, which is then essentialised as *the* experience of the Other (ibid.: 34). First of all, one could consequently strive for various representations of the Other gradually developed over the school years, to achieve what one might call a balanced representation. Additionally, I find Kumashiro’s suggestion convincing to circumvent the pitfalls of the single story:

Students need to learn that what is being learned can never tell the whole story, that there is always more to be sought out, and in particular, that there is always diversity in a group, and that one story, lesson, or voice can never be representative of all. [...] Rather, lessons about the Other should be treated as both catalysts and resources for students to use as they learn more. (Kumashiro 2000: 34)

Thus, a thorough reflection of a single representation of the Other, combined with stipulating the interest to learn more and to fill gaps, could be as powerful and effective as adding numerous other representations in the attempt to draw as accurate a picture as possible. Furthermore, Kumashiro takes issue with the learning objective of developing empathy. While confirming that empathy is an important social value, he stresses that it cannot be the ultimate learning objective in itself:

[T]he expectation that information about the Other leads to empathy is often based on the assumption that learning about ‘them’ helps a student see that ‘they’ are like ‘us’; in other words, learning about the Other helps the student see the self in the Other. Such a perspective leaves the self-Other binary intact, and allows the self (i.e. the normative identities) to remain privileged. (Kumashiro 2000: 35)

Not only does Kumashiro’s position caution against assimilating the Other within the self or vice versa, and thus effectively annihilating the Other as it is subsumed under a normative self (such as, ‘They are just like us!’), it also points to a central issue that I have developed above in my critique of an affirmative diversity pedagogy, i.e. that engaging with the Other might leave the norm intact and uninterrogated, which Kumashiro also highlights: “Teaching about the Other does not necessarily illuminate, critique, or transform the processes by which the Other is differentiated from and subordinated to the norm” (Kumashiro 2000: 35). Hence, Kumashiro supplements ‘Education about the Other’ with a dimension that seeks to make visible and disrupt the processes that differentiate the Other from the norm and that seeks to work against privileging and normalising certain identities at the cost of others.

Accordingly, Kumashiro’s third approach to anti-oppressive education is called ‘Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering’. This approach rests on the assumption that the Other always hints at its relational norm and also at the ordering system that maintains this relationship. Instead of just making the Other visible, Kumashiro proposes that also the

norm as such must be made visible so that it can be recognised and reflected on. In locating this duality of the Other and the norm into education, Kumashiro proposes that

students need to examine not only how some groups and identities are Othered, that is, marginalized, denigrated, violated in society, but also how some groups are favoured, normalized, privileged, as well as how this dual process is legitimized and maintained by social structures and competing ideologies. (Kumashiro 2000: 35-36)

A close reading of Kumashiro's text reveals that he advocates two dimensions that are ideally to be achieved, including both *a critique* and *a transformation* of privileging structures and normativities (Kumashiro 2000: 36). To disentangle both of these aspirational objectives, let me look at them separately. Enabling students to critique norms and normative orders requires a critical consciousness that unmasks the norm as a social construct "that both regulates who we are supposed to be and denigrates whoever fails to conform to 'proper' gender roles, for instance, or 'normal' sexual orientation" (ibid.). By referring to Britzmann (1998), Kumashiro highlights the notion of 'unlearning', meaning that learners must unlearn what they had previously understood to be, or learned as being, normative (Kumashiro 2000: 37). This means that students begin to think critically about norms, but also realise how they themselves are positioned in society through norms, and how they position other people in society. In view of this, Kumashiro emphasises that "it is important for students to develop the knowledge and thinking skills necessary to understand not only the processes of Othering and normalizing, but also their own complicity in these processes" (Kumashiro 2000: 38). Consequently, the dimension of *critique* first of all involves learners in recognising existing regimes of normativity, learning how to unlearn normative knowledges, and then reflecting on how they themselves are deeply enmeshed in the ordering systems of norms and Othernesses. An 'Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering', however, does not merely stop at the level of critique and developing a critical consciousness, although I would argue that this is in itself already a very complex and also powerful learning objective that is not easily achieved. Kumashiro additionally envisions this pedagogic approach to enable learners "to resist hegemonic ideologies and to change social structures" (ibid.), hoping that "critical knowledge and thinking is what impels students toward action and change" (ibid.: 37). Such an interventionist pedagogic vision is close to those critical pedagogies that aim at a liberatory and emancipatory education that empowers learners to change society, most famously Freire's work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) originally developed for the Brazilian context, in which he envisions an empowering pedagogy that seeks to free the oppressed and powerless from an oppressive system.. Even though pedagogies of change and transformation rest on the possibility that critical thinking and knowledge might ultimately lead to social change, this link is far from being deterministic and maybe even outside of a teacher's control: "The goal that students will first learn and then act 'critically' is difficult to achieve" (Kumashiro 2000: 38). Indeed, one could argue that setting the normative objective that students must use their critical knowledge to transform society can be manipulative, as it implies that students simply replace an existing worldview with another worldview that has been imposed by the teacher. Somewhat paradoxically, the wish to achieve a transformation of normative orders and worldviews (e.g. of heteronormativity) would in itself prescribe a new normative view of how the world should be.

Therefore, I argue that the aim of transformation might not only be difficult to reach, but also even undesirable if students are made to follow *a particular worldview* or think and act in *particular ways*. This cannot be in the interest of critical or anti-oppressive pedagogy, therefore I would like to highlight the value of enabling students to think critically and recognise consciously how the relationship between the Other and the norm can function, but leave it up to them to use these insights to think through other possible worldviews, rather than following a ready-made prescription spoon-fed by the teacher.

Even though I have expressed some concerns about conceptualising (prescriptive) change and (prescriptive) transformation as the ultimate objective of pedagogy, I still see good value in Kumashiro's fourth dimension of anti-oppressive pedagogy that is, perhaps not surprisingly, called "Education that Changes Students and Society". This value particularly rests on the impulse to grapple with the discourses of Othering and normalising, to propose the notion of 'learning through crisis', and embrace poststructuralist approaches to education. To begin with the first aspect, Kumashiro writes that "[o]ppression originates in discourse, and, in particular, in the citing of particular discourses, which frame how people think, feel, act, and interact. In other words, oppression is the citing of harmful discourses and the repetition of harmful histories" (Kumashiro 2000: 40). If, accordingly, oppression, Othering and normalising are discursively produced, it becomes an arguably viable strategy to investigate, dismantle and supplement existing discourses as they circulate in society at large, in the educational institution, in the classroom (e.g. as they are uttered by learners or teachers), but also in texts and media that are used as learning resources in the classroom. As a particular example, Kumashiro takes on a Butlerian perspective and explores the iteration of harmful stereotypes about the Other in discourse. With reference to Butler's *Excitable Speech* (1997), Kumashiro (2004: 41) argues that oppression is the result of harmful citational practices in discourse, i.e. the citation of stereotypes that have emerged over time, crafted by particular communities of people, to vilify the Other. A closer look into Butler's *Excitable Speech* reveals that she emphasises the relevance of language to constitute subjects: by the language one speaks, and by the language one is spoken to, the subject comes into existence (1997: 28). This relationship between language and the subject is highlighted at the example of hate speech – "injurious language" (ibid.: 27) – directed at the Other. Butler remarks that the use of hate speech, including harmful stereotypes, can never be innocent:

How does the language we use affect others? If hate speech is citational, does that mean that the one who uses it is not responsible for that usage? Can one say that someone else made up this speech that one simply finds oneself using and thereby absolve oneself of all responsibility? I would argue that the citationality of discourse can work to enhance and intensify our responsibility for it. (Butler 1997: 27)

What I derive from Butler's position is that education, too, has a responsibility to engage with hate speech, especially if it is used in educational settings. Each moment in which hate speech is used is marked by ambivalence: On the one hand, there is always someone who is affected by hate speech in harmful ways. On the other hand, each instance can become an opportunity for intervention. Butler writes that we must begin by

noting that hate speech calls into question linguistic survival, that being called a name can be the site of injury, and [...] that this name-calling may be the initiating moment of a counter-mobilization. The name one is called both subordinates and enables, producing a scene of agency from ambivalence, a set of effects that exceed the animating intentions of the call. To take up the name that one is called is no simple submission to prior authority, for the name is already unmoored from prior context, and entered into the labor of self-definition. The word that wounds becomes an instrument of resistance in the redeployment that destroys the prior territory of its operation. Such a redeployment means speaking words without prior authorization and putting into risk the security of linguistic life, the sense of one's place in language, that one's words do as one says. That risk, however, has already arrived with injurious language as it calls into question the linguistic survival of the one addressed. Insurrectionary speech becomes a necessary response to injurious language, a risk taken in response to being put at risk, a repetition in language that forces change. (Butler 1997: 163)

This ambivalence between subordination and enabling, between injury and agency, that emerges from hate speech can be harnessed productively in the classroom. It opens up a space for critically reflecting on the harmful power of hate speech, or stereotypes, to injure and insult people, i.e. how some people are put at risk and their sense of one's place in language is called into question. Since the words as they have been spoken, however, cannot be taken back and are out in the open, Butler insists on the necessary responsibility to respond to such harmful discourse and enter into 'labor' to rework and redefine such discourse. In Butler's words, harmful language and stereotypes can in themselves become weapons to work against their original intent. This leads Kumashiro (2000: 42) to say that neither the prohibition nor the critical awareness of harmful discourses actually change such discourses. He adopts Butler's notion of labor and locates such labor into the classroom where learners can be encouraged to challenge and alter harmful language: "When enough members of a community participate in this kind of labor citational practices (especially the repetition of harmful citations) change" (ibid.). Again, I would like to recall the reservation that expecting change to happen automatically might be too optimistic. But what I seek to stress is the potential of the classroom to interrupt harmful discourses to stop their constant and uncritical repetition. If learners can additionally be encouraged to 'do labor' and to reflect on how harmful discourse can be "repeat[ed] with a difference" (ibid.: 43), then the objective to disrupt the association of certain attributes with certain identities might move into the horizon of possibility.

While the pedagogic idea to challenge and rework harmful stereotypes or hate speech is one way to grapple critically with discourses, e.g. by reflecting on them with learners in the classroom, it would still focus rather one-sidedly on the Other. Therefore, I also suggest working with and through discourses in which normalcy is constituted, for example by exploring how lifestyle magazines sell a worldview of heterosexuality and a dichotomous gender order. Such an intervention could cause students to call into question what is 'normally' known, or to speak with Kumashiro, to unsettle "normative knowledges" (Kumashiro 2000: 44). Although the notion of unsettling normative knowledges is conceptualised as an integral component of anti-oppressive pedagogy, I seek to challenge the assumption that all students share the same normative knowledges, or that they only know what is 'normally' known. Such a one-sided and homogenising view might lead to the misleading assumption that all non-Other students passively reside in a state of ignorance and must be shown the light of counter-

normative knowledges, foreclosing the possibility that they themselves might already bring a critical awareness of norms to class, or that, by contrast, all students who are Other, and through their being Other, can already see perfectly through normative knowledges and critique them. In spite of this reservation, a pedagogy that introduces allegedly ‘new’ knowledges or disrupts allegedly ‘normative’ knowledges can still lead learners into what Kumashiro calls a state of crisis: “Students can simultaneously become both ‘unstuck’ (distanced from the ways they have always thought [...]) and ‘stuck’ (intellectually paralyzed so that they need to work through feelings and thoughts before moving on with the [...] lesson)” (Kumashiro 2000: 44). While one could argue that all learning involves some moment of crisis when new knowledge or insights are constructed into, supplement, or shatter existing knowledge and insights, I do concede that any form of learning that relates to assumptions about normalcy and Otherness, possibly deeply engrained into the learners’ mind-sets, can cause particularly intense moments of crisis¹³. Within the concept of anti-oppressive pedagogy, such moments of crisis become the starting point for new learning. Kumashiro (2000: 44) stresses that the curriculum needs to provide ample space for learners and educators to work through the crisis together, e.g. by giving learners the opportunity to voice what was felt to be unsettling, or by reflecting deeply on how the newly gained insights supplement or call into question what was known before. Ultimately, then, the pedagogy that is conceptualised by Kumashiro neither seeks to reinscribe normalcy, nor does it seek to reinscribe Otherness. Instead, it advocates fostering critical thinking and an awareness of the intricacies that belong to the contested domain of normalcy and Otherness. It remains to be seen if Kumashiro’s pedagogic vision can live up to its Derridean influence and fully “deconstruct the Self/Other binary” (Kumashiro 2000: 45). When Kumashiro proposes, however, that “[b]y changing how we read normalcy and Otherness, we can change how we read Others and ourselves” (Kumashiro 2000: 45), a first step towards transformation might be taken, especially if learners can be encouraged to engage critically with representations and discourses of normalcy and Otherness.

13 By drawing on Luhmann (1998) and Britzmann (1998), Kumashiro points out that “we unconsciously desire learning only that which affirms what we already know and our own sense of self” (Kumashiro 2000: 43). Any pedagogic intervention that seeks to work against ‘what we already now’, e.g. a critical engagement with norms or with the Other, might therefore cause a resistance among learners to learn what is new. From this, Kumashiro derives the claim that anti-oppressive pedagogy, with its inherent aim to transform harmful and restricting orders and relations between ‘norm’ and ‘Other’, might lead to particularly intense moments of crisis. It must be noted, however, that such a moment of crisis must not be seen as a deliberate and unethical border-crossing where students are confronted with highly intrusive content. Rather, a moment of crisis is conceptualized as the result of a pedagogic intervention that opens up an horizon for deep reflection and new ways of thinking and knowing.

1.4 Difference and Otherness in TEFL Research and Practice: Towards a Heuristic

The previous chapter set out to delineate that EFL education, but also foreign language education in general, conceptualises cultural difference and Otherness as constitutive elements of its own pedagogy. It emerges as an inherent principle of EFL education to initiate encounters with what is perceived to be culturally different or Other. The ensuing negotiation of differing cultural meanings has the potential to de-centre learners from their own cultural frames of reference and have them understand the relativity of their cultural worldviews. This endorsement of engaging with cultural difference and Otherness is in itself good enough reason to develop a substantiated theoretical framework to guide the development and implementation of cultural learning scenarios for the EFL classroom. However, I even go one step further and argue that the need for such a rich and theoretical substantiation is exponentiated in the wake of increasing cultural heterogeneity and plurality, which has become a core feature of today's sociocultural realities, as Küster observes:

Die rapide fortschreitende Globalisierung in nahezu allen Bereichen des öffentlichen Lebens, in Wirtschaft und Politik, in Kultur und Alltagskommunikation sowie migrationsbedingten Veränderungen unserer Gesellschaft lassen Vielfalt und Heterogenität [...] zu einer unumkehrbaren Gegebenheit unserer aktuellen Lebenswelt werden. Ob wir im Austausch mit Partnern auf entfernten Erdteilen oder in der eigenen Arbeits- und Wohnumgebung stehen, immer stoßen wir auf die Andersheit der Anderen, mag diese vorrangig sozio-kulturell oder ethnisch-kulturell geprägt sein. (Küster 2003: 13)

The inevitability of encountering the Otherness of the Other on a daily regular basis in all of our immediate living environments, Küster continues to argue (*ibid.*: 14), is closely linked to foreign language education, precisely so because the initiation of cross-cultural communication intensifies the learners' contact with cultural diversity. If cultural difference and Otherness can proliferate along numerous lines, it will become increasingly improper also for EFL education to think about culture in the singular, or establish the engagement with cultural difference along a few specific lines only. The call for aligning EFL education with 'other Others' and 'different differences' that I articulate centrally throughout this dissertation does not only mirror current educational tendencies to develop pedagogies of diversity, it also requires a careful theoretical reconsideration of the complexities that are at stake when conceptualising the engagement with cultural diversity in the EFL classroom.

In this chapter, I have collated a fabric of theoretical positions that shed a complex light on difference and Otherness as concepts of critical thought, and reflected on these positions in view of their potential trajectories for EFL education. Let me now deduce from these positions and considerations a heuristic that is intended to serve as 'guiding map' for providing systematic orientation concerning the epistemological stakes of conceptualising an engagement with 'other Others' and 'different differences' in TEFL. Based on the theoretical fabric of the first chapter, I suggest the following complex of issues to constitute the heuristic grasp of modelling Otherness and cultural difference into the discourse of TEFL. Such a heuristic should entail

- (1) a critical consideration of the ambivalent nature of the **binary opposition** and its relationship to articulating cultural difference in oppositional terms;
- (2) a careful analysis of the **lines of difference** or **axes of social categorisation** that play a central or only a peripheral role in TEFL, which points to potential limitations regarding the range of sociocultural identities and phenomena that find their way into research and the classroom;
- (3) a sensitive responsibility for excluded, silenced or marginalised difference positions that can be subsumed under the rubric of **Otherness**;
- (4) a sound grasp of the critical challenges of **representing** cultural difference and Otherness;
- (5) a deliberate turn towards the role and power of **discourse** to produce and redefine the meanings that become attached to cultural differences and Otherness, with a particular sensitivity to the discursive process of **Othering**;
- (6) an endorsement of the need to **affirm diversity** that is coupled with a **critical stance on diversity** to avoid one-sided pedagogic agendas, including a focus on critically challenging the cultural **norms** that underlie the creation of difference and Otherness;
- (7) an understanding that Otherness and difference are **no ontological or absolute, but relational and dynamic entities** that can change in the process of learning;

In what follows, I will explain the scope of each of these aspects so as to point out their function in the heuristic and their relevance for TEFL.

(1) Heuristically speaking, the binary opposition is a powerful tool to structure human thought and experience and is assigned a central role in the creation of meaning based on difference. At the same time, the binary opposition is a grossly simplified and reductionist paradigm for describing or capturing human diversity. This ambivalent character of the binary opposition has two implications. On the one hand, I call to caution against fully shunning or simply prohibiting the binary opposition. Learners might initially bring a binary opposition to the understanding of a cultural context. Here, it might be advisable to *initially* retain the binary opposition as a discursive basis and then work towards complementing it with new and more nuanced meanings. Also, the binary opposition might be a valuable angle from which to approach, for example, a literary text in the classroom so as to identify in what ways a given text reproduces a certain binary. On the other hand, it must be stressed that thinking about and engaging with cultural meanings must not stop where the binary opposition ends. To work against its reductive, essentialising and universalising tendency, the critical challenge is to introduce complexity to shed a more differentiated light on a situation that has previously been conceived of in dichotomous terms (cf. Lütge 2013a). What is further needed is a sensitivity towards the cultural meanings that a binary opposition excludes, and also ponder their inclusion into the classroom. Ultimately, the maintenance and reproduction of binary oppositions in TEFL has been shown to be theoretically inappropriate. Therefore, I consider it necessary to radically acknowledge that difference – if thought of in the plural – produces multi-layered identities and sociocultural diversity in postmodern, media-saturated and global societies. It will be

increasingly difficult to ignore such a radical diversification in TEFL, and in the second chapter on cultural learning, I will show that TEFL research is levelling increasing skepticism towards binary oppositions.

(2) The considerations put forward in the first point immediately link to the second issue, in which I suggest that TEFL as a discipline must critically address its own role in establishing, endorsing and perpetuating a fine-tuned system of cultural differences and Othernesses that find their way into mainstream research and teaching, or that are assigned a peripheral or even silenced position. This claim embodies a strongly normative impulse in that it urges TEFL as a discipline to confront its own limitations and practices of representing cultural difference in the classroom and in research. Nonetheless, I consider it a viable and promising question to ask what particular lines of cultural difference or axes of categorisation are a welcome and established asset to the larger 'text' that TEFL is 'writing', what lines of difference are not acknowledged, and why that is the case. At the same time, TEFL as a discipline should also consider embracing its potential to cause the system of differences to shift by thinking through, and legitimising, innovative ways of bringing cultural diversity into research and into EFL classrooms.

(3) The third issue mentioned in the heuristic indicates the necessity to acknowledge Otherness and the Other as integral components of the whole theoretical complex of cultural difference. This turn can be theoretically justified with the poststructuralist interest of link disciplines (e.g. cultural studies) "in borderline territory, in margins, in zones of contestation between signs that defy the oppositional logic of the binary opposition" (Currie 2004: 48). Modelling cultural differences into TEFL therefore also requires a responsibility for excluded, silenced or marginalised difference positions. Representing Otherness in TEFL can be understood as an important and indispensable symbolic move to affirm the existence of Others and bring them into visibility. The feminist positions I referred to stress the absolute necessity not to represent the Other as a deficient mode of being, but to valorise their existence as equal. At the same time, however, the high claims of achieving a full understanding of the Other (e.g. in *Fremdverstehen*) must be critically reconsidered. A similar challenge is the question of how to represent the Other adequately in the classroom.

(4) The challenging issue of representing the Other or cultural difference in the classroom can be linked to the theoretical impulses deriving from Spivak's considerations in 'Can the Subaltern Speak', and also Derrida's concept of *différance*. Their critical thought might lead to the hasty conclusion that it might be better not to represent at all for fear of misrepresenting the Other or perpetuating stereotypes about the Other. Similarly, the impossibility to arrive at clear and unambiguous meanings might also engender the feeling that it is difficult to represent 'correctly'. *Not* to represent the Other, however, is no viable option, as this would mean to fall back behind the criticism that has originally identified the absence of the Other from representation and demanded their inclusion. Since the Other does not speak with a monolithic, essential and originary voice, it is necessary to aim at continuous and multiple representations that represent the Other in a more heterogeneous light. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that no representation is in itself valid, forever fixed, or correct. Here,

Kumashiro's (2000) position that I have discussed above is valuable in that it suggests to critically engage learners in interrogating the validity and scope of any given representation and to raise their interest in learning more about what a single representation could not tell them. Furthermore, if meaning is considered to be open and fluid, the classroom can become a site in which various interpretations of meaning are equally welcome.

(5) Cultural difference and Otherness are understood to be social constructs that are produced in discourse. Hence, it is an indispensable part of the heuristic to model a critical turn towards discourse into the engagement with difference and Otherness. A Foucauldian conceptualisation of discourses suggests that learners come to engage with a wide variety of texts into which discourse materialises, and to retrieve from these texts how cultural meanings surrounding difference are produced, redefined or dissipated. This includes a sensitivity to carve out the power relations fluctuating through discourse that define what counts as truth, what positions are dominant in a discursive formation, and who gets the chance to speak about what. In particular, Said's careful analysis of the techniques of Othering is ideally to be integrated into this rigid turn to discourse, as it can serve to lay open with what linguistic or other modes of meaning-making a certain cultural difference is actually discursively produced as Other.

(6) The discussion of diversity issues in pedagogy has shown that it would be a one-sided approach to simply affirm and celebrate the existence of various Others and cultural differences. The call is for harnessing the critical impetus that resides in diversity- and difference-oriented pedagogies. The central insight emerging from these positions – and this is a key element of this heuristic – is that cultural norms that produce difference and Otherness in the first place must also always be thematised and critically unmasked alongside representing the Other. Using the example of the construction of 'whiteness' in the context of racial privilege, Helán Page argues: "We shouldn't stop studying the 'Other,' but we need to study those who are reproducing themselves as dominant groups" (Page 1995: 21, quoted in Hartigan 1999: 184). If this impetus is harnessed, an awareness of the cultural privilege, the social expectations and the exclusions that a cultural norm engenders can be achieved. Furthermore, the critical conceptualisation of engaging with Otherness and difference in TEFL should ideally cover all four dimensions of Kumashiro's framework of anti-oppressive pedagogy. If the dimensions of 'Education for the Other', 'Education about the Other', 'Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering', and 'Education that Changes Students and Society' are equally considered in the EFL classroom, the need for affirming the Other, for bringing the Other into existence via representations, and for critically challenging privilege and norms so as to achieve social change can be equally covered lest to circumvent one-sided pedagogic interventions.

(7) A further issue that cuts through the considerations above is that cultural learning in TEFL does not conceptualise Otherness and difference as ontologically fixed and absolute categories. Indeed, they are understood to be relational and dynamic categories that are prone to change when learners come to discover them and in doing so relativise their own cultural frames of reference. The coordination of perspectives centrally suggested in the concept of *Fremdverstehen* implies that it is possible to experience and understand the Other. Although a full understanding and a complete fusion of horizons might be considered impossible, this

position highlights that those who have once been introduced as Other are perhaps only initially perceived to be the Other, soon losing their status as being completely foreign or alien – which is certainly to be welcomed in EFL education.

All in all, the heuristic I have collated here is intended to sensitise to the critical issues that are at stake when a more diversified focus on ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ moves into the horizon of TEFL as a discipline. On the one hand, this heuristic can serve as a matrix of criteria that might prove helpful for teachers to plan, implement and evaluate teaching scenarios that centralise the engagement with cultural difference and Otherness. It points to methodological questions (e.g. avoiding to reinscribe binaries in the classroom), questions of learning objectives (e.g. critically engaging with norms, understanding how the Other is constructed in discourse) and to questions of text selection and representation (e.g. the choice of a literary text with a gay protagonist). On the other hand, I believe that this heuristic is useful to put TEFL research that explores Otherness and difference as a constitutive element of EFL education on a sound theoretical basis. It points to a diversity of issues – developed against the backdrop of a broad theoretical fabric constructed out of diverse link disciplines – that will inform my subsequent investigation of the fields of *Kulturdidaktik*, *Literaturdidaktik* and *Genderdidaktik*, but that might generally serve to be useful for other researchers who work at the intersection of Otherness, difference and TEFL. Let me now turn to investigate the field of cultural learning within TEFL.

2 Cultural Learning in TEFL: Moving Towards Greater Complexity

The discourse on cultural learning in TEFL is soaked with discussions and reflections on the status of difference and Otherness in research and in the classroom. Laurenz Volkmann, for example, calls to mind that cultural learning has traditionally been marked by an “ongoing grappling with or negotiation of the culturally different Other” (2015: 21). For the teaching of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), Byram posits that foreign language teaching can introduce learners to different cultural worlds, initiate the experience of cultural Otherness, provide scenarios for learners to investigate and encounter different norms, values and world-views, and to establish a relationship to the cultural Other while being critical and reflective towards one’s own cultural imprint (1997: 3, 18, 35; cf. also Hu/Byram 2009b: vii). From a curricular perspective, the notion of cultural difference also features in the current German educational standards for foreign languages, where a “verständnisvoller Umgang mit kultureller Differenz” (Kultusministerkonferenz 2004a: 8) is sketched out – albeit rather cursorily – as an important dimension of intercultural competence (alongside “soziokulturelles Orientierungswissen” and “praktische Bewältigung interkultureller Begegnungssituationen”, *ibid.*). At the same time that Otherness and difference are constituted as a central lens of cultural learning, Blell and Doff highlight the importance to open up to renegotiations of the “cultural conceptions of the ‘other’ or the ‘different’” (2014: 77) so as to keep in sync with the cultural realities experienced by today’s EFL learners and with the state of knowledge in key referential disciplines such as Cultural Studies. Blell and Doff’s call for renegotiating Otherness and difference in TEFL parallels current shifts and transformations within cultural learning discourses that seek to broaden the intercultural foci of the EFL classroom to incorporate transcultural and global vistas. It is in this climate that, for example, Alter takes up a transcultural perspective to reevaluate Otherness as a key facet of *Fremdverstehen* (2015), and Lütge (2013a) proposes to consider new contours of the categories of difference that learners are to engage with in the classroom.

The critical engagement with cultural learning discourses that I will develop in this chapter is located exactly in these renegotiations of the concepts of difference and Otherness in TEFL. In investigating existing conceptualisations of cultural learning from this specific vantage point, I seek to identify what the understandings of difference and Otherness in TEFL actually stretch out to and how these concepts are ‘handled’, e.g. whether there is an interest in looking at difference beyond binary oppositions, or whether TEFL embraces a sensitivity to culturally marginalised Others. In the main, I am concerned with what types of difference and Otherness are, perhaps exclusively, moved into view in cultural learning, and if there are tendencies to widen the scope by engaging lines of difference and Otherness that have not (yet) been accessed for the EFL classroom. In other words, who and what is actually entailed in the TEFL-specific understanding of the cultural Other and of cultural difference? These concerns become particularly relevant regarding the affirmative rhetoric of diversity that is typically to be found in the literature on cultural learning. Publications seem to abound with ‘buzz words’ such as

- cultural complexity and heterogeneity,
 - plurality of voices, individual and collective identities, and cultural expressions,
 - multiperspectivity of different worldviews and values,
 - experience of alterity
- (e.g. Blell/Doff 2014: 80; Freitag-Hild 2010b: 3; Rössler 2008: 51; Doff/Schulze-Engler 2011b).

All of these ‘buzz words’ seem to be considered to be a self-evident quality criterion for cultural learning, e.g. in getting learners to explore and understand diverse cultural practices, or have them engage with a choice of texts that represent cultural diversity. If such a rhetoric casts a potentially endless horizon of cultural differences and Otherness onto EFL teaching and learning, one might be advised to some caution by listening to Volkmann, who says that, possibly, “German academics publishing in the field of EFL teaching pay supposedly politically correct lip-service to abstract values such as difference, plurality, decentering, openness and tolerance towards the Other” (Volkmann 2013: 171). He asks what other angles (in his case, the postcolonial angle, and from my perspective, the angle of Queer Theory) would be obvious invitations to further theorise concepts of cultural learning. This suggests that cultural learning might not tap into the full theoretical potential other, hitherto unaccessed viewpoints hold in store. In suspecting that the all-pervasive endorsement of plurality might not fully filter down to TEFL research and practice, instead being not more than what Volkmann calls a lip-service, I also seek to confront the inherent limitations and reductive approaches of cultural learning in view of the ‘different differences’ and ‘other Others’ TEFL *actually* (and not just *potentially* qua easily articulated proclamations of diversity) grapples with. Ultimately, this exploration serves a double function. On the one hand, it seeks to take stock of current (re)negotiations of cultural learning in view of cultural difference and Otherness. On the other hand, it seeks to lay open and carve out an epistemic space for ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’, in which I seek to locate and integrate a queer perspective.

To frame my investigation of cultural learning, let me provide a brief overview of what *Kulturdidaktik* as a branch of TEFL is concerned with. I understand the term *Kulturdidaktik* as it is used in German academic discourse on foreign language education as an umbrella term for a discipline that is concerned with questions relating to teaching and learning about culture, mainly in institutionalised EFL settings. Wolfgang Hallet (2010) stresses that *Kulturdidaktik* is far from being a unitary field with a unanimously shared agenda, and indeed, various conceptualisations of teaching and learning about culture have emerged under the open umbrella of *Kulturdidaktik* over time (e.g. conceptually and terminologically as *Landeskunde* (area studies), intercultural learning, transcultural learning or global learning). On a base level, however, it is still possible to articulate common key concerns of *Kulturdidaktik*, which Hallet condenses in the following definition: “Unter dem Begriff der K[ulturdidaktik] sind Konzepte der Vermittlung, der Repräsentation und des Verstehens von kommunikativer Interaktion mit fremdsprachigen Kulturen oder einzelnen ihrer Vertreter/innen und Hervorbringungen zu verstehen” (2010: 153). Hallet’s definition points at three major concerns of *Kulturdidaktik*. The

first key issue is the question of how culture can actually be conveyed in the foreign language classroom, which relates to a specification of didactic principles that serve to realise cultural learning in concrete teaching situations of a classroom. Depending on the exact concept that is currently favoured, this could include, for example, an instructive and teacher-centred approach to conveying cultural facts, or a student-centred approach in which learners discover and negotiate cultural meaning in a dialogic way. A second major concern of *Kulturredidaktik* focuses on questions of representing culture in the classroom, and what forms such representations can take. This is inextricably linked to the question of selecting content, i.e. what is out there that is considered to be worth learning as cultural content, and more generally to the question of how culture is understood, e.g. if there is a tendency towards equating culture with national culture, if culture is seen as a heterogeneous and multi-layered construct that emphasises the everyday signifying practices of individuals, or if there is a normative tendency to favour elitist products and phenomena deemed aesthetic in a society (high culture or large-C ‘Culture’) (cf. Alter 2015a: 32-34; Nünning 2010: 152; Delanoy/Volkman 2006b: 11). This question is also immediately relevant for conceptualising what is actually meant by *cultural* difference – an issue that I will thoroughly investigate throughout this chapter. The third dimension that becomes apparent in Hallet’s definition is the notion of understanding and entering communicative interactions with representatives from other cultural backgrounds, and of understanding the phenomena and products that emerge from foreign language cultures. Such encounters with foreign cultures can either be “face-to-face or text-conducted” (Blell/Doff 2014: 83), with the second option indicating that EFL teaching can also mediate foreign language cultures into the classroom via literature, film, music, etc. This third dimension directly points to the question of learning objectives, i.e. what is it that learners are to learn, understand and develop through cultural learning? These three cornerstones of *Kulturredidaktik* will resurface throughout my subsequent investigation, in which I will juxtapose the conceptualisation of didactic principles, the selection of cultural content, and the specification of learning objectives with my exploration of cultural difference and Otherness in TEFL.

What needs to be emphasised is that *Kulturredidaktik* has undergone and is frequently undergoing significant shifts, depending on how each of the dimensions sketched out above is approached and defined in order to conceptualise cultural learning. Hallet and Nünning (2007: 1) point out that current openings, innovations and paradigm shifts in important link disciplines such as cultural studies and literary studies yield valuable impulses for the further advancement and development of cultural learning pedagogies in foreign language education. These include, among others, changing concepts of ‘culture’ away from seeing culture as monolithic, a turn towards a wide and open notion of ‘text’, or innovations in the field of media and visual culture. Hallet and Nünning (2007) suggest that existing approaches and concepts put forward by link disciplines be investigated in view of their relevance for foreign language education so as to access their didactic dimensions and potentials. The systematic integration of such new impulses can be retraced in current TEFL research, e.g. in the dissertations by Britta Freitag-Hild (2010b), who makes accessible *British Fictions of Migration* under the lens of transcultural learning to access alternative and fluid notions of identity and culture in the foreign language

classroom, or by Grit Alter (2015), who also employs a transcultural lens to reinvestigate the established concept of *Fremdverstehen* by drawing on Canadian Young Adult Fiction. Even though Hallet and Nünning (2007: 2; cf. Blell/Doff 2014: 77 for a similar concern) call to caution that these new developments do not necessarily filter down immediately to classroom practice, where older and more traditional orientations might circulate longer – hence their call for a more thorough transfer –, current research such as Freitag-Hild’s or Alter’s indicate that TEFL as a discipline is not immune to these developments and contributes to the ongoing shifts that mark the (re)conceptualisations of cultural learning. What can also be expected from these new shifts is a contribution towards changing understandings and broader vistas regarding the conceptualisation of cultural difference and Otherness for TEFL.

Broadly speaking, conceptualisations of cultural learning that have been developed in *Kulturdidaktik* and that are operative today can roughly be grouped into intercultural learning (in particular intercultural communicative competence and *Fremdverstehen*), transcultural learning and Global Education (cf. Alter 2014: 54-55; also Volkmann 2010). *Fremdverstehen* and intercultural learning, including its coterminous concept intercultural communicative competence, put much emphasis on “furthering students’ abilities to develop empathy, the willingness to put oneself into the position of a member of another culture and negotiate culturally informed thought patterns” (Volkmann 2013: 171). *Fremdverstehen* embodies a hermeneutic approach to intercultural understanding located in literature pedagogy and seeks to develop empathy and a negotiation of cultural viewpoints through a complex interplay of perspective changes, mainly at the example of literary texts (cf. Alter 2014; Risager 2013: 149; Hu/Byram 2009b: vii). Intercultural communicative competence, consisting of a plethora of subskills, is seen as a basis for interacting appropriately with people from another culture (cf. Byram 1997; Antor 2007b). While intercultural learning tends to emphasise, although not invariably so, that communicative interactions and the negotiation of meaning occur between two distinct cultures (i.e. the learner’s ‘home culture’ and the so-called ‘target culture’), transcultural learning promises to offer an altered perspective in that it distances itself from seeing (target) cultures as monolithic entities, instead favouring cultural diversity and a view on individuals and cultures as hybrid and multi-layered entities that are globally interlocked (cf. Volkmann 2013: 172; Eisenmann/Grimm/Volkmann 2010b: vii). Other than such a terminological distinction might suggest, each of these concepts might be articulated with a heterogeneous scope, and Alter (2014: 54) calls to mind that the exact differences between these concepts often only come in nuances. Rather than assuming that the advent of new superior concepts (e.g. transcultural learning) replaces older, allegedly inferior concepts, I follow Delanoy (2013) who objects to seeing intercultural learning as “an outmoded and problematic paradigm” per se (ibid.: 157) and favours to harness the potential and value of each approach to enrich cultural learning, while taking seriously and adopting the criticism each individual approach might engender. A rather recent newcomer to the German discussion of foreign language education and cultural learning is the pedagogic concept of Global Education (cf. Lütge 2015a, 2015b; Surkamp/Jancke 2012; De Florio-Hansen 2010). Global Education can be seen as a pedagogic response to increasing planetary globalisation and internationalisation. Its

specific trajectory “involves learning about those problems and issues that cut across national boundaries, and about the interconnectedness of systems – ecological, cultural, economic, political, and technological” (Lütge 2015b: 7), but it also “involves perspective taking – seeing things through the eyes and minds of others” (ibid.). While Global Education’s specific stance is on grappling with the ramifications of globalisation, these aspects clearly mark sympathy with conceptualisations of inter- and transcultural learning. In view of this broad scope of cultural learning approaches, it will be interesting to see how they understand and (re)negotiate notions of cultural difference and Otherness.

This chapter will come in three parts. At first I will retrace how the establishment of a cultural dimension in TEFL engendered specific stances on cultural difference, and then analyse existing conceptualisations of intercultural learning (ICC and *Fremdverstehen*) both in view of their understanding of cultural difference, and their general didactic value for conceptualising the learner’s engagement with what is culturally different or Other. In the second part, I will grapple with current renegotiations in cultural learning theory to show that there is an opening up to new cultural differences at the same time as there is a canonising limitation regarding the cultural differences that are made accessible in and for TEFL. This chapter will conclude with suggesting didactic principles that can serve to frame the practical implementation of teaching and learning about ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ in the EFL classroom.

2.1 What’s the Difference in Cultural Learning? – From Area Studies to ICC and *Fremdverstehen*

This sub-chapter serves a double purpose. On the one hand, it will provide an overview of the relationship between the cultural dimension of EFL education and its engagement with cultural difference. I seek to retrace how and why culture has become a component inextricable from language teaching, and what directions the development of cultural learning has taken in terms of concrete conceptualisations such as *Landeskunde* (Area Studies), intercultural communicative competence (ICC), and *Fremdverstehen*. In doing so, I will identify aspects of cultural difference within these approaches, and what types of difference and Otherness they posit as central. On the other hand, my overview of the field of intercultural learning – which the cultural dimension of foreign language education developed into in the 1980s – will show how its central concepts, ICC and *Fremdverstehen*, have put forward agendas that are generally conducive to engaging learners with cultural difference and Otherness, which highlights their inherent value for increasing the scope of cultural learning towards ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ in TEFL.

To situate cultural learning historically, it can be said that foreign language teaching has always covered or included a cultural dimension in terms of content, e.g. by selecting reading pieces or literature that provided some insights into a country’s culture or history (cf. Risager 2013: 143; Alter 2015a: 47; Klippel 2000: 53). Up to the 19th century and beyond, culture pedagogy had what Risager calls a “national shaping” and a “geographical division” (2013: 145), moving the countries where the target language is spoken into the focus of attention,

which coincided with the establishment of nation states in Europe and across the world. Risager observes that

[f]rom the latter half of the 19th century we can see language subjects gradually becoming nationalised and included in the general upbringing of populations to a nationally structured view of the world. They began to acquire the aim of conveying a uniform image of the various national states, of the language, the literature, the country and the people. (Risager 2013: 145)

As I will show later in this chapter, this legacy of a national orientation in foreign language education has exerted a powerful influence up to today, although it has developed into a contested and controversial issue, with researchers seeking to update cultural learning through increasingly international, transcultural, global and diversity foci. Alter (2015: 47) stresses that – unlike in today’s conceptualisations of cultural learning – the inclusion of cultural content did hardly ever serve the purpose of critical cultural reflections. Rather, in an approach that became popularly known and wide-spread as *Landeskunde* (Area Studies), learners were supposed to accrue a catalogue of “factual knowledge – facts and figures – about the two main target cultures Britain [...] and the United States” (Eisenmann/Grimm/Volkmann 2010b: vii), with teaching goals that conventionally included to learn about “British and American ‘life and institutions’, ranging from fine arts to political and governmental systems as well as geography” (ibid.). Delanoy and Volkmann (2006b: 12) critically remark that, as a rule, *Landeskunde* approaches presented the target culture in neutral or positive terms, avoiding potentially conflict-laden issues and favouring harmonious encounters with its representatives. This “fact-based, conflict-avoiding and tourism-related approach” (ibid.) is not only to be seen critically because it rules out the engagement with those cultural differences that might be a source of controversy and conflict. Eisenmann, Grimm and Volkmann (2010b: vii) stress that *Landeskunde* also endorsed elitist and conventional concepts of culture (large-C ‘Culture’), neglecting many aspects of popular culture and everyday life (small-c ‘culture’).

When these historical developments are reflected in view of the cultural differences represented in TEFL, it becomes clear that the concept of ‘nation’ became deeply engrained as an organising and structuring principle of cultural learning. This mirrors a common understanding of culture that applies the term “to geographical and political entities such as nations, with their different histories and the unity conferred to them by their language, character, art, customs and traditions” (Assmann 2012: 13). The effect of this understanding of culture, with its stress on unity, provides “an all-embracing name and identity” (ibid.) to the various elements mentioned by Assmann. What follows is that one can talk about, for example, British traditions and customs, or a British mentality, and in turn, about British culture in general. Liddicoat and Scarino point out that “[t]his view of culture is analogous to the idea of naming languages” (2013: 18), the impact of which must not be underestimated regarding the perception of what foreign language learning is about, as it allows for a quick and almost self-evident link between, for example, learning English, and hence, learning about English culture. Liddicoat and Scarino further elaborate that

[s]uch a view of culture is an essentializing one that reduces culture to recognizable, often stereotypicalized, representations of cultural attributes. Identifying a culture as a national culture does not make reference to what culture is, but rather where culture is found: American

culture resides in the essentialized attributes located in the territory of the United States, French culture in France, etc. Culture is an unproblematic and unproblematized construct that can be reduced to a label derived from political geography. (2013: 18)

If equating culture with nation has been an influential paradigm, if not *the* paradigm in foreign language education – and dare I call for keeping an open eye for those instances and contexts in which exactly such an equation continues to remain active as a primary paradigm – then the effects of this for the representation of culture and the selection of cultural content can be sketched out as follows.

On one level, naming and sorting cultures as nations implies that cultures might become represented as unified and homogeneous entities that are clearly distinct from one another (cf. Assmann 2012: 13), thus casting a line of demarcation, for example, between what is perceived to be German and British culture. This has become a target of critique in current conceptualisations of cultural learning, but for more traditional approaches such as *Landeskunde*, this view on culture meant that understanding culture involved observing and knowing about culture in an undifferentiated way, and that learners remained external to a culture while projecting homogeneous images onto that culture from the outside, without recognising a culture's heterogeneity from the inside (cf. Liddicoat/Scarino 2013: 19; Assmann: 2012: 13). A further problem is terminological in nature. Privileging the nation as the endorsed site for culture renders invisible other 'cultural' groupings (e.g. according to gender or sexual orientation) to whom the label 'cultural' does not easily apply because they do not primarily classify as national (cf. Liddicoat/Scarino 2013: 18). Even for today, Eisenmann, Grimm and Volkmann observe "[a] surprising recurrence with which traditionalists still ask the question of whether a country or an area qualifies for EFL teaching" (2010b: ix), which mirrors that the primary guiding principle for selecting cultural content may still be informed by national or geographic preferences. In my own anecdotal experience, people have questioned the validity of establishing LGBT issues within cultural learning, as this was not felt to be part of the 'cultural' scope. From the perspective of terminology, what is probably needed is a change in mind-sets that problematises and complicates what qualifies as 'cultural'. This might also require the need for continuously specifying the somewhat ambiguous term 'cultural' so that, for example, cultural differences that are covered in TEFL can also stretch out to gender, sexuality, or other markers of 'cultural' difference which might otherwise be "filtered out of the view of culture in the essentialising process of identifying the national culture" (Liddicoat/Scarino 2013: 18).

In spite of my criticism, I do not mean to abandon the notion of culture as nation altogether. As Assmann (2012: 13) argues, it still serves as a basic orientation in practice, and it must be noted that national patterns of thinking might certainly resurface in the texts and contexts that are investigated in the EFL classroom. Blell and Doff (2014: 79) take the example of a Canadian beer advertisement that revolves centrally around 'being Canadian', which serves as a suitable starting point to explore the constructedness of nation and national stereotypes. In keeping the possibility of focusing on 'nation' as an exciting point of departure for critical explorations of cultural meaning in the classroom, all I am merely suggesting is to move away from employing the notion of culture as nation as the main or only lens through which to conceptualise cultural learning (cf. also Alter 2015a: 64). Such a move would allow us to

remain open to alternative inscriptions of ‘culture’ into cultural learning. Even though I am still within a historical line of argumentation, I am convinced that the reflections I have offered here are also valuable for today.

To continue the discussion, from the 1980s onwards, the status of culture in foreign language education experienced a radical and far-reaching transformation that occurred under the terminological umbrella of ‘intercultural learning’, which became an integral component of foreign language teaching and learning (cf. Delanoy/Volkman 2006b: 12; Risager 2013: 147; Blell/Doff 2014: 78)¹⁴. Influenced by a general cultural turn in the humanities and the growth of postmodernism and poststructuralism, anthropological concepts of culture (e.g. Geertz: 1973) and interpretive and hermeneutic approaches to the analysis and understanding of culture moved into view, marking a turn away from conceptualising cultures as fixed and objective entities that can simply be transmitted and learnt. Instead, cultures are viewed as highly complex webs of meaning, open to continuous change and crafted and recreated by concrete people, with learners becoming actively engaged in the exploration and discovery of cultural meanings (cf. Risager 2013: 146; Delanoy/Volkman 2006b: 12-13). This active role of the learner is reflected in the prefix ‘inter’, suggesting that the creation and negotiation of cultural meanings occur between representatives or texts from the target culture and those who engage with these meanings as learners of a foreign language. This stresses a learner-centred reciprocal dynamic: intercultural learning redefines the role of learners as agents who bring their own cultural frameworks and imprints to the understanding, interpretation and negotiation of cultural meanings – rather than being merely passive containers or receptacles that are unilaterally to be filled with cultural information stemming solely from the target culture (cf. Delanoy/Volkman 2006b: 13; Decke-Cornill/Küster 2014: 225-226). This development has strong ramifications for the status of cultural difference in TEFL. In moving away from such a unilateral relationship to the so-called target cultures, the import of the term ‘intercultural’ into cultural learning marks a turn towards emphasising a perspective of contrast and comparability between cultures (cf. Volkman 2010: 17). It is precisely this view on intercultural learning that has emerged as its most severe and persistent critique, namely that intercultural learning conceptualises cultures in binary terms as separate and homogeneous entities, and hence as clearly different. Delanoy (2013: 160) acknowledges that this can be an unwanted-for outcome of intercultural learning, but he cautions against reducing the scope of intercultural learning to this dubious reputation, precisely because intercultural learning is a field of diverse practices and can include other approaches that go beyond singular and monolithic understandings of culture.

14 From today’s perspective, the steady stream of publications focusing on cultural learning in TEFL pay testimony to the important status of this field within research and practice, e.g. the work by Kramsch (e.g. 1993; 1995), Byram (e.g. 1997) or the Gießen graduate school *Didaktik des Fremdverstehens* (e.g. Bredella/Christ/Legutke 2000), who have put cultural learning firmly on the agenda, and almost two decades later, an innumerable range of articles (e.g. Lütge 2013a; Blell/Doff 2014), edited volumes (e.g. Delanoy/Volkman 2006a; Antor 2007a; Hu/Byram 2009a; Doff/Schulze-Engler 2011a; Matz/Rogge/Siepmann 2014) and dissertations and habilitations (e.g. Fäcke 2006; Freitag-Hild 2010b; Alter 2015a) indicate the vibrant discussions in the field.

In the wake of these reconceptualisations, researchers such as Byram (1989; 1997) or Kramsch (1993; 1998) have stressed the close interrelation of culture and language. Cultural meanings are created, contested and circulated through language (indeed, through discourse at large) so that the negotiation of meanings can be defined as a process of communication in symbolically mediated interaction, which in intercultural encounters necessitates the command of a foreign language shared by both interlocutors (cf. Delanoy/Volkmann 2006b: 13; Decke-Cornill/Küster 2014: 226; Hu/Byram 2009b: xx; also: Barker 2012: 75). The merger of language learning and intercultural learning initiated the articulation of intercultural communicative competence as the main objective of foreign language education (cf. Müller-Hartmann/Schocker-von Dittfurth 2009), and Blell and Doff (2014: 78) state that gaining a high level of language proficiency goes alongside with mastering the cultural contexts in which the language is used, thus emphasising the close link between language and culture. The prominent role culture nowadays plays in foreign language education can also be legitimised by the holistic and comprehensive educational goals that institutionalised education at school generally has to foster and that point beyond developing communicative skills only (cf. Grimm/Meyer/Volkmann 2015: 154, and in particular also Bredella 1999: 102-105¹⁵). In fact, it needs to be seen, as Risager points out, that foreign language teaching and learning follows a more holistic agenda in which the learner is not just a *language* learner, but indeed “someone who also develops other facets of the personality in connection with language learning – especially a greater knowledge and understanding of the world” (Risager 2013: 144). This points to the general educational relevance of learning a foreign language and also to the impact that engaging with cultural meanings has on the development of the learners’ personal identities – a complex relationship that is, for example, explored in Burwitz-Melzer/Königs/Riemer (2013) or Norton/Toohey (2011).

Research into the intercultural dimension of EFL and foreign language education has provided an inventory of concepts that frame, and give a pedagogic imperative to, the engagement with cultural difference and Otherness that unfolds when a foreign culture is accessed. In particular, I am referring to research that revolves around the didactic concept of *Fremdverstehen* and the concept intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as central cornerstones of intercultural learning. Doubtlessly, notions of cultural difference and Otherness

¹⁵ Bredella pointedly and convincingly argues that institutionalized foreign language education at school, especially in an intercultural approach, cannot do without general educational goals: “Fremdsprachenunterricht an allgemeinbildenden Schulen ist immer auch durch allgemeine Erziehungsziele begründet worden“ (1999: 102), or: “Interkultureller Fremdsprachenunterricht kann auf allgemeine Erziehungsziele nicht verzichten“ (ibid.: 103). With reference to Peter Doyé (1991), Bredella critically explores the contribution of intercultural learning to general educational goals such as solidarity, justice, tolerance, emancipation and peaceful cooperation with other people. In particular, Bredella argues that a general educational goal that is inherent to intercultural foreign language learning lies in the broadening and deepening of the learners’ experience: “Wenn es ein allgemeines Erziehungsziel gibt, daß [sic] dem fremdsprachigen und fremdkulturellen Lernen inhärent ist, dann besteht es wohl darin, daß man sich auf eine andere Ordnung einläßt und damit Grenzen überschreitet. [...] Man muß sich auf das Andere einlassen und erweitert damit den eigenen begrenzten Horizont“ (Bredella 1999: 104). With this position, Bredella turns against the fervent criticism against intercultural learning put forward by Edmondson (1994) and Edmondson/House (1998), who argue that intercultural learning is a superfluous concept and that cultural or affective learning goals minimize the position of language-related and communicative learning goals as the core business of foreign language teaching (cf. also Decke-Cornill/Küster 2014: 227).

cut centrally across these research areas of cultural learning as constitutive elements, indicating that there has been a marked interest in theorising and conceptualising the engagement with difference and Otherness in research and for classroom practice (cf. chapter 1.1). In what follows, I will critically discuss and survey the didactic concepts of *Fremdverstehen* and ICC with a very specific lens. On the one hand, I am convinced that these concepts have provided invaluable insights for enabling learners to open up to encountering cultural difference, to experience and engage with Otherness, to relativise cultural norms and to de-centre from deeply engrained worldviews, while approaching cultural meanings with a mindset of multiperspectivity (cf. Rösler 2008: 51; Hu/Byram 2009b: vii). Consequently, I consider these concepts generally useful to critically engage with cultural difference and Otherness, negotiate meaning along the lines of cultural difference, and to achieve what Grit Alter articulates as the overarching aim of all cultural learning, that is “enabling students to respectfully approach and deal with people who are members of other cultures” (2015: 64). On the other hand, however, I also approach these concepts critically in view of the exact scope and conceptualisation of cultural difference and Otherness they entail, assuming that the theories these concepts offer are limited, but can potentially stretch out to include a more diverse understanding of difference and Otherness than is currently the case. In what follows, I will first explore the concept of ICC, and then turn to an investigation of the concept of *Fremdverstehen*.

Discussions and conceptualisations of intercultural communicative competence have circled widely in discourses of cultural learning within the field of TEFL.¹⁶ By far the most influential and widely received concept of ICC has been put forward by Michael Byram in his 1997 publication *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. The model of ICC has been devised to complement the goal of developing communicative competence, which goes alongside reorienting language learners away from the model of the native speaker towards the model of the intercultural speaker as a cultural mediator (cf. Byram 1997: 38; Byram/Zarate 1996: 240; Hu/Byram 2009b: vii). Furthermore, the model of ICC is also an extension to the notion of intercultural competence by incorporating a focus on the adequate use of foreign languages. Intercultural competence as such is also thinkable in *intracultural* situations and encounters, for example when representatives of different cultural backgrounds meet and negotiate cultural meaning as long as they can use the same language to do so. What follows is that using the foreign language as communication code is essential to what Byram calls ICC (cf. Byram 1997: 70-71; Decke-Cornill/Küster 2014: 226; Knapp/Knapp-Potthoff: 1990: 66; Volkmann 2010: 21). Byram explains:

[S]omeone with Intercultural *Communicative* Competence is able to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language. They are able to negotiate a mode of communication and interaction which is satisfactory to themselves and the other and they are able to act as mediator between people of different cultural origins. Their knowledge of another culture is linked to their language competence through their ability to use language

16 Grit Alter (2015: 45) provides a broad overview of the wealth of publications that address the issue of intercultural (communicative) competence in TEFL and foreign language education, including, but not limited to, Antor (2007a), Bausch/Christ/Krumm (1994), Bredella (2002), Eckert/Wendt (2003), Knapp/Knapp-Potthoff (1992), Volkmann/Stierstorfer/Gehring (2002), Witte/Harden (2011).

appropriately [...] and their awareness of the specific meanings, values and connotations of the language. (Byram 1997: 71)

Accordingly, when ICC is, in its broadest sense, understood as the ability to communicate and interact with people speaking a foreign language and living in another cultural context and to negotiate meaning among two or more cultures involved (cf. Freitag-Hild 2010a: 123; Müller-Hartmann/Schocker-von Dittfurth 2009: 23), then the model of ICC entails several dimensions that describe and operationalise this ability. In Byram and Zarate's (1996) initial considerations, they suggested four dimensions called *savoirs* (*savoir-être*, *savoir-apprendre*, *savoirs* and *savoir-faire*), which Byram (1997) developed further into a model containing five dimensions: attitudes (*savoir-être*), knowledge (*savoirs*), skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/savoir faire*), and as a last dimension in which the previous dimensions culminate, critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*). Grimm, Meyer and Volkmann (2015: 167) condense these dimensions into learning objectives of knowledge (including statements about what students know of), skills (including statements of what students can do), and attitudes (including statements of how students are), all of which is framed by a critical awareness and reflexivity of one's own and the other's cultural conditionings (ibid.: 159). In more detail, the model of ICC by Byram consists of the following five dimensions, rendering ICC a complex construct (cf. Alter 2015a: 46) in which issues of cultural difference and Otherness play a crucial role.

The attitudinal dimension (*savoir être*) is concerned "only with attitudes towards people who are perceived as different in respect to the cultural meanings, beliefs and behaviours they exhibit" (Byram 1997: 34). Byram further specifies that these need to be "attitudes of curiosity and openness, of readiness to suspend disbelief and judgement with respect to others' meanings, beliefs and behaviours" (ibid.). But the attitudinal dimension also relates to the self, which requires "a willingness to suspend belief in one's own meanings and behaviours, and to analyse them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging" (ibid.). This complex interplay of reflections is encapsulated in what Byram calls "[the] ability to 'decentre'" (ibid.). This ability is considered to be the crucial prerequisite for understanding other cultures and centrally involves the willingness to challenge and relativise the norms one has been socialised into, and to open up to new cultural norms one encounters (cf. ibid.). Even though the rhetoric of ICC centralises the encounter between people from different countries and the aligned respective cultures (read, national cultures), a specification like this also – at least potentially – allows for a wider understanding of culture, e.g. 'cultural meanings' could also differ, or perceived to be different, according to gender, class or sexuality, and indeed, Byram sometimes speaks of "social groups" (1997: 34) rather than countries or cultures. Furthermore, the (rather unspecified) notion of cultural norms Byram mentions does not necessarily have to include cultural-national norms only, but can also include gender norms or heteronormativity. Hence, decentring from or relativisation of one's own norms can also entail, for example, to call into question the sexual norms one has primarily been socialised into. As such, the model of ICC can theoretically also accommodate for encounters across or between social groups and involve the renegotiation of a vaster set of cultural norms.

The cognitive dimension of *savoirs* relates to knowledge, for which Byram develops a twofold distinction: “knowledge about social groups and their cultures in one’s own country, and similar knowledge of the interlocutor’s country on the one hand; knowledge of the processes of interaction at individual and societal levels, on the other hand” (Byram 1997: 35). According to Byram, this knowledge includes knowledge of social groups (either to which one has gained membership, or to which one has contact), which does not only relate to national identity, but also to other identities one has been socialised into, e.g. “regional, ethnic, social class and so on” (ibid.). A further distinction is made between conscious and emblematic knowledge (e.g. overt meanings such as dress or modes of greeting) and unconscious and unanalysed knowledge (e.g. rules of proximity). Furthermore, knowledge is considered to be relational when one’s background knowledge is brought into contrast and comparison with the others’ knowledges, e.g. when the same historical event allows for multiple interpretations depending on one’s own and the other’s perspective on that same event. Next to this declarative knowledge, Byram also includes “procedural knowledge of how to act in specific circumstances” (ibid.: 36), e.g. the covert or overt rules of communicative interaction. Surprisingly maybe, Byram also refers to a complex web of knowledge regarding social identities: “If an individual knows about the ways in which their social identities have been acquired, how they are a prism through which other members of their group are perceived, and how they in turn perceive their interlocutors from another group” (ibid.), this points to a complex awareness learners need to have so as to lay “a basis for successful interaction” (ibid.). Again, my reading of Byram’s model emphasises that it is in principle open to various cultural differences and identities other than just national ones.

The fifth dimension is called critical cultural awareness (*savoir s’engager*), which Byram (1997: 43) moves into the proximity of political education as a part of general education, which, overall, links the development of ICC to broader and more holistic educational goals (see above). In particular, the dimension of critical cultural awareness includes a strong “evaluative dimension” (Byram 1997: 44) and is not to be seen as additive to the other four dimensions, but as Alter (2015: 47) stresses, as the culmination of these four. Hence, critical cultural awareness is “[t]he ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and another cultures and countries” (Byram 1997: 53). For this highly complex ability, learners need to coordinate and change perspectives and compare cultures by drawing on explicit frames of references or criteria (cf. ibid: 53-54; Alter 2015a: 47). Byram stresses that the intercultural speaker brings a rational and explicit standpoint from which to evaluate a given situation, and can make that standpoint explicit to others. Against this backdrop, critical cultural awareness points to the issue of cultural relativism and ethnocentrism as a fundamental problem in intercultural encounters and learning (cf. Volkmann 2010: 136). Ethnocentrism means that the own position is *always* considered to be superior (in particular, Western values and norms), that the positions of other cultures are inferior (which can lead to imposing one’s own value system or denying ‘them’ their own value system), and that other positions are translated into one’s own system, and therefore misrecognised, condemned or not understood. A violent expression of ethnocentrism is Western

imperialism and the colonisation of major parts of the world, the effects of which are still deeply engrained in recent thought patterns (e.g. Said 1978; cf. also Thiongó's 1992 [1986] famous call for 'decolonising the mind'). In contrast to that, cultural relativism assumes both a fundamental difference and a fundamental equality of all cultural expressions and formations. This implies that one's own values must *never* be transferred to another cultural context or used to understand that context, and that everything occurring in or emerging from that context must be accepted unconditionally. This extreme position is discussed as irresponsible and unrealistic and runs the danger of causing learners to be ethically indifferent to situations that would usually be evaluated as unethical in their own culture (cf. Volkmann 2010: 139). The consequence of this is that one does not have to 'like' or approve of everything just because it emanates from a different cultural context, but neither should learners automatically and at once condemn everything. This makes it ever more important in Byram's dimension of critical cultural awareness that both one's evaluation criteria, and that the results and insights generated through such an evaluation, are made explicit and clarified in intercultural encounters (cf. 1997: 101).

In evaluating Byram's model in view of its negotiation of cultural difference(s), I turn to Blell and Doff (2014: 85) who do acknowledge that Byram's model of ICC provides a solid basis to negotiate meaning between cultures and to relate home cultures and identities with foreign cultures and identities – and hence to engage with and explore cultural differences between cultures and identities. Yet they call to greater caution when using or employing Byram's model in situations when the focus is on "texts, events or encounters which go beyond the traditional binary scope of self/other or of home culture/'other' culture [...] and allude to more cross-cultural and transcultural notions or other diversity situations" (Blell/Doff 2014: 85), for which they propose their own ICC-informed model with a transcultural component (cf. chapter 2.2). But even though Byram's model frequently refers to cultures as emerging from two different countries, he is not insensitive or indifferent to other markers of difference (other than the national), and that the attribution of characteristics can unfold along various lines:

From the social psychological perspective, we are reminded that in a social encounter, the participants attribute characteristics and identities to each other [...]. In an encounter between people from different countries, one of the initial attributions is usually, though not always, that of national identity. [...] The social psychological perspective also reminds us however that attributions other than nationality occur simultaneously: gender, ethnicity, social class and others. Where one of these is more important to the individuals or is given dominance by the particular context of interaction, national identity and presumed culture will not be an issue, or will soon be ignored. (Byram 1997: 40-41)

Even though an endorsement of a diversity of cultural differences can be deduced from Byram's theory of ICC, the question is in how far this sensitivity to various cultural differences and identities has ever been systematically incorporated in theoretical discussions and practical implementations of teaching and learning ICC. Indeed, Volkmann (2013: 169) charges the discourses of interculturality, but also transculturality in TEFL to have neglected vital categories such as race, class or gender regarding their role in the formation of individual identities and also of human exchanges:

Most of the standard studies on intercultural competence are virtually devoid of any reference to humans as 'gendered' or 'raced' in intercultural exchanges. Indeed, while Cultural Studies has

almost overused the triad of race, class, and gender, this perspective seems to be the very blind spot of intercultural theorizing and conceptualizing. (Volkmann 2013: 169)

I read this sensitive enunciation of ‘blind spots’ as a powerful epistemic call to actually think through and theorise those blind spots that are absent from or underrepresented in TEFL theories – although ironically, Volkmann’s list of blind spot produces other blind spots (e.g. sexual orientation). This, in fact, points to a problematic issue of representation and inclusion. Although it would certainly be improper to privilege some blind spots over others or to argue that TEFL is already covering ‘enough’ blind spots of cultural difference and Otherness and is therefore ‘full’, from a theoretical perspective one could (or should?) nonetheless enter an almost endless spiral of unearthing still-silenced and still-invisible blind spots. What is probably needed is a radical mind-set of plurality, without foreclosing the exact types of cultural differences and Othernesses that may find entry. Such a radical plurality is also suggested by Alter, who calls for a pluralisation of Byram’s five-level model of ICC:

Based on the plurality of cultural identities [...] and the manifold lines along which cultural identity can be realized, special emphasis needs to be put on the plural in which these levels are to be understood which accounts for the target cultures as well as for the cultures of the learners. [...] Consequently, it is necessary to speak of own and other cultures between which meaning is negotiated in the plural. (Alter 2015a: 44)

While this call is, on the one hand, a welcome theoretical legitimisation to engage with plurality in intercultural learning, it also entails the desideratum to actually begin researching, accessing and making available this plurality in cultural learning pedagogies in TEFL.

In contrast to the outcome-oriented model of ICC, the didactic concept of *Fremdverstehen* is more likely to emphasise the process-oriented nature of intercultural learning (cf. Decke-Cornill/Küster 2014: 237; Freitag-Hild 2010b: 22). It was the graduate school *Didaktik des Fremdverstehens*, located at the German university of Gießen, that proposed and developed this concept between 1991 and 2001, sparking a considerable amount of research that has been developed ever since (cf. chapter 1.1). The two components of this term – *Fremd*: the foreign, usually translated as Otherness or the Other, and *Verstehen*: understanding – indicate that the concept of *Fremdverstehen* has conceptualised the understanding of Otherness, or of the Other, as a central objective of intercultural learning (cf. Alter 2015a: 34-36; Bredella 2010a, 2010b; Christ, Herbert 2007: 54-55). Its theoretical framework is deeply embedded in the hermeneutic tradition of understanding, in particular following Gadamer’s (2004 [1960]) reflections on human understanding, and in the concept of perspective change by Geulen (1982) (cf. also: Hu/Byram 2009b: vii; Decke-Cornill/Küster 2014: 230). The concept of *Fremdverstehen*, however, stresses that it does not aim at a unilateral understanding of the Other, but at the same time also at an understanding of one’s cultural self (cf. Alter 2015a: 34). This dialectic viewpoint is encapsulated in the following definition of *Fremdverstehen*:

Fremdverstehen besagt, dass wir etwas nicht im eigenen, sondern im fremden Kontext zu verstehen suchen. [...] Das heißt, es gibt Situationen, in denen wir einen fremden Kontext im Gegensatz zum eigenen berücksichtigen müssen, um bestimmte Phänomene angemessen in den Blick zu bekommen. Fremdverstehen bedeutet demnach, eine andere Perspektive einzunehmen und eine Distanz zum Eigenen zu gewinnen. (Bredella/Meißner/Nünning/Rösler 2000b: XII-XIII)

This consideration and critical reflection of two contexts and perspectives, i.e. that of the own and that of the Other, is considered a constitutive and necessary element of *Fremdverstehen* that prevents learners from fixing and essentialising the Other as an absolute and ontological entity when in fact the Other and the self have to be thought of as relational and dynamic terms (cf. Alter 2015a: 34; Bredella/Christ/Legutke 1997b: 11-16; Bredella/Delanoy 1999: 14; Freitag-Hild 2010b: 24-25).

To elaborate on this central tenet of *Fremdverstehen*, I will now further specify the notion of ‘perspective’ when it comes to developing an understanding of the Other and of the Self in situations of dialogue and encounter with the Other, which can be real-world encounters with representatives from a certain culture, but also encounters with the Other in literary texts (cf. Freitag-Hild 2010b: 25; Bredella 2002). Understanding the Other begins with reconstructing or taking over the perspective of the Other (*Innenperspektive*) so that a learner begins to understand the other through their specific cultural frame of references, rather than imposing one’s own cultural frame of reference. This requires that a learner simultaneously recognises and distances themselves from their own perspective (*Außenperspektive*) (cf. Alter 2015a: 35; Freitag-Hild 2010b: 24-25). But neither does *Fremdverstehen* aim at completely taking over the Other’s inner perspective, nor does it entail a complete abandonment of one’s own frame of reference, as Bredella highlights:

Die Innenperspektive ist notwendig, um den Ethnozentrismus zu überwinden, und die Außenperspektive ist notwendig, um sich nicht unkritisch der jeweiligen Innenperspektive anzuliefern. Ein reflektiertes interkulturelles Verstehen vollzieht sich, indem man die Spannung zwischen Innen- und Außenperspektive entfaltet. (Bredella 2001: 12)

This interplay and change of perspectives, also called coordination of perspectives (*Perspektivenkoordination*), initiates the dialogic engagement between the cultural self and the cultural Other and allows for a negotiation of cultural meanings that can cause the previous perspectives and assumptions to shift (cf. Bredella/Christ 1995b: 16; Freitag-Hild 2010b: 24). This also means that the original perception of someone’s Otherness can shift, and so can the perception of one’s former self, highlighting the dynamic and relational nature of *Fremdverstehen*: “Was fremd ist, kann vertraut werden, und was vertraut ist, kann fremd werden” (Bredella/Delanoy 1999: 14). Hence, *Fremdverstehen* can move away the learner from absolute, fixed and ontological understandings of the Other. Furthermore, the Other as a dialogic partner should not be stereotypically and deterministically reduced to their role of being a representative of another culture only. Rather, Freitag-Hild (2010b: 25) stresses that each Other who one encounters in a dialogue constitutes a unique assembly of individual and cultural characteristics. Therefore, the coordination of perspectives also requires multiperspectivity so that the Other is acknowledged in their own individual complexity, rather than only in a one-dimensional cultural Otherness.

The concept of *Fremdverstehen* has been met with a considerable amount of criticism. To date, Grit Alter (2015: 36-44) has by far provided the most elaborate critical perspective on the conceptual limitations of *Fremdverstehen* and collated various existing critical positions. Alter, however, does not drop the concept altogether, but instead suggests a sound renegotiation. She develops her criticism along two major lines, including in how far an understanding of the

Other is possible or even desirable, and what Otherness actually means and whom this term entails – a concern that is oddly underdetermined in the concept itself. To begin with the first train of thought, Alter (2015: 36) notes that it is almost impossible to find absolute Otherness in today's globalised and interlocked societies. This reflects Doff and Schulze-Engler's point of view that cultural difference might no longer be perceived in terms of a "deep alterity" (Doff/Schulze-Engler 2011b: 3) or a fully exotic Otherness, with which they draw on Clifford who argues that "[d]ifference is encountered in the adjoining neighborhood, the familiar turns up at the end of the world" (Clifford 1988: 14). Even though there might no longer be a full and stable Otherness in today's societies, this does not negate the experience of difference as such, as learners might still perceive of someone or something as being Other with reference to themselves, and not with reference to a deep or ontological Otherness, which highlights that there remains a need for understanding. To complicate the issue of understanding Otherness further, Alter draws on Said and Foucault to argue that "understanding the other reflects exercising power over the other" (2015: 37) and can serve their appropriation or domination, which is mirrored in Banerjee's concern that "turning a moving target into an understandable one may itself be an act of epistemic violence" (2011: 40). This, however, cannot be a good enough reason for fully negating or abandoning *Fremdverstehen* altogether. On the one hand, negating understanding as a viable didactic concept might also lead to negating the Other, which in turn can leave certain Others in a silent and marginalised position. On the other hand, Alter stresses that foreign language education seeks to overcome power-soaked and unequal encounters "by creating open and respectful encounters of otherness" (2015: 38) so that the EFL classroom can become a space for non-violent and non-appropriating attempts of understanding Otherness.

Alter (2015: 38-39) then continues to collate various positions which argue that the multidimensional complexity of the Other cannot, and does not have to be, fully grasped and understood (e.g. Antor 2007b; Burwitz-Melzer 2003; Fäcke 2006; Hunfeld 1991, 1992, 1994). In view of the impossible complexity that were necessary to fully understand the Other, it is unavoidable to keep a certain distance or boundary between the self and the Other: "[N]egotiating otherness always leaves a certain part that will remain 'other' and that will not be understood" (Alter 2015a: 39). What follows is that intercultural competence must necessarily entail the ability to live with this 'gap' and to recognise the normalcy of the other (ibid.; Hunfeld 1994: 97). Only if a remaining difference between the self and the Other is acknowledged can a subsuming of the Other under the self be prevented, which leaves the Other with a space to unfold (Alter 2015a: 39). Ultimately, Alter's critical reflection is valuable in that it does move away from the self's intricacies of actually and fully understanding the Other. Instead, it leaves open an epistemic space in which the Other can gain a voice and visibility and can reside as Other, without running the danger of being appropriated or subsumed by the 'onlooker'. Therefore, Alter's suggestion of lowering the objective from understanding to *experiencing* Otherness, alongside reflecting on that experiencing and gaining awareness of the Other (cf. also Lütge 2013a), can count as a more sober and realistic renegotiation of what Volkmann (2010: 133) calls the utopia of *Fremdverstehen*.

In another line of criticism Alter develops, she urges to put into practice a didactics of *Fremdverstehen* within cultural learning “which agrees to lifestyles and modes of societies in the 21st century” (2015: 41) and accepts that a necessity for engaging with Otherness remains as important as ever in view of the social, political and cultural changes, accelerated by global developments, in increasingly diverse and multicultural societies (ibid.). Hence, understanding Otherness must remain as a (normative) objective of cultural learning in TEFL, but it must also get out of the ruts of traditional approaches that present cultures as homogeneous and separable entities (ibid.). In spite of the positive and optimistic rhetoric that is to be found in the discourse of *Fremdverstehen*, the reification of someone who is culturally different as Other looms as a continuing danger of cultural learning. Next to initiating complex reflections of the experience of Otherness in the classroom, Alter therefore suggests reconceptualising the very notion of what TEFL discourses mean by the Other. Her suggestion is of utmost importance for the line of argumentation I am constructing in this dissertation. From her point of view, it is necessary to include a broader range of “diversity markers” (Alter 2015a: 212) into the scope of cultural learning. More often than not, “it seems as if the ‘other’ is limited to an ethnic or national ‘other’” (Alter 2015a: 43). Hence, Alter strives for a conceptual shift that begins with “acknowledging the dynamics and complexity of otherness [by] refer[ring] to it in the plural as othernesses” (Alter 2015a: 36). Her ultimate call for representing a greater cultural diversity in the classroom reads like a blueprint for including a queer perspective, too:

Beyond ethnicity and nationality, othernesses can be perceived as different constructions of gender and sexual orientation, family structures, perceptions of age, religious beliefs, or questions of ethics. Furthermore, it is possible that various features intersect in one person. (Alter 2015a: 212)

This mirrors a claim that central *Fremdverstehen* researchers have already expressed 15 years prior to Alter’s call for diversity:

Das Einnehmen einer Innenperspektive bedeutet, Andere zu Wort kommen zu lassen. Insofern trägt Fremdverstehen auch zu einer ‘politics of recognition’ bei. Wie Charles Taylor in seinem vielbeachteten Essay ‘Politics of Recognition’ ausführt, leben wir in einer Zeit, in der Menschen sich gegen die demütigenden Bilder, die andere ihnen aufgezwungen haben, wehren und um Anerkennung ihres Selbstverständnisses kämpfen. Das gilt für Feminismus ebenso wie für den postkolonialen Diskurs [...]. (Bredella/Meißner/Nünning/Rösler 2000b: XIX)

Although this position is not articulated as radically pluralistic as Alter’s claim, it nonetheless illustrates well that a sensitivity to ‘other Others’, in particular those who are left marginalised or voiceless in society and who have to fight for their recognition in the face of stigma and vilification, has long been available in the theory of *Fremdverstehen*. The unsettling and pressing question remains, however, to what extent such a position has actually been taken up in TEFL research, and to what extent the implications and trajectories of this position have filtered down into concrete classroom practice where, for example, the selection of literature and media, or the creation of challenging and meaningful, content-based task environments could realistically mirror a more careful recognition of greater cultural diversity and offer the experience of Otherness and difference from a multitude of perspectives.

2.2 New Orientations in Cultural Learning: Moving Beyond Binaries and National-Ethnic Lines of Demarcation

In this subchapter, I will continue to elaborate on the idea of how cultural learning in TEFL seeks to live up to and respond to the challenges of teaching culture in a world that is increasingly marked by cultural diversity, heterogeneity and globally networked cultures and individuals. I will locate this elaboration in current theoretical shifts that have addressed the need to overcome conceptualisations of cultural difference primarily in terms of binary oppositions, and that have worked towards making cultural diversity increasingly accessible to learners in the EFL classroom as a rich source of experiencing cultural diversity. But what exactly are these ‘new’ lines of difference that are currently being inscribed into the discourse of TEFL, in particular in the wake of an increasing interest in transcultural learning? In response to this question, I will identify a ‘double force’ that is at work in TEFL. On the one hand, there is a general openness to embrace, sometimes enthusiastically, ‘new’ lines of difference and Otherness that are readily transferred to the corpus of cultural learning in TEFL. Yet at the same time, the incessant insistence on *particular* lines of difference can become deeply fossilised in the discourse of cultural learning, thus obstructing the view on other lines of difference and Otherness that could justifiably well also contribute to making ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ accessible in the classroom. In critiquing the establishment of fixed lines of demarcation, I propose a more radical opening up and re-orientation of TEFL towards greater diversity.

From the perspective of TEFL theory in cultural learning, the construction of cultural difference in terms of binary oppositions with clearly distinguishable poles has harnessed a considerable amount of criticism. In particular, such critical positions charge the conceptualisation of cultural learning as *intercultural* learning for cementing binary oppositions. In retracing the establishment of intercultural learning in the German educational TEFL context, Hu and Byram point out that the “basic assumptions were founded on a dichotomous concept of cultural difference (the learner’s own language and culture and the so-called target language and culture)” (2009: vii). With some context-sensitivity, one might argue that such a dichotomy was the almost inevitable result of the specific educational constellation. When an *intercultural* learning agenda was established in Germany as a non-Anglophone country, this required Anglophone cultures as the necessary target of intercultural learning endeavours – at least when following the initial impulse of the logic that the prefix ‘inter’ suggests (cf. Delanoy/Volkman 2006b: 12). Blell and Doff point out that this view of the role of culture in language teaching strongly influenced the discussions in the 1990s, requiring as “[t]he basis of learning about culture [...] a binary opposition between the existence of a ‘native culture’/‘real C1’ vs. a ‘target culture’/‘real C2’” (Blell/Doff 2014: 81). The effect was that, if cultural difference was moved into view, then it was about the differences between a clear-cut C1 (own culture) and a clear-cut C2 (‘other’ or target culture). Such an idea, however, “only works when it is based on the assumption of different cultures as separable entities” (ibid.).

Against the backdrop of today’s heavy-weight of poststructuralist thinking about culture, such a reliance on a structuralist opposition between two clearly distinguishable home

and target cultures in a self/other-binary might theoretically be improper. But one needs to acknowledge, first of all, that such a view of culture has been operative and productive for a long time, and that the legacy of what Blell and Doff call “a fetishization of ‘other cultures’” (2014: 82) might still be tangible today. Hu and Byram (2009: xii) give rise to the concern that practical applications of cultural learning may still run the danger of following existing and everyday notions of ‘culture’ or ‘difference’ which are questionable from a theoretical perspective. They argue that one might find “an agglomeration of everyday concepts” (ibid.) that put aside theoretical insights put forward by theory building in cultural studies and their incorporation into concepts of teaching culture (Hu/Byram 2009b: xii; also: Hallet/Nünning 2007). When Blell and Doff remark that to overcome binary oppositions in cultural learning “requires a corresponding fresh approach from teachers” (2014: 82), this centralises teachers as those who are responsible for the alleged mismatch between new concepts in cultural studies and their application to classroom contexts. While it might be true that some teachers follow more of a traditionalist agenda, I would like to call to some caution that such easy claims, in which teachers are identified as being complicit with a lack of progress, might be counter-productive for updating cultural learning agendas. On the one hand, this casts – oddly so – another dichotomy between allegedly theory-free teachers, immune to change, and theory-savvy researchers, waiting to pass on the latest insights. Maybe it is not just the teachers who require a fresh start, maybe it is also the researchers who require a fresh start, for the sake of communicating their insights across the various phases of teacher education. Another target of critique that might prevent change are the current educational policies for TEFL. Decke-Cornill and Küster (2014: 238) argue that the national educational standards for foreign languages (Kultusministerkonferenz 2004a) adhere to focusing on bipolar oppositions between what is culturally ‘own’ and what is culturally ‘foreign’. Even though that notion of ‘cultural difference’ that is key to this educational document could – at least theoretically – be interpreted in most diverse and non-binary ways, it is understood in terms of recognising and identifying typical features of one’s own and the ‘other’ culture in a contrastive and comparative approach. If curricula continue to ignore the theoretical groundwork provided by TEFL research (Decke-Cornill/Küster 2014: 238), then it might be no surprise that innovation in educational practice has long to be waited for. Nonetheless, the call remains that “teaching about culture in the EFL-classroom has to move beyond the self/other-binary by which the field has so far often been dominated” (Blell/Doff 2014: 78).

But what exactly was (and still is?) the nature of this binary opposition in TEFL like? What lines of difference became so deeply enshrined in the constantly perpetuated binary? The discussion in chapter 2.1 has already pointed to a national understanding of culture as ‘the usual suspect’, and also Eisenmann, Grimm and Volkmann observe that earlier concepts of intercultural learning drew a clear-cut conceptual boarder between two distinct cultures by “adher[ing] to ideas of national differences” (2010b: viii). Similarly, Doff and Schulze-Engler find such an understanding of culture reproduced in EFL coursebooks, “which regard ‘culture’ as coterminous with ‘nation’” (Doff/Schulze-Engler 2011b: 7). When it comes to the nations/cultures that are typically studied in the EFL classroom, Volkmann calls to mind that the

“negotiation of the culturally different Other” (2015: 21) circled in particular around the so-called core cultures of Great Britain and the USA, which were meticulously analysed to arrive at allegedly ‘pure’ understandings of what British or American culture ‘typically’ is (cf. also Volkmann 2013: 177). Ultimately, such a focus on cultural (read: national) difference had a double-bind effect of privileging nation as the most likely and viable focus of cultural learning, and of privileging *certain* Anglophone nations, the UK (possibly even only England) and the USA, as concrete examples of cultures/nations. Not only does such a selection reinforce the binary of self/other in view of national difference. It additionally constructs a reductionist and hierarchical binary of “centre and periphery, superior and inferior culture(s)” (Eisenmann/Grimm/Volkmann 2010b: vii) that provides a diminished space for other Anglophone countries, in particular postcolonial countries, in the EFL classroom. In terms of classroom foci and content selection, the implications of this line of argumentation would be to rethink the primacy of culture-as-nation(-as-‘core-countries’). With a heed to transcultural theory, Blell and Doff argue that such a change is necessary to keep in sync with the cultural realities of the 21st century:

[I]n the wake of rapidly accelerating globalization, traditional notions of understanding the social world primarily in terms of ‘cultures’ has lost much of its credibility [...]. Cultural realities for most people in the world are much more complex than simplistic notions of national ‘cultures’ as irreducibly different symbolic worlds of their own seem to suggest. The real challenge in coming to terms with this cultural complexity encountered in the social world lies in exploring the cultural practices of individuals and social groups that operate within a globally interlinked network of culture. (Blell/Doff 2014: 80)

What emerges from this position is that a critical space for nation can be retained in the classroom so as to be able to respond to moments or texts in which nation might still be a viable focus of analysis (e.g. to disentangle those discourses that contribute to the building of nation and national identity, cf. Volkmann 2013: 177, or to discover how the make-up of a nation is changing in the face of multiculturalism, migration, or global developments such as climate change). But what also emerges centrally from this position is to move away from simplistic and reductive polarities about some vague notion of nation as a larger concept, and instead to embrace a focus on individuals and social groups so as to recognise how they craft and constitute their cultural realities. If such a view were more thoroughly implemented, it would become increasingly difficult to focus on nation only, as individual identities are constructed in more complex and multi-layered ways.

It needs to be highlighted though that this rather wholesale rejection of the binary opposition does not coincide in TEFL research with an abandonment of the heuristic category of ‘cultural difference’ altogether. When in 2014 and 2015, however, two articles by Volkmann entered the scene, their suggestive titles ‘Challenging the Paradigm of Cultural Difference and Diversity: Transcultural Learning and Global Education’ (2015) and ‘Die Abkehr vom Differenzdenken: Transkulturelles Lernen und global education’ (2014) seemed to mark a turn away from “[t]he paradigm of difference” (Volkmann 2015: 20) in TEFL. What at first sight implies a sweeping dismissal or even normative ban of using the terminology of difference or diversity altogether is in fact an attempt to establish a nuanced understanding of these concepts that is sensitive to its pitfalls but also to its potentials. Primarily, what emerges is that the

concept of difference is not rejected per se, but only in its conceptualisation as universally enshrined and carefully demarcated binary oppositions. Reflecting a heed to poststructuralist thinking and deconstruction, this move seeks to overcome seeing individuals, cultures or traditional categories of difference (e.g. gender or class) as stable, homogeneous or easily opposable entities than can clearly be defined, unpacked and moved into the arena of cultural learning for their investigation (Volkmann 2015: 23). A similar position is expressed by Delanoy:

[I]t should be pointed out that the ‘trans’ in transculturality, transdifference or transmodality does not mean that cultures, difference or different modes of expression (should) no longer exists. [...] Similarly, the ‘trans’ in transdifference does not reject difference as such but difference based on binary thinking [...]. In other words, trans-theories do not remove basic categories such as culture or difference but offer specific perspectives on them. (Delanoy 2013: 159)

Delanoy effectively argues that only *certain* forms of difference are to be rejected or transgressed, namely those that establish cultures or social categories as monoliths, and those that rely on or induce binary thinking (Delanoy 2013: 159). Consequently, both Volkmann’s and Delanoy’s lines of argumentation mirror the discussion introduced above, but they make a strong case for retaining a critical stance on difference in TEFL discourse, but difference that is perceived in non-oppositional terms. Also Blell and Doff highlight that embracing and shaping these new directions “does not reject the key role which the experience of (cultural) difference and the resulting dialogue plays in the language classroom” (2014: 82), which indicates that retaining difference, and broadening up the horizon to new differences, could become a valuable source of productive and critical dialogue in cultural learning scenarios in the EFL classroom.

On a more critical note, however, I would like to emphasise that this move within TEFL theory ideally reflects the *outcome* of critical cultural learning endeavours that support learners in identifying and possibly overcoming the perception of cultural difference in monolithic binaries. Yet at the same time, the binary opposition, powerfully anchored as it still might be in human thought and experience, can still be methodologically harnessed as an ideal *starting point* and might even have an inherent didactic potential. Whenever a binary opposition is activated or visible, e.g. in classroom discourse, in the coursebook used, or in a text that is read, it might provide a welcome source of intervention to challenge and expand on an originally inscribed binary thinking¹⁷. Certainly, the sensitivity towards binary oppositions can also be a supportive heuristic for teachers to select cultural content that does not represent culture in clearly binary terms, and to (re)consider their classroom methodology, e.g. whether tasks or

¹⁷ At first sight, the view I am expressing here contradicts with Doff and Schulze-Engler’s position, who write: “If a more or less absolute cultural difference is posited as the starting point for processes of ‘intercultural learning, and essentialist binary oppositions between one’s own culture and ‘strange’, ‘alien’ or ‘other cultures’ are set up, the well-meant pedagogical objective of ‘intercultural understanding’ actually reproduces stereotyped notions of cultural difference that are hard to reconcile with the social and cultural realities that teachers and learners are faced with in an increasingly globalised world” (Doff/Schulze-Engler 2011b: 1). When I suggest using the binary opposition as a starting point, however, I do not mean to use the binary opposition as the ultimate imperative that guides all cultural learning, or that teachers should use it as an orientating rubric to select cultural content. Rather, what I do highlight is that the binary opposition can be a viable point of entry to challenge simplistic or stereotypical cultural understandings and to introduce a more nuanced understanding of cultural differences.

question techniques might actually work towards reproducing a binary opposition. What I effectively propose is to attempt a move away from thinking *in* binary oppositions, but to keep open a position from which to think critically *about* binary oppositions.

The discussion so far has shown that there is an increasing tendency in TEFL theory to move beyond binary oppositions and to renegotiate the status of culture-as-nation in the EFL classroom, with a particular emphasis on interrogating the primacy of the so-called core countries of the UK and the USA. In the following section, I will now explore what I think TEFL research is suggesting as potential ‘remedies’ to these reductionist understandings of cultural difference. These remedies include accessing the so-called ‘New English Cultures’, turning increasingly towards ethnic diversity, and incorporating transcultural foci into cultural learning. I will begin with the latter.

The call for transcending cultural difference in terms of binary oppositions and for pluralising cultural difference in TEFL discourse can be well-aligned with, and often actually emerges from, transcultural vistas for conceptualising cultural learning. My turn towards transcultural learning, however, is not meant to suggest that it is inherently superior to established concepts of intercultural learning or *Fremdverstehen*. Researchers such as Delany (2006, 2013, 2014) in particular, but also Alter (2014, 2015) and Freitag-Hild (2010b) caution against a one-sided positive celebration of this concept as the cure for the alleged limitations of previous approaches, and favour an integration of approaches. Indeed, transcultural topoi can be beneficial, but also detrimental, to the widening of horizons when it comes to cultural differences in TEFL, as the brief ensuing overview will demonstrate. The concept of transculturality has found entrance into TEFL debates primarily through the philosopher Wolfgang Welsch. In his seminal essay ‘Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today’ (1999), he presents a concept of culture that marks a departure from traditional concepts of culture that rely on unificatory understandings of internal social homogenisation, ethnic consolidation and clear-cut separability from other cultures (ibid.: 194-195). He finds this traditional concept untenable and points out that today’s cultures are internally differentiated and externally networked (ibid.: 195-199). The inner complexity of modern cultures, for example, consists in different cultural patterns and lifeforms on a macro-level, such as ethnic diversity or “differences between male and female, or between straight and lesbian and gay” (ibid.: 195). Also for the micro-level of individuals, Welsch observes that “[w]e are cultural hybrids” (ibid.: 198), drawing on various cultural formations to constitute identity. The external interconnectedness of cultures is a result of “migratory processes, [...] of worldwide material and immaterial communication systems and economic interdependencies and dependencies” (ibid.: 198) so that “[l]ifestyles no longer end at the borders of national cultures” (ibid.: 197). If cultures are no longer separate and isolated, but intermixed, entangled and diverse, Welsch argues, then “[t]he detachment of civic [i.e. national, TM] from personal or cultural identity is to be insisted upon” (ibid.: 199).

The incorporation of this understanding of transculturality provides a sound theoretical legitimisation for broadening the view within TEFL away from national-cultural difference and dichotomous thinking (which is untenable and also descriptively wrong in Welsch’s theory)

towards a more diverse inventory of cultural differences and identities for which ‘culture’ is not to be equated with ‘national’. For Volkmann, transculturality indeed offers an altered perspective for TEFL in that it is “inextricably linked to the loss of certain target cultures, of monolithic concepts of culture or majority culture and the insights gained about individuals as hybrid, multi-cultural beings in the era of globalization” (2013: 172). Within TEFL, a transcultural focus is therefore applicable to those cultural contexts and phenomena in which “people, cultural artifacts or literary texts are [not] determined by (presumably one) culture of origin” (Doff/Schulze-Engler 2011b: 3) and that invite “exploring the hybridity of individual and collective identities and the cultural ‘connections between things’ in an increasingly globalized world” (ibid.). This mirrors Said’s often quoted insight:

No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are no more than starting points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of culture and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly exclusively, white, or black, or Western, or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about. Survival in fact is about the connections between things. (Said 1993: 407-408)

In sum, Doff and Schulze-Engler (2011b) use a transcultural focus to legitimise a reconfiguration of learning and teaching about culture, which is no longer about laying bare distinct and separate ‘other cultures’ in a contrastive approach alongside “identifying binary oppositions and observing difference on the basis of a comparison between ‘self’ and ‘other’” (ibid.: 6), but instead about turning to the complexity of cultural practices, ideas and expressions. On a more critical note, I wish to add that such a turn might indeed generate new and exciting vistas for cultural learning in the 21st century, but the question must be raised what types of cultural differences are actually chosen as reference points in the classroom when transculturality stresses the proliferation of cultural differences and expressions and, at least theoretically, allows for numerous viewpoints.

In more critical and less euphoric readings of transculturality (e.g. Alter 2015a: 63; Delanoy 2013; Freitag-Hild 2010b: 35; Volkmann 2015; Sommer 2001: 51-54), Welsch’s concept is criticised for its insensitivity to power relations and cultural participation, and its overly positive and progressive-elitist rhetoric of cultural fusion and mixing. With reference to Sommer (2001), Freitag-Hild (2010b: 35) argues that the transcultural imagination of fragmentary and instable identities has little to offer for cultural minorities who seek to overcome social marginalisation and discrimination in order to achieve equal cultural and political participation. Losing a sense of one’s own identity – the articulation of which had to be struggled for in the first place – might pull away any sound basis for political recognition claims and cause marginalised identities to fall back into a state of silence and invisibility. To avoid global uniformity and the dissolution of a comforting sense of identity, Delanoy stresses the need to “help people in transcultural constellations gain recognition for who they are and who they may wish to become” (2013: 159) and to keep sensitive to “the legitimate interest of people

to construct specific and separable identities” (ibid.: 162). Consequently, Volkmann (2005: 27) warns against hushing up cultural difference precisely because difference is still experienced by many people, for example as a marginalising or de-privileging force or as a (possibly hindering) factor intersecting with cross-cultural communication or access to resources. Difference is also to be retained in that it can cause people to question their own position (e.g. in terms of their own privilege or normative positions) or in that it is felt to be enriching to the individual (ibid.). To put it quite bluntly, not all people, including EFL learners, are “global player[s] who [move] freely and effortlessly in the cosmos of neoliberal, liquid modernity” (ibid.), but who still need to be prepared to participate in and critically reflect on living in a globalised world, including a reflection on cultural hierarchies and injustices (cf. Alter 2015a: 35). Volkmann (2015: 28) argues that a space must be retained in critical discourse – which from my point of view can be located in TEFL research and the EFL classroom alike – that still dares to thematise “the ongoing existence of binary or hierarchical structures in thinking with regard to nations or communities” (ibid.) rather than being ideologically silenced by allegedly superior transcultural positions that might disallow such thinking. Since cultural separation or hierarchy might still be perceived as a powerful force by the individual, one could argue in favour of a persisting need of intercultural competences – not necessarily to negotiate meaning between monolithic cultural-national entities, but maybe ever more so to negotiate meaning and enter respectful encounters along the lines of diverse cultural differences and Othernesses. Even though these are good reasons to see the establishment of a transcultural horizon in cultural learning critically, it might still provide a powerful intervention – although maybe not a full remedy – against reproducing binary oppositions and primary foci on national conceptions of culture in the EFL classroom.

In the wake of these shifts and reconfigurations, in particular in attempts to overcome the primacy of the so-called ‘core countries’ and the aligned hierarchical binary between ‘inferior’ and ‘superior’ countries, a recent trend can be observed in TEFL research that seeks to make a new range of cultures accessible to the EFL classroom, namely the so-called ‘New English Cultures’ (Eisenmann/Grimm/Volkmann 2010a). The choice of “geographical preferences” (Volkmann 2013: 171) moves away from the traditional core countries (USA/UK) towards other countries and areas, also those with a growing global influence. This becomes evident in researchers who suggest accessing “a ‘new’ or rather hitherto neglected body of cultures” (Eisenmann/Grimm/Volkmann 2010b: vii) and, in doing so, establish “an enlarged focus on other English-speaking countries, their societies, their traditions and their customs – mainly Australia, Canada, India and South Africa” (Eisenmann/Grimm/Volkmann 2010b: vii). Although this list of countries seems to be a bit arbitrary and exclusive, what this is emblematic of nonetheless is a turn to those countries that historically once belonged to the British Empire. Hence, conceptualisations of cultural learning are currently marked by “the opening towards the post-colonial and global world, and the new diversity and pluralism in English-speaking cultures which are entailed in the changing realities of the world we live in” (Eisenmann/Grimm/Volkmann 2010b: vii). Such a move is considered to be paramount for intercultural learning, as it increases learners’ awareness that English is not just spoken in the

UK and the USA, and it highlights the increasing importance of non-European countries in today's increasingly interconnected and globalised world (ibid: ix). In deconstructing the binary between well-established 'core countries' and formerly unacknowledged countries from 'the periphery', this increase in 'New English Cultures' marks a significant shift away from Eurocentric worldviews. In teaching practice, the inclusion of these new cultural areas materialises in terms of new cultural foci in ELT coursebooks and in a wider selection of literature for the classroom, which parallels an increasing research interest in these 'New English Cultures and Literatures' (e.g. Doff/Schulze-Engler 2011a; Eckstein 2007; Eisenmann/Grimm/Volkman 2010a). Generally speaking, this tendency is indicative of an ongoing opening and reorientation of the EFL classroom and TEFL research towards acknowledging greater cultural diversity. On the other hand, however, the impression remains that aspects of geography, nation or region continue to remain a powerful, if not the primary criterion for the selection of cultures (and by extension, literatures) for broadening the scope of cultural learning in TEFL. I do not argue against this recent shift per se, and I welcome this growing consciousness within TEFL for the diversity of the postcolonial and global world. But if such a mind-set is constantly kept up (e.g. in a potentially endless spiral of 'discovering' hitherto unacknowledged cultures), it might reinforce the 'nationalisation' of the cultural and literary canon for TEFL while simultaneously blocking space for other possibilities of bringing cultural difference into the classroom, thus perpetuating their exclusion.

In acknowledging the heterogeneity and internal diversity of TEFL's target cultures, another tendency in selecting cultural focal points gained increasing momentum – the move away from "images of [...] ethnic homogeneity" (Eisenmann/Grimm/Volkman 2010b: vii). Coupled with an emerging interest in transcultural approaches to cultural learning, this acknowledgement of the diverse make-up of what was formerly transported into the classroom as monolithic national cultures caused a new shift, as Hallet notes:

In den Mittelpunkt des (kulturwissenschaftlichen und didaktischen) Interesses rücken damit auch die Kulturen und Literaturen zuvor ignorierter oder marginalisierter, vor allem auch indigener Ethnien und Minderheiten und deren Platz und Rolle in den fremdsprachigen (postkolonialen) Gesellschaften der Gegenwart. (Hallet 2010: 154)

Hallet shows that TEFL developed a marked interest in the cultural margins, which resulted in centralising a focus on ethnicity, or ethnic minorities, as a new supplement to cultural learning. Accordingly, the choice of literature, but also films, for the classroom changed to mirror the increasing attention paid to issues and cultural phenomena of ethnicity. The so-called *British Fictions of Migration* (Freitag-Hild 2010b; Sommer 2001) has become a viable genre from which to select literary texts, and films such as *Bend it like Beckham*, *East is East* and *Brick Lane* developed into popular sources for depicting ethnicity in contexts of migration (2012: 33). What Volkman calls an "intuitive turn" (2013: 171) is legitimised with its hoped-for added value for cultural learning. The minority perspective such texts cast from the margin on the majority culture might be a valuable point of identification for learners, who are themselves outsiders to the target culture (ibid.: 171). Hence, they provide an enhanced perspective on Otherness or being Other and an enriched access to new worldviews and the experience of cultural difference (cf. Lütge 2013b). By diversifying the view on the cultural realities in

Anglophone target cultures, it will become increasingly difficult for learners to maintain a clear-cut and homogenising opposition between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ (ibid.).

Yet at the same time, the establishment of ethnicity as a ‘new’ line of difference also runs the danger of producing clichés about how the multi-layered contexts of ethnic-cultural identities are modelled and represented in teaching scenarios. Eisenmann, Grimm and Volkmann observe the tendency to thematise “the double-bind of being caught between two cultures” (2010b: xii) and the problems that are at stake when it comes to resisting or following acculturation and assimilation (cf. also Volkmann 2013: 173). A good example of this cliché is Hesse’s (2010) suggestion for teaching Bali Rai’s *(Un)arranged Marriage*, a piece of literature that revolves around a Punjabi family in Leicester/England and their plans for an arranged marriage for their son Manny. Henceforth, Manny is torn between a traditional (and therefore undesirable or restrictive?) culture and a modern Western culture with beliefs in freedom and choice. This rift between cultures embodies the learners’ ensuing exploration of “an adolescent growing up between two cultures” (ibid.: 183) who is “stuck in a culture clash” (ibid.: 184). Another telling example of reproducing ethnicity as the newly favoured line of cultural difference can also be found in Blell and Doff’s (2014) suggestion for using the narrative poem *The Bullets and Dusters and Borders* by Benjamin Alire Sáenz. This suggestion is articulated against the backdrop of their transcultural reconceptualisation of Byram’s ICC model that now includes a strong focus on “plurality and polyvocality in the global EFL classroom” (2014: 93) that allows for exploring “manifold background(s) and perspectives (history, culture, religion, gender, etc.)” (ibid.: 92) in order to develop “border literacies” (ibid.: 86). Oddly enough, this plea for diversity is then juxtaposed with a text choice in which (again) aspects of ethnic identity are centrally negotiated.

By way of summing up my line of argumentation, there is a tendency to overcome the conceptualisation of cultural learning in terms of binary oppositions, which are conceived to be an untenable concept for modelling the cultural diversity of today’s Anglophone world into the EFL classroom. In particular, current research takes severe issue with the most deeply enshrined binary opposition, ‘wrought’ by *intercultural learning*, of the learners’ home culture and the cultures of TEFL’s previous core countries (UK/USA), which are concomitantly perceived as homogeneous and essential cultural units, thus cementing a dichotomy of ‘Us’ vs. ‘Them’ as a recurring motif of cultural learning. Current attempts to get out of the ruts of the binary opposition coincide with making accessible new cultural foci, i.e. new lines of difference and Otherness, that seek to bring the cultural diversity of Anglophone target cultures and the postcolonial Anglophone world into the EFL classroom. What has gained increasing momentum in this changing context is the primary preference for selecting ‘new’ national or regional cultural focal points (i.e. ‘The New English Cultures’), or vistas of ethnic diversity (in particular to depict target cultures as multicultural migration societies). While these attempts can generally be lauded for providing stimulating new impulses for cultural learning and for bringing hitherto unacknowledged viewpoints and voices into light, it must also be said that the preference for a national-ethnic line of demarcation, thus still equating culture with nation or increasingly so ethnicity, is theoretically questionable, as Schulze-Engler argues:

[I]deas, texts, images, and sounds circulate through a globally interlinked network constituted by old and new media alike. The idea of ‘locating’ culture and literature exclusively in the context of ethnicities and nations is rapidly losing plausibility throughout an ‘English-speaking world’. (Schulze-Engler 2009: x)

Hence, one can deduce that the current trends for selecting cultural content for the EFL classroom are too narrow in scope considering the wide variety of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ that could just as well be accessed. To counter this development, Lütge suggests the following:

Insbesondere für die Literatur- und Kulturdidaktik, die Forschung zum inter- und transkulturellen Lernen und zu allen Fragen, die die Darstellung von Differenz und Diversität behandeln, z.B. in Literatur und Film, können veränderte Zugänge zu Identitätskonstrukten eine wichtige Rolle spielen und dazu beitragen, klischeehafte Vorstellungen von ‘otherness’ zu relativieren. [...] Als besonders relevant erachte ich eine neu konturierte Betrachtung von Differenzkategorien jenseits ethnisch-nationaler Demarkationslinien, wie es so oft der Fall ist [...] und eine Hinwendung zu anderen Differenzkategorien (gender, class, creed usw.), die Identitäten komplexer beleuchten. (2013a: 166f)

On the one hand, Lütge’s position illustrates how TEFL is prone to canonising certain ‘lines of demarcation’ as they might materialise in textbook representations of culture or the choice of literature to be read in classrooms. On the other hand, this quote calls for incorporating more diverse notions of culture, i.e. new lines of demarcation or difference categories, into the scope of TEFL. The potential of this diversified diversification, so to speak, is to shed a more complex light on the construction of identity, relativise clichéd notion of what it means to be ‘the Other’, and to overcome simplifying oppositions of ‘Us’ vs. ‘Them’, which are difficult to maintain if the cultural Other is actually a complex and multilayered being. Lütge’s call for a more substantial range of cultural differences then mirrors Alter’s suggestion for pluralising both ICC and the concept of *Fremdverstehen*. All in all, when TEFL is, generally speaking, cultivating a climate of openness and diversity (limited in scope as it might still be), then it is into this climate that new lines of difference can arguably and justifiably be embedded into TEFL discourse and be removed from their status as ‘blind spots’ – including a perspective on sexual and gender diversity.¹⁸ If TEFL is to live up to its inherent proclamations of diversity, which Volkmann mockingly calls “politically correct lip-service” (2013: 170), then such an agenda must be more thoroughly embraced and backed up by research.

2.3 ‘Other Others, Different Differences’: Didactic Implications and Principles

The increase in the complexity of cultural differences I have theoretically argued for raises the immediate question of how the advent of a more diverse set of cultural differences into the EFL classroom can practically be accommodated. In what follows, I will therefore sketch out a range of didactic implications and principles that are meant to provide a facilitative frame for teaching scenarios in which the engagement with ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ is a central

18 When Hu and Byram ask, “In how far is the attitude towards cultural difference dependent on what kind of cultural difference is involved?” (2009: xxi), one might suspect that there are lines of difference that are more difficult to establish (possibly those that are perceived to be controversial or taboo), or that require more legitimization to make their relationship with cultural learning clear, whereas other differences might have a more intuitive appeal for TEFL, such as national and ethnic foci.

concern. Lütge (2013a: 166) argues that such a careful approach to ‘reducing’ or ‘simplifying’ is crucial so as to achieve a transfer of complex topics and differentiated discourses into EFL practice. Above all, it is the learners who should ultimately benefit from and enjoy what the Common European Framework calls “the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture” (Council of Europe: 1). In collating such guiding principles, I turn to Freitag-Hild’s (2010b: 60-61) didactic principles which she suggests for transcultural- and intercultural learning (‘multiperspectivity’, ‘dialogicity’, ‘reflexivity’), connect these where appropriate with Lütge’s (2013a: 166) considerations for identity-based approaches to TEFL (‘overcoming bipolar perspectives’, ‘relativising uninterrogated norms’, ‘pluralising linguistic-cultural identity/ies’), and add Volkmann’s notion of critically engaging with ‘othering’, which adds a discourse-critical dimension to the scope of didactic principles. To conclude with, I will relate these principles to Kramersch’s (1993) notion of the ‘third place’.

My collation of didactic principles for bringing ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ into the classroom entails the following aspects:

- **Overcoming bipolar perspectives:** A teacher’s sensitivity to, and knowledge about, binary oppositions is crucial for identifying their (re)occurrence in classroom discourse or in the material that has been selected for classroom usage. If a given material, text or coursebook page is felt to reproduce cultural phenomena or differences in a dichotomising and essentialising manner, then the challenge is to search for or create materials with more balanced representations, or (if that is not possible) to harness the potential of a binary opposition inherent in a given material (e.g. an image, an advertisement, a short story, etc.) and to challenge it, rather than to perpetuate it silently. Similarly, if binary assumptions about culture are introduced into the classroom by students, the teacher can encourage students to question the validity of that opposition. From my point of view, it is crucial that teachers do not come across as intrusive or indoctrinating, but adopt an interrogating and sensitive approach. Furthermore, I wish to point out that the introduction of a ‘new’ line of cultural difference might, overall, serve the purpose to represent culture in terms of diversity and to overcome binary oppositions of ‘Us’ vs. ‘Them. But each line of difference can in itself engender new binary oppositions or stereotypical assumptions, which requires a relentless sensitivity to, and critique of, potential moments in which binary oppositions become active.
- **Multiperspectivity and pluralising linguistic-cultural identity/ies:** On the one hand, the diversity of cultural differences and Othernesses must become accessible in the classroom, which stresses the importance of selecting texts (in the widest sense of the word, e.g. literary texts, visuals, multimodal texts) that represent such diversity. Here, Decke-Cornill’s (1994) concept of creating text ensembles that mirror multiperspectivity (also from controversial or contradictory perspectives) is a helpful orientation for putting together the larger ‘didactic text’ that is used in the EFL classroom. On the other hand, it is important that learners engage with these texts and extract and coordinate the diverse perspectives on difference that a text offers (cf. Freitag-Hild 2010b: 61). On a more realistic level, it needs to be said that it is most likely impossible to find one text that ‘says it all’, i.e. that includes

as many facets of cultural difference and identity as possible. Therefore, the representation of cultural difference through texts must be crafted as an ongoing endeavour, with the continuous need to bring balanced and diverse representations into the classroom. The discussion of Spivak and Derrida in the first chapter calls to mind that no single representation can convey an ‘image’ of Otherness or difference that is universally true. What follows from this, methodologically, is also to question the validity and ‘truth’ of each representation that is introduced into the classroom.

- **Dialogicity:** With this principle, Freitag-Hild (2010b: 61) highlights the central function of dialogue in the negotiation of cultural meanings. She argues that the representations of difference ideally challenge the learners and their existing worldviews, from which fruitful discussions and explorations of difference can emerge. In view of Hallet’s notion of *fremdsprachige Diskursfähigkeit* (2012), such a culture of dialogue can foster the ability to participate in real-world discourses, starting in the classroom itself. A space must also be provided that learners can use to express their own viewpoints and experience of encountering difference (cf. Freitag-Hild 2010b: 61). What I would like to add is that the introduction of new and hitherto unrepresented, maybe even controversial, differences can be a stimulating speech incentive (which can be harnessed in lively discussions), but it can also cause caution, bewilderment or reticence on the side of the learner. Therefore, it might be advisable not to jump into a discussion at once, but perhaps to leave space for students to express their thoughts in silent ways, e.g. through writing. It is furthermore necessary, I argue, that students feel that they can also voice critical opinions (although within certain limitations to avoid, for example, racist or homophobic slurs). This is important to prevent socially desirable answers, a problem that Alter (2015) cautions against throughout her dissertation.
- **Reflexivity and relativising uninterrogated norms:** In encountering cultural difference and Otherness, it is important that learners critically reflect on their existing schemata and worldviews in view of difference and Otherness. What is called de-centering in Byram’s ICC model is intended to achieve an interrogation and relativisation of existing cultural imprints. Sometimes, the confrontation with difference might also require a consciousness-raising process so that the underlying (but often only implicitly assumed and known) norm becomes tangible, e.g. gay/heteronormativity. Since Otherness and difference are, by their enmeshedness in binary oppositions, also regulated by social norms and expectations, it is crucial that these norms are reflected on alongside encountering the Other. Therefore, I suggest that the exploration of the Self-Other-binary can also be supplemented with, or rearticulated as, the exploration of norm-Other-binaries.
- **Lay open mechanisms of ‘othering’ and exclusion:** The inclusion of this didactic principle derives from Volkmann’s reflection, who stresses that a more thorough focus on the techniques of ‘othering’ and inclusion must be incorporated into cultural learning (2013: 169, 174). It also links to the reflections on discourse and power I developed in chapter 1.2. Volkmann argues that the practice of intercultural learning and teaching is often blatantly ignorant of inequalities, exclusions, and power asymmetries. Therefore, a close analysis of

how discourse produces exclusions and power asymmetries by mechanisms of ‘othering’ can lay open detrimental stereotypes and thought patterns. To challenge “preconceived notions of the Other” (Volkmann 2013: 174), learners can come to grapple with “the importance of words, the choice of terminology and the issue of naming” (ibid.), all of which are typical techniques of silencing, excluding or discrimination. Such an analysis can be developed at the example of a text in which ‘othering’ becomes emblematic, which in turn poses a specific challenge for the selection of texts. Rather than *avoiding* texts that have an either blatant or more subtle representation of the Other as negative for fear of reproducing stereotypical perceptions, this didactic principle would actually require that such texts are deliberately and carefully chosen for being employed in the classroom.

To highlight the importance of the learners’ individual processes of negotiating cultural meanings and creating new meanings and interpretations that can emerge from such negotiations, I consider Kramsch’s concept of the ‘third place’ a useful conceptualisation to frame the learners’ encounter with difference. The third place describes an imaginary space, a state of mind, or a border experience, in which the learner is ‘sitting on a fence’, in view of his own culture and the other culture, and makes connections between them and reflects on them (cf. Kramsch 1993: 234; Kramsch 2009: 239, 244). The third place, in a 2009 publication by Kramsch also referred to as ‘third culture’, is conceptualised as follows:

The concept of third culture was proposed as a metaphor for eschewing other dualities on which language education is based: first language (L1)/second language (L2), C1/C2, Us vs Them, Self vs Other. Third culture does not propose to eliminate these dichotomies, but suggests focusing on the relation itself and on the heteroglossia within each of these poles. It is a symbolic place that is by no means unitary, stable, permanent and homogeneous. Rather it is, like subject positions in post-structuralist theory, multiple, always subject to change and to the tensions and conflicts that com from being ‘in between’ [...]. (Kramsch 2009: 238)

In this shifting place, learners negotiate between familiar meanings and unexpected meanings. They question, challenge, and problematise meanings that were taken for granted, and construct their own, new personal meanings (cf. Kramsch 1993: 238). In view of cultural difference and Otherness, Kramsch’s notion of the third place is particularly valuable. She describes it as “an oppositional space where the learner creates meaning on the margins or in the interstices of official meanings” (Kramsch 2009: 238), turning the third place into a place of “tactical subversion” (ibid.). Most interestingly, Kramsch does not exclusively reserve the third place for encounters between home and target cultures, but for various border crossings and communicative interactions “between people who don’t share the same nationality, social or ethnic origin, gender, age, occupation, or sexual preference” (Kramsch 1998: 81). This makes the learner’s emerging third place an exciting and contested place for the (re-)negotiation and exploration of meaning along various lines of cultural differences, to which the didactic principles sketched out above may offer a valuable contribution.

3 The EFL Literature Classroom: Exploring Otherness and Difference in Texts

This chapter rests on the assumption that a key role of using literary texts in the EFL classroom lies in their potential to offer new horizons of Otherness and difference to learners as readers of literary texts. Given my specific research interest in ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’, I understand that literature can initiate challenging encounters with cultural diversity in the EFL classroom and bring learners in contact with various types of Otherness and difference whose horizons they have not yet accessed and explored. Yet in contrast to this wholesale and initial endorsement of the role of literature to extend learners’ experience beyond what is already known, the pressing question emerges in how far the EFL literature classroom actually provides ample opportunities to experience a broad scope of cultural diversity, or whether there is – in parallel with the discourse of cultural learning – a limited or ‘canonised’ set of facets of Otherness and difference that are primarily mediated into the classroom via literature. To engage with these questions, I will open this chapter with describing the educative potential and value of literary texts that is often ascribed to their use in EFL and foreign language education, and then zoom in on the particular role of literature as a site for learners to experience cultural diversity and to come to a differentiated understanding of various axes of cultural difference and Otherness beyond simplistic binary perceptions. In a second step, I seek to illuminate to what extent current selections of literary texts actually achieve to model a broad understanding of cultural diversity into the EFL classroom. For this purpose, I will turn to TEFL-specific studies of the so-called ‘literary canon’ in order to extract an approximate overview of the literary texts that are currently read in classrooms. This overview is a valuable cornerstone to determine the range of Othernesses and differences learners currently come to engage with, and to identify possible ‘blind spots’ that have not yet moved into the horizon of the EFL literature classroom. Furthermore, this overview also seeks to show if the current text selection is more likely to tend towards a fossilisation of a limited set of texts, or if there is movement and flexibility that makes it possible to pay more attention to “the distorted, drowned, forgotten voices in texts” with a view to “bringing out those that remain latent or displaced” (Volkman 2007: 176). Finally, I will argue that the depiction and negotiation of cultural difference and Otherness in a literary text is a necessary prerequisite to lay hold on cultural diversity in the EFL literature classroom, but may in itself only have a limited effect. What is necessary is to think about effective methodological inventories that tease out the perspectives on ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ inherent in a text, and that activate learners to understand, explore and interrogate these new perspectives. The approaches to teaching literature I will collate here will serve the purpose of bringing these new and extended perspectives on Otherness and difference to life in the EFL classroom.

3.1 The Potential of Literature in TEFL: Exploring New Horizons of Otherness and Difference

Asking for the *potential* of literature in an *educational* setting such as the EFL classroom, in which the engagement with literature is didactically staged, engenders the question of functionalising a medium that is otherwise used for different purposes than for school settings, e.g. private enjoyment. For the use of literature in gender-oriented teaching scenarios, Decke-Cornill raises the following concern: “Darf sie [Literatur] überhaupt für Unterrichtsziele wie Geschlechterbildung usurpiert werden?” (Decke-Cornill 2010b: 12). Even though a certain instrumentalisation of literature in pedagogic-didactic settings cannot be denied, Decke-Cornill (ibid.) does not give in to a defeatist position that would prohibit the use of literature in the EFL classroom, and instead, she calls for harnessing the enriching potential of literature – even though the use of literature in a classroom may follow different purposes and functions than reading literature at home. Indeed, reading and engaging with literature in an institutionalised EFL setting is enmeshed in a fabric of purposes and objectives (cf. Nünning/Surkamp 2008: 17), which will become clear in the following discussion.

Modern literature teaching goes beyond seeing a literary text as inert object which can, at best, be instrumentalised for the sole purpose of language acquisition. Paran (2006) calls for approaching the use of literature in a more holistic manner to access its educative potential. Decke-Cornill (2010b: 3), for example, stresses the unique potential of literature as a springboard for communication and for exchanging ideas (*Anschlusskommunikation*). After reading a text or a passage from a text, learners in the classroom can talk about their individual reading experience, engage with other and different interpretations of the same text, and defend their own position or negotiate previous reading experience in the light of what other learners have experienced. Furthermore, the whole TEFL tradition of *Fremdverstehen* and cultural learning, whether it be defined as inter- or transcultural in scope, would be unthinkable without literature (cf. Bredella 2002; Nünning/Surkamp 2008: 12). In engaging with literature, learners can develop esteemed cultural learning objectives such as empathy or changing perspectives into the viewpoints of the literary protagonists in the texts, who are depicted in specific cultural contexts. Other learning objectives highlight the literariness of literature and seek to develop literary competences or literary literacy (e.g. Hallet/Surkamp/Krämer 2015; Lütge 2013c), or stress the aesthetic experience of reading literature (e.g. Küster/Lütge/Wieland 2015). In contrast to the rich potential of literature for fostering a wide array of holistic goals, it might come as a surprise that the role of literature is pushed to the margins in key influential educational policies such as the Common European Framework of References for Language (Council of Europe 2001), or the German educational standards for foreign languages (Kultusministerkonferenz 2004a). Various researchers (e.g. Bredella 2008; Burwitz-Melzer 2007; Rössler 2008) call to mind not to neglect the use of literary texts in the EFL classroom so as to provide a balance to the pragmatic and utilitarian scope of these policies. The latest increase in academic research and practice-oriented publications can be seen as a response to the endangered “right of teaching literature to exist in the classroom”, as Kirchhoff (2016: 230) puts

it, and this new interest in the EFL literature classroom may contribute to reinvigorating and strengthening the use of literary texts (cf. Surkamp 2013).

Given my research interest in broadening the scope of TEFL towards ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’, it appears that literature is perfectly suitable for initiating learners’ engagement with difference and Otherness. When Bredella (2008: 17) argues that literature provides insights into lifeworlds that are rarely gained in life, he highlights the potential of the fictionality of literary texts, which is embodied in Volkmann’s metaphor of literature as a fictional laboratory:

Fiction can offer a rather pressure-free environment to encounter different characters and ways of living and thinking, thereby creating fictional laboratories for probing into different ways of growing up or forming identity. Being invited to enter the life and thoughts of a fictional character, if only vicariously, students are offered the chance to perceive another person and her or his different outlook on life [...] through different eyes, to compare this with their own attitudes and thus to broaden their minds. (Volkmann 2016: 116-117)

Volkmann’s comment reads like a blueprint for legitimising the use of literature to experience ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’. It offers insights into lifeworlds hitherto unknown to readers, and given the laboratory character of literature, readers can experiment with different outlooks on the world they have so far never encountered or experienced themselves. Since the encounter with difference or Otherness is fictionally conveyed and not experienced in real life, Delanoy argues that “literature can provide space for safe experimentation with personally meaningful issues” (Delanoy 2016: 28), which also makes literature an ideal space for engaging with differences or Othernesses that might be controversial, taboo, or provocative. This becomes particularly relevant when it comes to the characteristic feature of literature to allow for experiencing other ways of living, other values, other norms and other worldviews as they are negotiated in the fictional world of the literary text, as Nünning and Surkamp (2008: 14) underline, as these worldviews or norms might be different from the worldviews and norms the readers might hold high for themselves. The novel *Luna* by Julie Anne Peters, for example, provides a rich insight into the life of a transgender teenager, which could – depending on the reader’s background – either confirm one’s existence or invite to change one’s perspective into a lifeworld that one has never entered before.

As the discussion so far has shown, reading a literary text can cause the reader, which in this context would also be the learner in an EFL classroom, to leave their comfort zone. Therefore, the selection of literary texts should be guided by assessing the text’s potential to irritate, to cause confusion, to call into question. Literary texts must not be misunderstood “as the confirmation of what we already know” (Bredella 2008: 17), but rather as the affirmation of something new or unknown. Also Decke-Cornill (2013b) considers the value of literature in its capacity to transcend mental boundaries, as becomes apparent in her pointed evaluation of what literature can offer its readers in comparison to other, non-fictional forms:

Literatur unterscheidet sich von anderen Kommunikationsformen durch die Freiheit des Fiktionalen, der Imagination, der Subjektivität. Mit dieser Befugnis kann sie Grenzen der Wahrnehmung überschreiten, die Menschen sonst in ihren Lebenswelten gesetzt sind, und ihnen Innenperspektiven, Bewusstseinsströme, Gedanken, Visionen, Gefühle nahe bringen, die ihnen im außerliterarischen Leben unzugänglich bleiben. Literatur ist erfinderisch. Sie kann

unerreichbare, ferne, fremde und fiktive Lebenswelten vorstellbar machen und, eng damit verbunden, Nahes und Vertrautes in neuem Licht erscheinen lassen und befremdlich machen. Literatur kann also nach innen wie nach außen die Wahrnehmungs- und Vorstellungswelt der Lesenden vervielfältigen und bereichern und die Provinzialität der Alltagserfahrung bezwingen. (Decke-Cornill 2010b: 10)

When Decke-Cornill emphasises that literature can challenge the provinciality of the everydayness of one's experience by introducing the reader to the personal insights and lives of others, this is indicative of the mainstake of intercultural learning – to decentre from the cultural norms one has been socialised and become accustomed to during the encounter of other ways of being. This stresses the dialogic quality of literature. It does not only introduce the reader to a new world, it also calls the reader to compare it with their own world. This dynamic dialogue between the Otherness of the literary world and the sameness of oneself can be harnessed for cultural learning, as Lütge points out:

The teaching of foreign language literature in its representation of linguistic and cultural otherness is seen as an ideal starting-point for reflections on the perspectivity of individual viewpoints. In comparing and contrasting their own values and world views to those of literary texts learners can change and coordinate perspectives, a prerequisite for developing intercultural competence. (Lütge 2013c: 191)

What emerges from this statement is the close (functional) relationship between literary and cultural learning. But one must not misunderstand the notion of comparing and contrasting as a renaissance of clear-cut binaries between self and Other. Rather, literary texts in themselves already contain complex arrangements of perspectives, conflicts, multivoicedness, controversy and difference, as Decke-Cornill (2010b: 10-11) stresses. If this is coupled with readers' diverse responses to such complex literary arrangements, it seems almost impossible to continue thinking in closed cultural boundaries.

Furthermore, Kirchhoff (2016: 229) emphasises that literary texts offer a starting point to reflect on historical, social or political issues. As Ansgar Nünning and Carola Surkamp (2008: 36) call to mind, however, this does not mean that the literary text, or rather the world it creates, simply mirrors the outside reality. Rather, the literary text stands in a close and dynamic relationship to the world in that it takes up discourses that are circulating 'out there', and transforms these discourses into a fictional world by commenting on them, interrogating them, or turning them on their head. What follows is that literature provides an aesthetically mediated relationship to historical or current contexts, which a reader can then respond to and engage critically with (ibid.: 18). Hence, Nünning and Surkamp stress that the reality a literary text models or creates interacts with the 'real' world of the readers in complex ways:

[L]iterarische Wirklichkeitsentwürfe [wirken] in mannigfaltiger Weise auf die Gesellschaft (und die Lernenden) zurück, in dem sie etwa zur Ausbildung neuer Wahrnehmungs-, Denk- und Empfindungsweisen beitragen. Durch die fiktionale Gestaltung und Umdeutung von kulturspezifischen Erfahrungen gewinnen literarische Texte einen produktiven, welterzeugenden Charakter und tragen als ein Medium menschlicher Wirklichkeitsaneignung wesentlich zu kultureller Orientierung und Sinnstiftung bei. (Nünning/Surkamp 2008: 36)

If, for example, readers (that is, readers as learners) encounter cultural difference or Otherness as it is negotiated and mediated in the text, they can build up new ways of perceiving the world by becoming aware of, say, social issues or individual experiences they were unaware of before.

In my reading of Nünning and Surkamp, such an encounter with difference can provide new cultural frameworks to re-situate and orientate learners in their own worlds. From a cultural learning perspective, literature can be ascribed a transformative potential that unfolds in the dynamic of experiencing someone else's worldview and, through that, re-experiencing one's own worldview (cf. Bredella 1995: 20). Similarly, Delanoy draws on Said (2003) to argue that "literature is a richly-textured and multi-layered discourse which can empower people to (self-)critically gain access to complex realities" (Delanoy 2016: 26). What follows is that the notion of literature on the one hand, and life on the other hand, cannot or should not be artificially separated, as Hallet emphasises in his vision of literary education:

Ein Begriff von literarischer Bildung, der die Bedeutung literarischen Lesens in der Schule sichtbar machen will, muss sich (wieder!) auf diesen Zusammenhang von Literatur und Leben besinnen und das in der Literatur enthaltene kulturelle Wissen für die Bewältigung von alltäglichen Lebensaufgaben, aber auch für die Erzeugung ethisch und sozial verträglicher Lebensweisen aktivieren [...]. (Hallet 2007: 58)

Hallet's position reads like a call to rethink the function of literature in the EFL classroom in that it should provide an enhanced access to (new) cultural knowledge and foster social and ethical responsibility.

Such new knowledges and the development of social and ethical responsibilities, I argue, become particularly relevant in the context of cultural Otherness and difference. Difference has the power to demarcate and to divide human existence, and in doing so, produce Others who are marginalised to the brinks of society. Literary texts, then, can initiate contacts and encounters with those who are perceived to be Other, or with phenomena that are perceived to be different or alien. To speak with Nussbaum, literature can help us

to cultivate in ourselves a capacity for the sympathetic imagination that will enable us to comprehend the motives and choices of people different from ourselves, seeing them not as forbiddingly alien and other, but sharing many problems and possibilities with us. (Nussbaum 1998: 85)

When Lütge (2013b: 103) quotes Appiah, who proposes that literary texts "link us, powerfully to others, even strange others" (2005: 257), she emphasises that "dealing with difference – whatever that may be for children and young adults – is central to many traditional and modern texts" (Lütge 2013b: 99). Speaking at the example of children's literature, Lütge points out that difference can come in many disguises, for example in "distant settings, magical worlds, or transcultural encounters" (ibid.). If Otherness and difference are considered constitutive elements of many literary texts, and if one also acknowledges that this Otherness or difference is rarely portrayed in flat and narrow ways in literature, then the engagement with literary texts opens up "an enormous educational potential that can be exploited for the foreign language classroom" (Lütge 2013b: 103). According to Lütge (2013b: 97), literary texts and their complex negotiations of Otherness can help challenge and transcend seemingly easy oppositions between what is perceived to be Other, and what is perceived to be self. Since "[a]berrations from an alleged 'norm' are normal" (Lütge 2013b: 99), they do indeed call into question what is 'normal' by offering new insights into old certainties that are now turned upside down. Hence, the concrete experience of Otherness – or rather, of the many "facets of 'otherness'" (ibid: 98) – in literary texts can raise awareness of contrasting viewpoints, values and ways of being.

Ultimately, the need to engage in complex processes of understanding and reflection is almost necessitated by literary texts: “Understanding otherness, in terms of culture, gender, class and creed – to name but a few aspects – is a complex process with fuzzy edges and does not lend itself to easy categorizations” (Lütge 2013b: 98). If one brings in ‘other Others’ into the equation, then the experience of literary texts can counter simplistic binary oppositions.

Recently, Alter (2014, 2015) has further problematised the question of representing Otherness in the classroom through literary texts. By referring to Canadian multicultural children’s and young adult fiction, she calls to mind that marginalised Others are often reduced to their specific cultural Otherness and experience problems based on that Otherness. Often, these Other protagonists are depicted as victims who experience duress and discrimination while fighting against a malevolent social environment. This deterministic link between cultural identity and problem identity is problematic, especially if Other readers recognise themselves in such texts when the only options offered to them emerge from a paradigm of conflict and problems (Alter 2014: 59-60). Understandably so, Alter suggests more “balanced representation[s]” (2015: 202) of Otherness in which the fact of being Other is not deterministic for everything that occurs in the story. She opts for texts¹⁹ in which Otherness is thematised more en passant, but not centrally: “Homosexualität kommt vor, wird aber nicht problematisiert, körperliche Einschränkung ist sinnstiftend, nicht sinnnehmend, Inuit-Kultur erklärt ein Mysterium” (Alter 2014: 60). As a result, such texts could serve to deconstruct binaries of victim vs. violator, minority vs. majority, problem identity vs. norm identity, and hence contribute to the overall deconstruction of binary oppositions of identity and culture. I do agree with Alter (ibid.) in that learners must recognise that the perception of Otherness should unfold along diversified identity patterns. This can support learners to gain an awareness of social heterogeneity in addition to, or independent of, ‘cultural’ entities. What I would like to transfer to further reflection, however, is the question if Alter’s suggestion would ultimately rule out the selection of any text in which Otherness is in some way or another linked with the experience of problem, conflict or dilemma situations. Especially when it comes to marginalised, tabooed or controversial Other identities, one could argue that some form of conflict or ‘othering’ is inherent to the literature in which such Other identities are depicted. Rather than white-washing any text selection so that they become problem- and conflict-free vis-à-vis Otherness, I do argue that it is perhaps more important to scrutinise such problem-texts with learners in order to understand the mechanisms of exclusion and ‘othering’, e.g. how language is used in a text to vilify a gay classmate. Maybe an awareness of ‘othering’, as Said (1973) suggests, could then be as powerful in ‘unlearning othering’ as reading a problem-free literary text. All in all, the careful consideration of texts in which problem and conflict nonetheless do occur could even enhance the balancedness of the literature selection Alter has in mind.

The pressing question that still remains, however, is what ‘types’ of Otherness and difference are actually ‘experientable’ in the EFL classroom? Is the literature that is offered

19 The texts Grit Alter is discussing here include *On Thin Ice* (Bastedo 2006), *Run* (Walter 2003), *Missuk’s Snow Geese* (Renaud 2008), *Will’s Garden* (Maracle 2002), and *My Mother is a French Fry and Other Proof of my Fuzzed up Life* (Sydor 2008).

potentially open to ‘other Others’ or ‘different differences’? Decke-Cornill (2004) urges those who are in charge of selecting or suggesting literature for the classroom (e.g. academics, researchers, teachers) to foster an open ear to remain sensitive to those Others who are outside of normative discursive formations, and who are easily forgotten when it comes to the identities that are actually given voice by entering the classroom through a literary text. Decke-Cornill (2004) uses the metaphor of the guest list, to which some Others are not yet invited. At the example of identities that fall outside regular patterns of normative genders or sexualities, she makes a pressing case for keeping the guest list open, rather than shutting it down to a few select Others who reach the privilege of being affirmed in the classroom qua literature (cf. also Decke-Cornill 2007). In order to gain an impression of the range of identity positions that actually come into representation in the classroom, it is almost inevitable to look at the selection of literary texts *actually* used in the classroom.

3.2. Text Selection: Changing Canons, Changing Differences?

Research into the so-called ‘literary canon’ can yield valuable insights when the aim is to find out about the diversity of cultural differences and Othernesses that find their way into the EFL classroom via literary texts (cf. Surkamp 2013). In scanning existing research into the literary canon, Paran remarks that, at least in the past, the literature chosen “included a very narrow range of canonical writers who were in turn represented by an even narrower range of works” (2006: 3). More often than not, “the writers chosen [...] come from the inner circle [...], they are mostly men, and the works taught have won critical claim” (Paran 2006: 3). It appears that being male, being from a core English speaking country, and writing ‘high’ literature helps in gaining the privilege to enter ‘the literary canon’ of the EFL classroom. This raises the immediate question in how far such a *narrow* choice of literature can initiate access to a *broad* range of differences, Othernesses, identity positions and perspectives. Similar to Paran, also Kirchhoff engages with the question of the literary canon and presents the overall finding that “in the choice of literature certain authors, genres and national literary cultures were marginalized” (Kirchhoff 2016: 231), which underlines the notion that, at least in the past, the range of difference options was limited. In Nünning’s (1997) often quoted overview, the top ten of the texts used in the classroom were *Lord of the Flies*, *Brave New World*, *Animal Farm*, *Catcher in the Rye*, *1984*, *Cal*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Pearl*, and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (cf. Kirchhoff 2016: 234). These texts made up 78% of the overall bulk of literature that was read (ibid.), and it seems that such texts have been prone to persisting in a ‘hidden canon’ (cf. Surkamp 2013). Even if teachers have the freedom to choose the literature they want to read, bar from any curricular requirements, this does not automatically cause “an expansion of the breadth of titles”, as teachers might continue using familiar texts and thus contribute to “the establishment of a hidden canon” (Kirchhoff 2016: 231). Ironically, then, one could argue that constantly renewed curricular requirements regarding text selection might be more facilitative in challenging the hidden canon than giving teachers the freedom to choose their own texts, who might then fall back on what they know or what can be linked with existing teaching experience or method guides, which “can create a

vicious circle, perpetuating the same choices” (Paran 2006: 3). Another reason for the canonisation of a literary title could be that it is considered relevant for a certain topic (e.g. ‘The American Dream’), or a certain didactic approach (e.g. cultural learning). If a certain literary text has proven to ‘fit’, e.g. *The Great Gatsby* for the topic of ‘The American Dream’, then this can also lead to cementing its position in a school’s reading list. If this tendency is reflected on, this could, in turn, mean that any new text that is added to the text selection, e.g. because a new curricular requirement such as education for sexual diversity has been implemented, could all too quickly become fossilised, too, thus turning an innovative literary piece into a piece of the canon. While this reflection is not supposed to cut any discussion of new reading material short, it challenges us to keep open to new innovations in text choice and didactic approaches. The discussion so far has shown that a limited text choice might have been perpetuated over time, thus narrowing the availability of diverse texts down to a few. When Lütge, however, remarks that “[c]omplaints about a tendency of fossilisation of the literary canon at schools were prominent *in past decades* and have led to a gradual opening for new English literatures” (Lütge 2013c: 191; my emphasis), the question emerges what today’s situation in the EFL classroom is like.

It needs to be said from the outset, however, that a conclusive insight into the ‘true’ range of literary texts dealt with in the EFL classroom is difficult to obtain (cf. Surkamp 2013: 194)²⁰. Most recently, however, Kirchhoff (2016) has presented a study of ‘the literary canon’ to paint a more accurate and modern picture of the literature that is used in the EFL classroom, especially in comparison with older canon studies such as Nünning (1997), Beck (1995) or Peters and Underweg (2005). One of Kirchhoff’s rationales was to find out, for example, if there has been an increase in female authors or in the use of ‘New English Literatures’ – all of which are remarkably absent in older overview studies. Kirchhoff employed a simple and straightforward design and asked 913 students at universities across Germany to write down the literary works they read in their English lessons or that were recommended to them. In doing so, she achieved a “good impression of the texts the students experienced vividly, remembered either positively or negatively or that were in some way relevant to them” (Kirchhoff 2016: 233), although Kirchhoff also acknowledges that the new overview she has generated can only ever be an approximation rather than an exact mirror image of the classroom reality. The results she gained indicate the ‘literature trends’ of the late 2000s. Overall, the respondents of her study mentioned 557 different literary texts that were used in the classroom, which is indicative of a greater variety of texts as in the older canon studies:

20 The difficulty to gain insights into the exact titles used in EFL classrooms are related to research methods or the memory limitations of respondents (e.g. students or teachers). If, for example, a list with given titles is provided and respondents need to tick the titles they have used, this might prevent other titles from entering the study because they were not a part of the fixed selection provided. Other limitations have to do with what the respondents actually report. For example, they might mention titles that they should have used or read (social desirability), or they only report titles that they have strongly liked or disliked, leaving out other texts that were also used in the actuality of the classroom. So far, all available canon studies can only be approximations to what was really used in the EFL literature classroom (cf. Kirchhoff 2016; Surkamp 2013).

- **the top ten** includes *Macbeth*, *Brave New World*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, *About a Boy*, *Death of a Salesman*, *The Tortilla Curtain*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Animal Farm*; these quite traditional texts, however, make up only 36% of the total, which means that these ten titles do not present the overall majority of texts that are generally read; Kirchhoff concludes: "It thus seems there is no hidden canon" (Kirchhoff 2016: 234);
- a quarter of the texts were **contemporary**, i.e. the author is still alive, e.g. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Moon Palace*, *About a Boy*, *Holes*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*, or *Dead Poets Society* (ibid.: 237-238);
- 11,61% of all texts come from **female writers**, with Harper Lee and Nancy Kleinbaum being the most widely read female authors; but still, one must conclude that female writers are underrepresented; Kirchhoff's demand is clear: "We need to arrive at a many-voiced choice of literature that gives students access to categories of gender and sex that shape our experience" (ibid.: 239);
- 4% of the texts fall into the category of '**New English Literatures**': it seems that English literature studied at secondary school has ceased to be exclusively British and American literature, but even though "English literatures worthwhile of receiving attention in school are now spread across the globe" (Kirchhoff 2016: 239), only 4% of the texts mentioned come from outside the UK or the USA;
- when it comes to genre, the results show that there are 61% narrative texts, 30% dramatic texts, and only 6% poetic texts.

Even though Kirchhoff's study has shown that the overall range of texts and text types that are actually read in the classroom has increasingly diversified, it appears that the latest innovations – often demanded or suggested by academics (e.g. feminist or postcolonial literatures) – have not fully filtered down into the reality of the classroom.

As it turns out, one must not confuse the classroom reality with the demands and suggestions that come from academia, as their transfer into the EFL literature classroom might be accompanied by a certain time lag. Nonetheless, the emerging new interest in academia to shift the range of texts towards including a broader horizon of literature in the *near and potential future* is noteworthy. The following trends can be observed:

- there are gender-informed calls for a revision of the literature selection, which seek to establish a wider range of female authors in the literature classroom (e.g. Decke-Cornill 2010b); similarly, there have been suggestions to include a wider range of LGBT-focused literature (e.g. König 2015a; Merse 2015a, 2014, 2013);
- a greater acknowledgement of and interest in postcolonial and transcultural literatures, for example *British Fictions of Migration* (e.g. Freitag-Hild 2010b) or 'New English Literatures' (Eisenmann/Grimm/Volkman 2010a; Doff/Schulze-Engler 2011a);

- the increasing interest in “[g]oing global” (Lütge 2012b: 5) moves into view those literary texts that provide a source of engagement with global issues (e.g. Alter 2012, 2015b; Lütge 2015a, 2015b);
- a further trend is summarised by Paran: “It is now widely accepted that there is no clear demarcation between literary and nonliterary texts but rather a cline of literariness. [...] This has resulted in a widening of genres that are being used” (2006: 2-3); this current development is partly mirrored in Kirchhoff’s study; this change makes it possible to include a wider repertoire of literary texts, including children’s and young adult literature, fairy tales and their retellings, popular songs, autobiographical narratives and films and filmed versions of literary works.

Even though one can observe slight shifts in ‘the literary canon’, and also an increasing tendency in academia to access new literatures, it remains an elusive question how open the literature selection truly is in view of representing a more balanced and more varied range of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’. When Kirchhoff demands that “[w]e need to arrive at a many-voiced choice of literature” which allows students to gain insights into various lifeworlds and experiences, the urgent call is to spell out the ‘many-voicedness’ against more lines of difference and Otherness, including, for example, the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender protagonists in literature.

Up to then, I call for researchers and teachers to constantly reflect if their choice of texts mirrors more likely “open-ended text ensembles” or still a “hermetic and sacrosanct set of texts” (Delanoy 2016: 20). My assumption so far is that the recent tendency to acknowledge a greater variety of texts and text types, evoked by the decline of the traditional canon, is causing the landscape of text selection to shift. It is within this increasingly shifting and flexible rubric that literature representing a greater variety of differences and Othernesses can potentially be included in the near future. The expansion of text types (e.g. films, pop songs) that is occurring simultaneously can offer alternative sources for making differences and Othernesses accessible other than in one single text. Here, Decke-Cornill’s (1994) reflection on combining a sequence of various (literary) texts into a larger ‘didactic text’ can be purposefully reinvigorated. Her idea entails that a certain piece of literature is read centrally in the classroom and provides the backbone for engaging with certain themes and topics, but that this central literary text is complemented with a range of other texts that explore the same issues from different and conflicting viewpoints. Even if the central text is a canonised or set piece of literature, the addition of various satellite texts that orbit around this central text can serve to introduce more flexibility and tension to counter what one might perceive as the one-sidedness of a single, traditional text. Especially when it comes to complex and possibly controversial themes – which can in particular be embodied by contested cultural differences and Othernesses – this ensemble of texts can bring an enhanced and balanced multivoicedness into the classroom that would allow learners to approach their ‘new’ experience of Otherness and difference from various vantage points. Above all, such a carefully composed text ensemble can serve to overcome the danger that the representation of cultural difference or Otherness that a single text offers is taken to be ‘true’ and ‘monolithic’.

3.3 Aspects of Teaching Literature: Approaching Difference

Now it is one thing to include a wider variety of texts in the EFL literature classroom, or to acknowledge the unique potential of fictional texts to lead learners into new worlds that are different from what they are used to. The other aspect that needs to be considered is that a text must be brought to life in the classroom so that its unique potential to experience Otherness and difference can become accessible to learners. Therefore, it is perhaps as important to choose a suitable text with a balanced representation of Otherness as it is to teach and use that text in the classroom. When Bredella cautions us not to conceptualise learners or readers as “detached observers” (Bredella 2008: 16), and Paran (2006: 5) adds that we must move away from a narrow view of teaching literature in which only the teacher can help students to access a text’s meanings (which are simultaneously often seen as fixed), then the path is open to think about a literature methodology that can unlock a text’s potential and engage learners in discovering what the literary text they are reading offers them. Up to now, TEFL discourse on literature teaching has produced a sound array of methodologies which can roughly be grouped into process-oriented approaches (e.g. Lütge 2013c; Nünning/Surkamp 2008), analytical, action- and product-oriented approaches (e.g. Nünning/Surkamp 2013), and also resisting reading (e.g. Delanoy 2016; Decke-Cornill 2007). In the main, these approaches highlight “[the] increasing awareness of the importance of the learner’s role in the teaching of texts [that] was triggered under the influence of reception theory and reader response criticism” (Lütge 2013c: 191). Similarly, also Nünning and Surkamp (2013: 148) highlight that these approaches set the learners and their creative and emotional meaning-making processes centre-stage. In the following, I will attempt to provide a brief typological overview of these approaches to teaching literature and link them to the notion of experiencing Otherness and difference. At the same time, it needs to be acknowledged that these methodological approaches are not mutually exclusive, but can indeed overlap.

A process-oriented approach aims at initiating and supporting learners in understanding and making meaning of what a literary text offers, e.g. in view of language, content, literary devices and modes of meaning-creation, or its cultural implications (cf. Nünning/Surkamp 2008: 71). Ultimately, the mainstay of this approach is to encourage students to express their personal views on the text and get them to interact with the text (cf. Lütge 2013c: 191). The process-oriented approach is traditionally grouped into three phases (cf. Nünning/Surkamp 2008: 71-82):

- The **pre-reading phase** is intended to prepare the learner for reading the text, e.g. by attuning them to the unknown world the text displays, to install a sense of curiosity and motivation, to have learners express their own experience in view of a text’s topic, to provide necessary contextual clues, or to develop a certain expectation for reading the text. Example activities include, but are not limited to, using a visual stimulus or the first line of the text to evoke associations, or providing a short non-fictional text about a similar topic. The length of these activities should be limited and not take away too much from the text as such.

- The **while-reading phase** serves the purpose to encourage the learner to continue reading, enter into a dialogue with the text, work creatively with the text, or secure understanding, e.g. in view of the plot development, character constellation, or formal devices. Individual activities can include forming hypotheses (What is going to happen next? Were prior predictions true?), accessing the text creatively (e.g. by developing a freeze frame to illustrate a character constellation), and reflecting on the reading experience.
- The **post-reading phase** gives the learners space to discuss their reading experience in greater depths, e.g. to voice aspects in the texts that struck them. The communication that ensues after reading the text should provide an open atmosphere so that individual viewpoints and interpretations can be negotiated. Typically, the post-reading phase involves developing creative products that in some way or another work with the original text, e.g. to rewrite a scene from another perspective, to transfer the story to another medium, or to recast the text with different character constellations or identities.

While this three-partite structure is not meant to suggest that all these phases form a strict corset that teachers and learners need to stick to, it allows the learners to engage deeply with a text. This can enhance the learners' perception of Otherness and difference negotiated in a given text, but it can also provide a pathway into a text whose depiction of Otherness and difference might be challenging. Furthermore, the variety of activities makes it possible to approach or work with a text sensitively and subtly. If, for examples, learners feel inhibited to speak about a possibly controversial experience while engaging with a text's Otherness, they might initially resort to silent methods (e.g. writing down one's feelings, and then deciding what to add to a discussion).

Product- and action-oriented approaches to literary texts seek to move away from strict and cognitive analyses in which a text is dissected to get behind its 'true core' or the author's alleged intention, and to appreciate its literary beauty after all formal elements have been collected and described (cf. Paran 2006: 4). This is not meant to say that a close reading of a text does no longer have any value, as, for example, a close scrutiny to individual words or dialogues might be called for when learners are to grasp how a text functions to 'other' a person. Whereas action-oriented approaches aim at activating learners, e.g. in getting them to act out a scene, transferring a literary text into another medium, or developing a visual collage that mirrors the reading experience, product-oriented tasks usually include writing new texts ('products') about the literary text that learners are reading or have read. The range of these activities can be mapped onto the process-oriented approach described above and provides a rich treasure cove for a variety of ways to engage learners more deeply with the text (cf. Nünning/Surkamp 2013). For example, a text about a marginalised or discriminated against protagonist can be restored by learners if they invent more positive alternative endings. Another idea would be to take a text with a heterosexual plot, e.g. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and invite learners to re-write the heterosexual romance from the perspective of a lesbian couple. Another idea would be to fill the 'gaps' in meaning that a text creates. By drawing on Iser (1987), Bredella stresses that "there are gaps in a literary text which the reader must fill and bridge in order to understand it. The reader must supplement what the text left unsaid" (Bredella

2008: 20). This characteristic of literary texts can be harnessed if learners fill the gaps with their own hypotheses regarding what might have happened in that ‘gap’. In the main, the range of these activities aims at involving the learners emotionally and personally in a text and sustaining their reading experience (cf. Bredella 2008: 14). Since the breadth of possible activities might seem overburdening, one might be advised to follow Paran’s advice that “the methodology used must be chosen after considering the text, the learners, the aim of the lesson, and the teacher” (2006: 6).

Resisting reading allows for a power-critical approach to a literary text. When learners learn to resist what a text offers, e.g. in terms of language or cultural content, or the majority position it represents, they can intervene in a text’s one-sidedness or monologicity (cf. Decke-Cornill 2007: 254). Resisting reading, I argue, can ideally be harnessed in the EFL literature classroom when ‘traditional’ texts are read that contain normative cultural positions, e.g. heterosexuality or a bi-polar gender order. Methodologically speaking, learners can *intervene* in such a text by inserting alternative and non-normative viewpoints into a text. If a text, for example, represents a power relation in which a protagonist who is Other is marginalised or experiences discrimination, then learners could invent alternative relations that are less oppressive. What follows is that resisting reading can carve out a space for finer and more nuanced tunes that might otherwise be lost in a text’s overpowering one-sidedness. Attempts at resisting reading can be linked to the methodologies sketched out above, e.g. as a product-oriented activity in a post-reading phase. The example of resisting reading, but also the other methodological ideas described in this sub-chapter, show that ‘just’ choosing a text that is inclusive of Otherness or difference is in itself not sufficient. To allow for extended and sustained learning experiences in which learners can deeply engage with a text’s Otherness, a sensitively and sensibly assorted inventory of methodologies is called for.

4 And What about Gender? New Impulses for Diversity and Difference

The previous two chapters have shown that TEFL discourse is generally renegotiable towards including a greater diversity of differences and Othernesses into the scope of cultural and literary learning. At the same time, however, there are also limitations within TEFL in view of the markers of cultural diversity that are actually focused on, still causing exclusions and silences. Considering the tension between these inherent limitations and conceptual openings, I will now turn to gender-informed research within TEFL and argue that the increasing momentum ‘gender’ has gained in TEFL discourse can be understood as a specific and insightful *case in point* for a particular category of socio-cultural difference that has gradually become a visible and recognised part of the discipline. In saying this, however, I do not want to deter from the intense theoretical struggles and recognition claims gender-oriented research had to pass through in order to legitimise the integration of gender into the scope of EFL education. It is precisely because of this legitimisation process gender in TEFL has so far passed through why a close investigation of gender-oriented research promises to offer a highly valuable contribution to my own research angle. In adopting a meta-perspective on the discourse of gender in TEFL, I seek to retrace how gender has managed to legitimise its position in the field of TEFL. I assume that the insights that are to be expected here can be generally useful when it comes to arguing for a more diverse range of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ that TEFL can offer an epistemic space.

Against the backdrop of these considerations, I will investigate the intersection of gender and TEFL that will unfold in this chapter as follows. At first, I will retrace the legitimisation processes and recognition claims gender-oriented research in TEFL had to pass through to gain the recognition it has today. This will also include a descriptive overview of the publication history of gender in TEFL, which is indicative of the developments within this specific field. Then I will take stock of the various research directions that are circulating under the umbrella of ‘gender’, and identify those directions that seem most relevant for bringing in a focus on ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’. In the third part, I will further retrace how gender has legitimised its position in the realm of TEFL, this time with a view to recently emerging conceptual frameworks that make the complexities of gender accessible to concrete classroom implementations. In the last section, I will identify current re-negotiations within the field of gender itself, thus moving beyond focusing on gender as a ‘different difference’ in its own right, instead broadening up the view towards ‘new’ ‘different differences’ and ‘other Others’ that are beginning to circulate in the discourse of gender in TEFL.

4.1 Gender – A ‘New’ Category Gaining Ground in TEFL

Still in 2004, Helene Decke-Cornill (2004: 181) remarked that a cluelessness regarding gender in the didactic profession did not qualify as a lack of professional competence, and also Laurenz Volkmann (2007: 162) observes that being gender-blind in TEFL, at least for a long time, has more likely been the norm than the exception. In view of the implications of gender-informed didactic research and Gender Studies on actual classroom practice, Volkmann even came to the conclusion that gender-oriented research in academia and actual teaching practice thoroughly informed by gender approaches are “worlds apart” (Volkmann 2007: 162). This neglect of gender issues in TEFL seems to stand in stark contrast to the importance and influential omnipresence of gender in everyday life. Gender is an all-pervasive and powerful category of cultural difference that affects human existence and our perception of ourselves and others so fundamentally that a non-gendered way of being seems impossible, as Decke-Cornill notices (2004: 181). Indeed, the whole weight of the theories I explored in the first chapter seem to culminate in ‘gender’: It is a dichotomising category that deeply enshrines ‘women’ and ‘men’ as clearly distinguishable identities into a gender order that is commonly taken to be a ‘regime of truth’, to use Foucault’s terminology. It creates difference at the social and discursive level by determining what is a legitimate gender expression, thereby producing inclusions and exclusion that are regulated by influential social norms and expectations. At the same time, however, the rigidities of gender are increasingly being contested and shifted by those who craft a life outside of a strict gender order or those who counter the hierarchical opposition of gender by striving for more equitable gender relations. On the one hand, this view points to the dynamics and contestations *within* the difference category of gender, which would indeed provide meaningful and relevant thematic vistas from which to explore gender vis-à-vis culture and literature in the EFL classroom. Following Volkmann’s and Decke-Cornill’s concerns raised above, however, it appears that such a perspective has more likely been the exception than the rule. On the other hand, it must also be noted that the very category of gender *itself* can become marginalised when other categories of difference are given more attention in a specific context. This implies that a gender perspective might not only be absent in the classroom, but also in TEFL research at large – a charge that has frequently been filed, as I will show below.

Yet what is the current state of gender in EFL and foreign language education, and in how far has the research carried out in these areas incorporated and responded to the specific category of gender over time? Speaking from the perspective of the year 2016, König, Lewin and Surkamp summarise the state of gender-oriented research in TEFL as follows:

Although gender is such a relevant topic for pupils, and although the foreign language classroom offers great potential for teaching it, surprisingly little has been published on the matter. Until recently, only a handful of publications have approached the subject extensively – the interest, however, seems to be rising. (König/Lewin/Surkamp 2016: 22)

While this quote indicates that gender has an inherent value for TEFL – an assumption that I will explore in greater depth below (cf. chapter 4.3) –, it also hints at the ambivalent status of gender in TEFL. From today’s perspective, the interest in gender-informed approaches to TEFL

is on the rise, as a more recent wave of publication shows. From a diachronic perspective, however, the past state of research and publications can rather pessimistically be described as precarious. This mirrors Decke-Cornill and Volkmann's remark that institutionalised foreign language teaching and its aligned research "have almost continuously ignored gender relations" (2007b: 7), and in a similar vein, Decke-Cornill (2010a: 85) cautions that gender in foreign language education has long been an under-researched field. It must be noted that the current position gender has assumed in TEFL research and in the EFL classroom has not come about in a self-evident and easy way – its position had to be legitimised and struggled for in intense recognition claims.

The precarious position of gender in TEFL and the legitimisation process that ensued are best encapsulated in the following statement by Helene Decke-Cornill, who struggled intensely to carve out a space of greater acceptance and acknowledgement of gender in TEFL research and school practice. In 2004, Decke-Cornill reflected on the incorporation of gender into literary didactics in TEFL in comparison to the uptake of intercultural learning:

Der letzte große Theorieschub in der Literaturdidaktik ist der breiten Rezeption der interkulturellen Diskussion und der Thematisierung des Fremdverstehens zu verdanken. Dagegen wird das Theorieangebot der *Gender Studies* nicht systematisch genutzt, obwohl darin seit langem Differenz, Heterogenität, Fremdheit und Hybridisierung als Schlüsselthemen reflektiert werden. Anders als die interkulturelle Diskussion, die rasch und auf breiter und *letztlich* konsensueller Basis integriert wurde und für das Selbstverständnis der Literaturdidaktik heute unverzichtbar ist, hat eine vergleichbare Rezeption der Geschlechtertheorie nicht stattgefunden. Während sich eine komplexe interkulturelle Gesprächskultur entwickeln konnte, fehlt bis heute ein Forum für geschlechtertheoretische Fragestellungen. (Decke-Cornill 2004: 191-192; emphasis in the original)

Decke-Cornill's reflection indicates that gender as a focal point of foreign language education, and here literature didactics in particular, has not easily been integrated and taken up, assigning it to a marginal status in the discipline. While gender-oriented researchers struggled intensely to make the voice of gender heard, the discussion that revolved around intercultural learning soon became a consensual component of EFL and foreign language education. This is ever more surprising because both approaches are similarly concerned with issues of cultural difference, heterogeneity or being Other. What this calls for is a thorough integration of gender-related issues into the scope of cultural learning, rather than conceptualising both strands as separate discourse domains, with one being more widely integrated into the discipline than the other. Nonetheless, Decke-Cornill's critical observation from 2004, compared to the more established position of gender in TEFL today, indicates that gender has been a particularly contested field of cultural difference that had to legitimise its position to achieve the more mainstream position it has today.

A look into the publication history of gender-oriented research in TEFL underlines Decke-Cornill's observation. When retracing how gender moved into the focus of attention in the field of English and foreign language didactics, what emerges is that gender has by no means always been a widely incorporated component of TEFL research, let alone the classroom. Decke-Cornill and Volkmann's (2007a) edited volume *Gender Studies and Foreign Language Teaching* from 2007 has for a long time been the only available, comprehensive publication that

discusses various aspects and approaches of foreign language teaching from a gender-critical viewpoint (cf. König/Lewin/Surkamp 2016: 23). Other publications before this date that incorporate Gender Studies or feminist viewpoints into their research are few and far between (e.g. Decke-Cornill 2004; Decke-Cornill/Gdaniec 1992; Haas 2001; Kugler-Euerle 1998; Meyer-Zerbst 1989; Rampillon 1986; Schmenk 2002). In her overview article from 2001, Haas observes that the lacking integration of Women's and Gender Studies into English didactics has long been a structural marker of the discipline up to the 1990s: "Angesichts der punktuellen, marginal-additiven Etablierung der Women's und Gender Studies in der Fachwissenschaft verwundert es nicht, daß auch in der Fachdidaktik ihre grundlegende, zentrale Integration noch fehlt" (Haas 2001: 112). Haas links this near-absence to the male dominance in key positions of the profession and the subordinate positions of women, whose possibilities for publications were severely limited, and who were the only ones to turn to Women's and Gender Studies at all (Haas 2001: 106). This mirrors Decke-Cornill's (2010b) observation that the establishment of gender-informed focal points in TEFL research began with a feminist critique of patriarchal structures and the demand for a greater inclusion of women's perspectives, for example in the male-dominated literary canons circulating at schools. If one reads gender-related foreign or English language teaching publications, what one also often finds is an almost automatic reflex reaction that gender does not have an entry on its own in Germany's standard handbook on foreign language teaching, the *Handbuch Fremdsprachenunterricht* (Bausch/Christ/Krumm 2007). This complaint against the absence of gender in this handbook has frequently been filed and reproduced in publications (cf. Haas 2001; Decke-Cornill 2004; Decke-Cornill/Volkman 2007b; Gutenberg 2013; Linke 2012), which Gutenberg takes as a reference point to observe and challenge the general silence of gender issues in foreign language education research, i.e. "[d]as Schweigen der Fremdsprachendidaktik zu Genderthemen" (2013: 109).

This overview of the marginalised position gender has so far had in TEFL illustrates well that the advent of a new theoretical impulse does not translate into full integration and consolidation into the discipline over night. While an ongoing neglect of a valuable new theoretical impulse is certainly irritating for those who are convinced of the inherent potential this new impulse holds in store for TEFL, I do suggest that the lessons learned from the case of gender can generally lead to a more sober and realistic attitude regarding the pace with which a new impulse begins to materialise in the mainstream of research and teaching. Now it is one thing to hint critically at the absence of a certain topic or theoretical impulse in TEFL research and classroom practice, and perhaps such criticism is a first necessary step to raise awareness of a new impulse and achieve its visibility. The other thing is, however, to reflect on the potential of new theoretical impulses for research and practice, to show how their integration into research can yield valuable insights that serve the advancement of the discipline, and to develop conceptual frameworks that facilitate the implementation of a new perspective in teaching practice. Above all, it remains the responsibility of researchers to point out and argue for the relevance of a new theoretical impulse – in this case gender – for TEFL.

While the call for overcoming the "gender lag" (König 2014: 374) has remained, various researchers have worked towards establishing a focus on gender in EFL and foreign

language language education more firmly. Most recently, Elsner and Lohe (2016a) have put forward the latest collection of essays that link gender with language learning, including two introductory articles on gender and TEFL (Elsner/Lohe 2016b; König/Surkamp/Lewin 2016), and a range of other articles that explore various intersections of TEFL and gender (teaching profession, learners, text and media choice, and topic specifications). This edited volume is a timely continuation and consolidation of gender-oriented research that has been moved into greater spotlight by the preceding (and so far only) collection of essays by Volkmann and Decke-Cornill (2007a). What can also be observed is the inclusion of entries on gender in two important available handbooks, one by Decke-Cornill (2010a) in *Metzler Lexikon Fremdsprachendidaktik* (Surkamp 2010), and the second one by Schmenk (2010) in *Handbuch Fremdsprachendidaktik* (Hallet/Königs 2010a). These entries provide a solid balance to the invisibility of gender in the *Handbuch Fremdsprachenunterricht* (Bausch/Christ/Krumm 2007) – whose latest forthcoming edition still will not have a section or entry on gender, as Elsner and Lohe (2016b: 9) report. When it comes to dissertations, Haas (2012: 144) observes that only two out of 49 publications started between 2006 and 2010 include a focus on gender: Özkul (2011) on the impact of gender on the decision to enter the teaching profession, and Nowoczien (2012) on the incorporation of gender-sensitive approaches into drama-based teaching. Most recently, König (forthcoming) has completed her study on the potential of the EFL literature classroom to reflect on gender. Since 2010, a more recent wave of gender-related publications indicates that there is an emerging interest in gender-related issues in TEFL. Decke-Cornill (2010b), Gutenberg (2013), König (2012, 2014, 2015a, 2015c), König/Surkamp (2010), Lewin (2015), Lütge (2012a), Mittag (2015) and Starck (2013) lay a sound theoretical foundation for linking explorations and reflections of gender in the classroom with aspects of cultural learning, the use of literature, and language. These articles are also insightful in that they present a broad material basis on which to base gender-informed teaching, including literary texts, films, images, and advertisements, only to name a few. Furthermore, two special issues of the practice-oriented journals *Der Fremdsprachliche Unterricht Englisch* (König/Surkamp/Decke-Cornill 2015a) and *Praxis Fremdsprachenunterricht* (Thaler 2009) include a wide range of articles and teaching suggestions that make the issue of gender an explicit and accessible topic for EFL classrooms from year 5 up to the upper secondary level of school education.

What unites the majority of these publications is a principled and self-evident reliance on Gender Studies as a link discipline. Indeed, a theoretically informed understanding of gender is indispensable to avoid a trivialisation of research or lesson proposals (cf. Decke-Cornill/Volkmann 2007b: 7). What is fundamental to a gender-informed perspective is an understanding of the constructedness of gender as opposed to biological sex, meaning that gender is shaped by and constructed through socio-cultural discourses rather than being a natural given (cf. Elsner/Lohe 2016b: 12; Benitt/Kurtz 2016: 169). The stress on the discursive becomes particularly evident in Butler's notion of gender performativity, which highlights that "what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body" (Butler 2006 [1990]: xvi). As such, what we perceive to be gender is not the result of an inner essence, but the effect of repeated

enactments of gender that congeal over time into what we believe gender ‘is’ (cf. *ibid.*: 45; Jagose 1996: 87). In proposing this, Butler troubled the commonly held assumption that gender is “either a natural manifestation of sex or a cultural constant that no human agency [can] seek to revise” (2006 [1990]: xxi). At the same time, however, this does not mean that gender is completely freed from any normative pressures, or that one can simply live outside the culturally regulated performative acts of gender (cf. König 2015c: 169). For the EFL classroom, the exciting impetus is to have students engage with both the discursive construction of gender and with the cultural norms that have congealed over time to constitute what gender is. Far from seeing gender as deterministic, such a view can sensitise and open up the field of TEFL to a multitude of gender expressions. Elsner and Lohe also detect a “transformative potential, not only to reflect upon one’s own identity, but also to question the assumptions that we and others make” (2016b: 9), which they align with the various diversities one finds in today’s classrooms.

Additionally, Decke-Cornill (2010b: 9) calls to mind that the simple differentiation between gender as a socio-cultural and discursive construct on the one hand, and biological sex as a natural, prediscursive entity on the other hand that allegedly requires no further problematisation or theorisation, needs to be called into question, too. By drawing on Judith Butler (1993) and Krauß (2001), Decke-Cornill (2010b: 9) points out that also ‘biological sex’ can be understood as a social construct. It cannot come into existence outside of socially constituted meaning-making processes, norms, power relationships and discursive regimes of truth. For Butler, then, sex is not to be understood “as a bodily given on which the construct of gender is artificially imposed, but as a cultural norm which governs the materialization of bodies” (Butler 1993: 2-3). Hence, also ‘sex’ must be thought of as “indissociable from discursive demarcations” (*ibid.*: 1), as “part of a regulatory practice that produces the body it governs” (*ibid.*). In effect, as König stresses (2014: 367), gender and sex collapse into each other, so that there is only a discursively and socially produced gender. In transferring also the body and the sex/gender divide to deconstructive theorisation, it has been shown that the differentiation of sex/gender is in itself a power regime that normalises ‘sex’, and consequently, also a binary gender order and heterosexuality, rendering all identities that fall outside of its legibility as illegitimate and unintelligible. In Butler’s words, “the regulatory norms of ‘sex’ work in a performative fashion [...] to materialize the body’s sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative” (1993: 2). What follows from this complexity, which could only be sketched out briefly in this cursory address, is that to think about gender in the context of TEFL, and to invite gender theory into the theorisation of TEFL, constitutes a research area that goes beyond, for example, demanding the inclusion of texts by female authors into the literature curriculum, but is also called for to engage with gender and heteronormativity as regulatory practices.

The implications of theoretical understandings of gender for EFL and foreign language education become evident in Decke-Cornill’s sound and encompassing working definition of ‘gender’, mirroring the theoretical complexities of the term:

In der einschlägigen fremdsprachendidaktischen Diskussion wird ‘Gender’ heute als kulturell-diskursiv hervorgebrachte und subjektiv ausgestaltete, performative Konstruktion verstanden,

die als normativer gesellschaftlicher Ordnungsentwurf jede Identitätskonstitution beeinflusst und in komplexer Weise mit anderen gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen interagiert. (Decke-Cornill 2010a: 83)

In evaluation of Decke-Cornill's definition, the scope of gender-informed research en'genders' and requires a broad array of potential focal points (cf. Decke-Cornill/Volkman 2007a; Haas 2012; Linke 2012; König/Lewin/Surkamp 2016; Elsner/Lohe 2016a). Its link to the discursive and the cultural domain allows for explorations of how gender is produced through language and signifying practices. Gender as a category that is deeply cultural can also be transferred to, or even must be thought of as a constitutive element of, cultural learning (cf. König 2012; Lütge 2012a). Its ramifications for the constitution of identity also connect gender to identity-oriented approaches in TEFL, where an engagement with gender can shed light on the complexity and multi-layeredness of individual identities (cf. Lütge 2013a). Reflections on gender can have an unsettling or empowering effect on the learner's personality, either by calling into question naturalised assumptions and expectations about gender, or by affirming diverse expressions and experiences of gendered lives (e.g. König 2015a). From a theoretical perspective, gender-informed approaches to TEFL would also remain incomplete if they did not include a deconstructive stance on gender, including a critical thematisation of the bipolar gender order, heteronormativity and 'Other' gender identities (e.g. Decke-Cornill 2004, 2010b). Since teachers and learners as the participants of foreign language education are gendered beings, research on gender as a structural and historical aspect of TEFL also moves into focus, e.g. in researching the alleged feminisation of the teaching discipline, or gender differences in learning (e.g. Haas 2007; Doff/Klippel 2007; Schmenk 2002). A key issue of thinking about gender in TEFL also revolves around how gender can become an explicit thematic focus of exploration in the EFL classroom so that the complexities of gender can be harnessed in challenging and engaging teaching scenarios that make the experience of gender accessible to learners (e.g. the practice-oriented articles collected in König/Surkamp/Decke-Cornill 2015a). This focus on practice also points to questions of learning objectives, i.e. what is it that is to be learned when gender becomes an issue in the *foreign language* classroom? Existing conceptualisations of objectives currently seem to point into the direction of discourse competence (*Diskursfähigkeit*), critical reflection, and awareness (cf. Volkman 2016; König 2015a; König/Surkamp/Decke-Cornill 2015b). What these current developments reflect is the deep concern of linking gender issues sensibly and sensitively with the scope of EFL and foreign language education, thus seeking to establish and legitimise gender as an integral component of the discipline by drawing on Gender Studies.

When gender and the EFL classroom once were 'worlds apart', but by now have become a nascent focus in TEFL research and practice, then the incorporation of this particular category of difference is a telling example of how 'different differences' and 'other Others' can gain increasing momentum in EFL and foreign language education – even against all odds of initial skepticism and non-recognition. On the one hand, the specific example of gender shows that TEFL is generally speaking a rubric that is broad and flexible enough to attune itself to a wider range of differences and Othernesses, which mirrors the current openings and reorientations in conceptualisations of cultural and literary learning discussed above. On the

other hand, it is interesting to me with what particular concerns, focal points, conceptual ideas and lines of reasoning gender-oriented research has managed to fill the ‘gender gap’ in the open rubric that TEFL offers without coming across as an arbitrary ‘add-on’. Against the backdrop of these considerations, I will continue with taking stock of the various research directions that are circulating under the umbrella of ‘gender’ and that have contributed to legitimising the relevance of gender-oriented research in TEFL.

4.2 Directions and Aspects of Gender Research in TEFL

The on-going legitimisation of gender in EFL and foreign language education can be retraced against the backdrop of the various directions gender-informed research has taken over the past decades. Indeed, gender has been employed as a theoretical vantage point from which to research distinct aspects of the discipline. In what follows, I aim at presenting an overview of the various directions and aspects of gender-informed research in EFL and foreign language education (cf. Decke-Cornill 2010a; Haas 2012; Linke 2012; Benitt/Kurtz 2016). I argue that the academic rigour that becomes apparent here gradually contributed to consolidating and legitimising gender as a distinct vista of research and practice. The differentiated ways in which gender is discussed and researched include the historic dimension of gender and foreign language learning and teaching, the representation of gender in coursebooks and teaching materials, the link between gender and the literary canon, the research of gender differences in learning foreign languages, and what can be summarised as the gradual incorporation of gender into the classroom as an explicit topic, which in most of the cases clearly favours a systematic turn to Gender Studies as a link discipline of TEFL. In presenting each of these strands individually, I will seek to evaluate their usefulness for my specific research focus on ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ in TEFL.

Research on the historical dimension of gender in foreign language instructional settings is covered by Haas (2007, 2016), Doff (2002, 2005, 2009, 2016) and jointly by Klippel and Doff (2007). The key interest of historical research lies in unmasking and identifying in what ways contemporary conceptions of gender influence foreign language learning and teaching (cf. Schmenk 2002: 267). Haas, for example, illuminates the specific ways in which languages and language teaching have developed as a special domain of women. She goes back to the Middle Ages to show how, from the early stages of foreign language teaching onwards, the concept of ‘the mother tongue’ – as the first language that children learnt from their mothers – has served to construct foreign language teaching only “as a mere semi-profession, as an extension of the domestic education provided by the mother” (Haas 2007: 32). Historical research in the field retraces how the ‘feminisation’ of the language teaching profession continued into the 19th century. This ‘feminisation’ contributed to establishing the perceived link between femininity/maternity and teaching and learning foreign languages, which was “less and less acknowledged as an *intellectual* achievement” (ibid.: 38). When the second half of the 19th century saw the expansion of the public educational system in Germany, a gendered division emerged when it comes to modern foreign languages (e.g. English and French), with boys and girls being taught differently regarding text choice, teaching methods, and language aspects that

were focused on (cf. Doff/Klippel 2007; Doff 2002). Boys were taught the formal aspects of language with cognitive approaches such as the grammar-translation-method (mirroring the male privilege of learning Latin or Greek), whereas girls' foreign language education centralised on conversation, communication and real-world content. What seems surprisingly modern from today's perspective caused specific images to develop that associated (and still associate) foreign language teachers, learners and the domain as such with specific feminine traits, ideals or conceptions (Doff 2009; Linke 2012). Such images and associations have not disappeared, and notions of the alleged feminisation of the foreign language teaching profession in particular, and the teaching profession at large, reemerge frequently in public debates (cf. Doff 2009) and influence, for example, the decisions of future teachers regarding their subject choice (cf. Haas 2007; also Viebrock 2016). By way of conclusion, historical research can illuminate the ways in which gender has always been an integral component in the construction of foreign language teaching as a profession, and of foreign language learners as gendered. Its value lies in making visible and conscious the role gender has always had in the construction and constitution of EFL and foreign language education. Historical research also invites us to confront foreign language didactics with the representations or stereotypes of Otherness it might have created and perpetuated over time along the lines of specific cultural differences. Cynthia Nelson, for example, suggests (re)considering in how far language teaching pedagogies, classrooms, and research agendas have collectively been imagined as "monosexual" (2009: 52), thus excluding 'Other' sexual orientations from view.

A focus on the construction of gender is also increasingly interwoven into the research on published instructional materials for foreign or English language learning settings²¹, as Benitt and Kurtz (2016) show in their article in which they present both a collection of existing research and their own small-scale study on that issue. Of particular concern within this gender-informed research area is the question of how gender is represented in instructional materials, often with a particular focus on the coursebook or textbook as the most central object in the vast available range of (sometimes more peripheral) learning and teaching materials. To contextualise the link research establishes between gender representations and instructional materials, I consider it important to understand that such materials (in particular coursebooks) provide learners with a ready-made learning environment consisting of what one might call a 'coursebook microcosm' featuring a plethora of characters (e.g. the coursebook family, circles of friends), settings (e.g. the school, the home, leisure time), storylines, or themes, all of which offer the backdrop for learning the language. But rather than seeing these materials as the innocent source of linguistic forms, new vocabulary, or cultural knowledge, critical materials research looks at instructional materials as

cultural artefacts from which meanings emerge about the language being taught, associating it with particular ways of being, particular varieties of language and ways of using language, and particular sets of values. At the same time, they are also ideological [...] in that the meanings they seek to create tend to endorse and reproduce (although not invariably) existing power

21 For a general overview of research on language learning and teaching materials, may I refer the interested reader to the state-of-the-art article by Tomlinson (2012) in which he provides various points of entry from which to investigate instructional materials. This overview article also includes a review of existing literature in this field.

relations with regard to social class [...], and similarly with regard to race, gender and sexual orientation [...]. (Gray 2013a: 3)

While Gray's position opens up multiple perspectives from which to investigate instructional materials, it pointedly illustrates why published instructional materials are suitable objects of scrutiny that lend themselves reasonably well to gender-critical research, which Gray explicitly mentions as one possible dimension. In view of gender, the question emerges what 'ways of being', what values and norms, or generally speaking, what gendered meanings are represented in materials, e.g. visually in illustrative images, or linguistically in texts, dialogues and instructions. As a "bearer of messages" (Gray 2000: 280), materials can powerfully create or reproduce prevailing and stereotypical gender orders and normativities (cf. Gray 2013a: 4) and thus construct a learning microcosm for the learner with a specific gendered view on the world, e.g. by showing women and men in gender-stereotypical roles. Benitt and Kurtz take a similar position and argue that "representations of gender in textbooks and other teaching materials and media used in EFL classrooms can have a certain impact on the learners' perceptions of gender roles and norms" (2016: 171), which makes looking at gender representations in instructional materials a critical issue, especially in order to find out what gender orders and norms are potentially reinforced or reproduced.

One approach to researching gender in coursebooks is quantitative in nature and aims at taking measure of the numbers of female and male characters²². Whereas older studies from the 1980s (e.g. Porreca 1984) showed that male characters typically outnumbered female characters (cf. also Benitt/Kurtz 2016: 171; Guttenberg 2013: 113), a more recent study by Bittner, in which she investigated six EFL textbooks for students of year 5 published for the German market, shows that the gender ratio between male and female characters is well-balanced (2011: 35). Also Benitt and Kurtz come to the conclusion that there has been "a substantial shift in the visibility of female characters [...] – girls and women are becoming more visible in a variety of life contexts" (2016: 187). From my opinion, however, just measuring gender in coursebooks quantitatively is in itself of limited value, as even the most well-balanced coursebook might have outrageously stereotypical gender representations in it²³. Also Bittner (2011) cautions against purely quantitative approaches, in particular because there might be more subtle mechanisms at work that still reproduce stereotypical gender representations in coursebooks (e.g. regarding the topics that girls in coursebooks talk about). Therefore, qualitative approaches seem called for to arrive at more nuanced insights about how gender is represented.

22 Parreca (1984), for example, uses the categories of visibility/omission (i.e. the general ratio of women to men to show in how far women are numerically omitted or visibly present in texts and images) and firstness (i.e. the order in which women or men are mentioned first in a given sequence or text) in her quantitative analysis of 15 ESL textbooks.

23 This is, of course, not to imply that women should be numerically underrepresented or that it does not matter if coursebooks are dominated by male characters. The importance of numerically balanced representation of women and men is emphasized by Porreca: "When females do not appear as often as males in the text (as well as in the illustrations which serve to reinforce the text), the implicit message is that women's accomplishments, or that they themselves as human beings, are not important enough to be included" (Porreca 1984: 706). I do claim, however, that the numerically equal representation of women and men is just one factor worth considering – the qualitative representation of men and women (e.g. in occupational roles) is at least as important.

Typical qualitative approaches explore in how far certain groups of people (e.g. people with a certain gender) are misrecognised by stereotypical or also demeaning representations, e.g. the sexist representation of women (cf. Gray 2013b: 6). In studies such as the ones by Bittner (2011) and Benitt/Kurtz (2016), the researchers identify certain topic areas to explore if these contain stereotypical gender ascriptions, e.g. sports, hobbies and leisure time activities, outer appearance (clothing, body postures, haircut), school subjects, household duties, jobs and professions, or families. Bittner and Kurtz take a diachronic perspective and look at ten coursebooks that were published between 1957 and 2015 for the German market. Their close analysis of texts and pictures reveals that the representation in the textbooks analysed has changed considerably over time, but that traces of “outdated conceptions of normality and normativity and stereotypical representations of masculinity and femininity” can still be found (2016: 187), e.g. when it comes to hobbies, outer appearance, or professional occupations. Bittner’s (2011) study draws a more varied picture, which most likely has to do with her broader set of data of *current* textbooks than investigated by Benitt and Kurtz²⁴. She notices, for example, a reversal of stereotypes when it comes to school subjects or jobs (e.g. with boys who like English as a school subject) and no reproduction of gendered norms when it comes to technology use, but she also finds mild stereotyping in some books when it comes to household duties or leisure activities and sports (Bittner 2011: 40-48). In none of the textbooks analysed is there a demeaning representation of women and men, and it can also be concluded that gendered stereotypes are not as alarmingly present as they used to be.

What both studies show, however, is a strong reproduction of the gendered order as *dichotomous*, with (almost always) unambiguous girls/women and boys/men. This attribution becomes possible through distinguishable outer appearances, so that coursebooks construct the norm of either having to be male or female, leaving no space for diverse other and non-binary gender expressions (esp. Bittner 2011: 38)²⁵. In addition to that, Bittner (2011: 48-49) as well as Benitt and Kurtz (2016: 187) critically remark that the coursebook world established in the samples is almost exclusively defined by heterosexual norms (e.g. in families, relationships, or flirts), with almost no visible and explicit representation of LGBTIQ people or relationships. Only in one coursebook from 2015 (*Notting Hill Gate*) did Benitt and Kurtz find an example of an implied homosexual relationship between two women. While I will further problematise this

24 Bittner takes a synchronic perspective and looks at six coursebooks that were published between 2005 and 2007, thus putting together a corpus of books with more current exemplars than investigated by Benitt and Kurtz, who include one book from 2015, one from 2000, four from the 1990s, and four books from 1957 to 1970 in their diachronic analysis.

25 To add a more critical note here, it must be said that visual representations of men and women can in principle allow for various gendered interpretations, and also Bittner says that, when looking at people in pictures individually, a clear attribution is sometimes difficult. It appears, however, that the gendered representations of people become less ambiguous when looking at the overall construction of the coursebook, which then tends to harden the impression of a clear-cut gender binary of female and male. Further pitfalls of gendered representations, I argue, relate to the inclusion, depiction and recognition of trans* people in coursebooks. If, for example, there is a girl who is transgender and passes successfully as a boy, it is difficult to ‘read’ this person as being transgender instead of being male, unless it were made explicitly clear (e.g. in accompanying texts) that this person is transgender. Generally, this points to the difficult nuances of representing people in coursebooks with identities that do not fit neatly into the schemata of heteronormativity, which I will critically explore further in chapter 8.

almost complete invisibility of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) people, themes and relationships in chapter 8 alongside discussing other issues in-depth that are at stake when aiming at ‘queering’ coursebooks, this increased interest in non-heteronormative phenomena indicates a turn towards looking at gender (and sexuality) in more diverse and complex ways within the area of materials research (cf. also Gray 2013b). With instructional materials such as textbooks constituting a major material factor of institutionalised foreign language teaching, their close investigation can shed a nuanced light on how cultural differences are represented in the coursebook. In particular, materials research can identify in how far certain groups of people are ‘othered’ – either by excluding them completely, marginalising them in terms of quantitative representation, or misrepresenting them qua stereotypes. It needs to be seen, however, that a coursebook is not just an inert material, but something that is actually *used* in the classroom. Consequently, a coursebook and its contents can be contested or turned on its head when teachers and learners approach it with a critical lens and make the coursebook a deliberate object of critique. Most recently, such an open approach to engaging learners in analysing the norms and gendered representation in their coursebook has been suggested by Hermann-Cohen (2015). He presents a list of questions (e.g. What do the girls do in your English book?, What do the boys do?, What hobbies do they have?, How do boys and girls look?, What kinds of families are represented?) that provide a substantial scaffold for learners to detect gender constructions in the coursebook they use, and reflect on the representations that are conveyed.

A similar concern for the representation and inclusion of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ can be mapped onto critical gender-oriented research, often with a decidedly feminist perspective, that addresses and unmasks the one-sidedness of the literary canon in terms of the gendered representations it perpetuates (cf. Decke-Cornill 2007, 2010b; Gutenberg 2013: 112; Haas 2012: 148; Volkmann 2007: 167). Surkamp (2013: 194) calls to mind that the question of what literary texts are actually read in the classroom has always been a good source of controversy in the field of literary didactics. This is mirrored in the demands of a gender-critical-revision of the literary canon (cf. Gutenberg 2013: 112). Surkamp (2013: 193-194) remarks that a history of the literary canons of TEFL still needs to be written, and it is generally difficult to determine what texts are *actually* read in the classroom. She further adds that the selection of literary texts depends on a complex web of factors, including curricular requirements and suggestions, didactic objectives and ‘trends’ (e.g. reading texts for the purpose of *Fremdverstehen*), teacher preferences, and what publishing houses actually offer as *Schullektüre* (2013: 194, 197-198). While this web of factors can either severely limit or indeed open up the range of literary texts that could be read, what has frequently been bemoaned is the existence of a ‘hidden’ or ‘informal canon’ – texts that have persevered in proportionally high numbers in the realities of the classroom (ibid.: 198; also: Volkmann 2007: 167).

From a gender-critical perspective, such hidden canons are marked by “a strange inertia” (Volkmann 2007: 168) in that they perpetuate a “male bias” (ibid.) – texts that are read seem to emerge exclusively from dead, white, European or US-American male writers, or exclusively negotiate male perspectives on the world, including male perspectives on women (cf. Decke-Cornill 2010b: 4; Haas 2012: 148). Such texts traditionally include Shakespeare’s

dramas, Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, Golden's *Lord of the Flies*, or Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (cf. Surkamp 2013: 198; Decke-Cornill 2010b: 5). What such a selection effectively perpetuates is the exclusion of female authors and female perspectives from the literary experiences offered to learners. For Decke-Cornill (2007: 252), this 'canonical unconscious' mirrors social and hegemonic gender relations. She points out that such systematic exclusions are to be rejected and argues in favour of the affirmation and inclusion of the canonical unconscious into literature selections for the classroom. The continuous criticism directed against 'the canon', coupled with calls for its revision, has opened the path for women to take over subject positions in the canon. Even though female authors, e.g. Atwood, Gordimer or Chopin, are now reportedly read in EFL classrooms (cf. Volkmann 2007: 169; Haas 2012: 148; Decke-Cornill 2010b: 5), and the turn towards 'New English Literatures' has generally contributed to re-ordering text selections (Eisenmann/Grimm/Volkmann 2010a), the non-inclusion of female authors still looms large, which König (2014a: 268; for another discussion cf. Mittag 2015: 253-254) shows at the example of the reading requirements for the *Zentralabitur* in Lower Saxony in 2014 and 2015, which structurally exclude female authors or film directors.

In view of the exclusion or inclusion of 'other Others' and 'different differences' into the selection of literature for the EFL classroom, two crucial aspects emerge from this feminist, gender-oriented criticism against the canon. On one level, the call is for remaining attentive regarding which subject positions, authors or "distorted, drowned, forgotten voices" (Volkmann 2007: 176) are yet to be represented in the literary canon so as to enable learners to make more diverse encounters with cultural difference and Otherness. In particular, the 'blind spots' (Gutenberg 2013: 112) of the canon include those texts and authors that challenge, or write against, what Butler (2006 [1990]) termed 'the heterosexual matrix'. Such criticism is to be taken seriously, as the criticism against the canon I sketched out above remained firmly within a bipolar gender order, seeking to overcome the inherent gender hierarchy of literature selections, but at the same time potentially privileging female perspectives over, for example, LGBT perspectives. The opening of the literary canon, I argue, can crucially benefit from the wider understanding of literature and texts that is currently gaining ground in TEFL (e.g. Nünning/Surkamp 2008; Paran 2006). With such an understanding, Otherness or cultural difference can as well also be represented in films, visuals, or pop songs, only to name a few – rather than awaiting inclusion in the handful of literary texts that students get to read during their time at school. This current move can also cause teachers to rethink their everyday use of texts in the classrooms regarding the positions these texts represent and bring in (cf. Lütge 2012a; Volkmann 2016). For example, an image that is intended to provide an incentive for a conversation could include the representation of rainbow families or same-sex parenting. On another level, it needs to be added that the text and the perspectives it represents is not the only aspect worth considering. Among others, Decke-Cornill (2010b), Mittag (2015) and König (2014) argue that any given text can also be subverted, re-read and exploited differently depending on the specific perspective with which it is approached. Mittag (2015), for example, shows how the students in her class re-imagined the depiction of the caring and motherly

housewife in *Death of a Salesman* into the role of a power woman. What follows is that a given text, canonised as it might be, can be used flexibly in class, so that the question of canon revisions always needs to be coupled with questions of innovative methodologies for teaching literature. Even though this is not intended as an argument *against* the inclusion of ‘other Others’ or ‘different differences’ into the selection of texts that are actually read, it points to the creative leeway that learners and teachers have when working with literature in the classroom.

Another major research strand, Benitt and Kurtz (2016: 170) point out, is the empirical investigation of gender-dependent differences in language learning. Such research typically explores if girls are better at language learning than boys, or vice versa, often with a particular focus on a specific aspect of language learning, e.g. the acquisition of communicative competences. Benitt and Kurtz refer to the large-scale DESI study (*Deutsch Englisch Schülerleistungen International*) that was carried out in Germany to test and record the language competences of students of year 9 in the subjects of German (as mother tongue or as second language for some students) and English (as the first foreign language) (cf. Klieme 2006; DESI-Konsortium 2008). Within the publication of the results of the DESI study, Hartig and Jude (2008) summarise the results for the correlation between gender (that is, for girls and boys) and their respective success in learning English as a foreign language. The results indicate that girls are, overall, significantly ahead of boys in English. A look at the individual competences, however, yields a more refined picture. Whereas girls seem to be generally better at written production (e.g. creative writing and text reconstruction) than boys, boys do better at spoken production (e.g. fluency and pronunciation), and the differences in the area of speaking can be neglected (cf. Hartig/Jude 2008: 204-205; Klieme 2006: 4)²⁶. Furthermore, the growth of English language competences throughout year 9 is more favourable for girls than for boys. It is interesting to read how the authors write that the general superiority of girls affirms *existing findings* (Hartig/Jude 2008: 204), while the superiority of boys in a few specific areas is *against the trend* (cf. Klieme 2006: 4). From my point of view, this indicates a clearly dichotomous presupposition of how girls learn languages vs. how boys learn languages, with the concomitant effect that both boys and girls are universalised according to certain allegedly strong abilities. Even though the results of the DESI-study might be robust, I would like to call to greater caution when it comes to the pedagogic implications of the DESI study (and generally of studies that ‘prove’ existing gender differences). On the one hand, this could lead to the construction of ‘untypical girls’ or ‘untypical boys’ that seemingly defy the universalising gender tendencies of such research. Teachers could then project unconfirmed stereotypical assumptions of boys’ and girls’ language competences onto learners, thus glorifying those boys who are unexceptionally good, and being disappointed in girls who are unexceptionally weak. On the other hand, such research might enhance the (re)production of clear-cut gender differences in teaching practice, with a gender-separate methodology that tries to cater for the alleged needs of girls or boys

26 Schmenk (2002: 262) cautions that varying results like this actually draw a very differentiated picture of learners, but are often interpreted by researchers in ways that clearly underline (assumed) gender differences. She goes on to suggest that clear either/or-dichotomies cannot be inferred from such descriptive statistics, especially if the results differ across specific language competences (rather than uniformly suggesting that girls, or boys, are per se better at foreign language learning).

respectively, which in turn forecloses pedagogic possibilities that should be available to *all* learners equally (e.g. by creating specific tasks for girls only, or by selecting specific reading material for boys only). Yet it needs to be said that the DESI study does (fortunately) not fall back on a causal logic of boys' or girls' alleged different cognitive capabilities or other biologically determined factors to explain the correlation of gender differences and language learning success. This leaves open a space to explore socially informed reasons that bring about the gender differences, e.g. the gendered value systems of teachers, or gender-specific styles of interaction (cf. Hartig/Jude 2008: 206).

When it comes to gender differences and foreign language learning, Schmenk offers a refreshing and highly critical perspective on research carried out in this area, put forward in her meta-study of gender-specific research in foreign language education (Schmenk 2002), and in another article that explores the feminisation of language learning (Schmenk 2007). In the main, Schmenk takes charge against the clear-cut binary conception of gender and "the ongoing quest for differences" (Schmenk 2007: 127) underlying many gender-related empirical studies in foreign language education. Such studies seek to show "what seems to be a very simple and obvious truth: males are masculine, females are feminine, and somehow or other, that difference must show in their language learning as well" (ibid.). Such studies then rely on gender as an important differentiating learning variable and draw conclusions about male or female advantages in language learning, or about specific female or male characteristics that impact on language learning, which mainly show that women are superior in language learning. What Schmenk calls the feminisation of language learning then links specific images of femininity with certain behaviours, learning or communication styles, or motivational patterns, rendering language learning a feminine domain (Schmenk 2007: 129). Whenever gender differences in language learning are confirmed in such studies, Schmenk argues, this is the effect of a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (2002: 261). If learners are initially codified according to a fixed binary gender order into female and male and are presupposed to have two distinct and incommensurable genders with certain gender-specific stereotypical qualities, this automatically imports the same binary and the same assumptions into the research design. In the end, such research is bound to confirm both gender as a 'natural' binary variable as well as gender-specific effects on language learning, precisely because such research *wants* to find out that there are natural and dichotomous gender differences (cf. Schmenk 2002: 257-261). It appears that, to speak with Decke-Cornill and Volkmann pointed words, when "gazing through gender glasses, researchers find the world gendered" (2007b: 11). Not only does Schmenk criticise that the results of these studies are self-fulfilling prophecies, she also cautions that they are often based on unfounded, unacademic speculations and stereotypes about gender, and that research uncritically follows everyday knowledge and common-sense beliefs of gender about 'how women are and how men are' (2002: 260; 2007: 124-126). Research on gender differences in foreign language education is thus prone to being an unreflected practice of constantly confirming and perpetuating what has always already been known as 'truths' anyway (Schmenk 2002: 257; 2007: 127). Her stance on such research is clear: "neat and straightforward

assumptions about males and females and their respective learning styles, attitudes, brains, etc. are to be regarded as a product of stereotyping rather than of empirical research” (2007: 128).

Having debunked the highly problematic understanding of the category ‘gender’ that becomes apparent in her research, Schmenk envisions a change in the approaches of how gender is researched in foreign language education. She suggests moving away from researching gender as a learner variable, instead looking at gender as a complex analytical category and social construct (2002: 265; 2007: 131) and coupling gender-oriented research with the insights provided by Gender Studies: “A thorough look at the field of Gender Studies, even though it is by no means easily accessible and homogeneous, seems to be paramount if we want to avoid overly simplistic views of learners, language learning, and gender” (Schmenk 2007: 128). In particular, Schmenk highlights the value of poststructuralist approaches to researching gender (2007: 124). If such a view is adopted, this makes it possible to move away from the perceived naturalness of gender perceptions and call into question the heed to any alleged clarity of gender concepts or to men and women as distinct homogeneous groups. Instead, she states that gender ought to be researched as “komplexes kulturell kodiertes Zuschreibungssystem, das Sinn und Ordnungen erzeugt, nicht als eine im Menschen befindliche Entität, die per se Bedeutungen aufweist“ (Schmenk 2002: 261-262; emphasis in the original). As such, gender is not a fixed entity with fixed meanings, which in turn makes it impossible to assign stable gender-specific correlates to certain behaviours or characteristics in language learning (Schmenk 2002: 264).

Instead, Schmenk stresses the discursive and performative dimensions of gender, which makes it possible to theorise and problematise any ‘genderisation’ in foreign language education and research as discursively produced, and not as a reality or truth that resides in women or men. From this point of view, new research agendas could be defined that, for example, explore how gendered meanings impact on the individual’s experience of language learning or how ‘genderisations’ operate in education or learning environments (Schmenk 2007: 129; 133). In the context of this study, with its interest in opening up a space for ‘different differences’ in foreign language education, Schmenk offers another suggestion for future research that I consider highly relevant and that I would like to mention last:

Dichotomisierungen zu differenzieren, damit Pluralisierungen zu akzeptieren und diese in Theorien denkbar und erfassbar zu machen, erfordert die Revision der Auffassung, daß zwei Geschlechter als „natürliche Wahrheit“ vorausgesetzt und generalisiert werden können. (Schmenk 2002: 257)

I consider this suggestion as crucial because it provides a legitimisation to avoid simplifying, dichotomising and essentialising views on gender, and to accept instead that various gender identities are possible. This indicates a clear move away from simple paradigms of binary difference towards more complex conceptualisations of gender marked by greater diversity, which I understand as an increased openness or readiness to embrace more complex and differentiated research agendas exceeding simplistic or seemingly natural binary differences of female and male. Indeed, Schmenk explicitly invites such ‘liminal foci’, too. With reference to Cameron’s (2005) diversity paradigm in gender theory, she inscribes an interest in non-mainstream or queer gender identities and the relation of gender to sexual identities and

heteronormativity into possible approaches to researching gender and foreign language education.

This broadened view has two implications. On one level, as Schmenk's quote above shows, the challenge is to first of all *permit oneself to thinking* in these more complex terms, and then make non-dichotomous and pluralised views on difference (especially in the domain of gender and sexual identity) theoretically accessible for foreign language research, which I will attempt to achieve in Part B of this study at the example of Queer Theory and queer-informed approaches to TEFL. The second implication relates to Schmenk's suggestion to supersede using gender as a learner variable or predictor for language learning. If, according to Schmenk, the focus ought to shift towards gender as a complex analytical category or social construct *in research* (i.e. as something that researchers conceive of in a careful and critically reflective way in their research designs), then the same critical approach could also be imported into teaching practice where gender becomes an *explicit topic*. Thus, the classroom can become a space in which learners and teachers explore gender explicitly and critically as a complex social construct.

This potential turn towards gender as an explicit topic in the classroom is mirrored in a wide array of current publications and lesson proposals, establishing the notion of 'teaching gender' as another significant area of research and teaching practice (cf. Benitt/Kurz 2016: 170). Rather than asking how gender can be employed in research beyond 'proving' gender differences, these publications conceptualise the EFL classroom as a platform for critically exploring gender issues with learners. It appears that research on the explicit integration of gender into the classroom, alongside embedding it in existing didactic concepts, has emerged as *the* major direction in gender-informed research, as the overview of published work above has shown. In critiquing some existing and published gender-related lesson proposals and practice-oriented tasks, König, Lewin and Surkamp give rise to the concern that such teaching suggestions

often use gender as an incentive for communication in the foreign language. While this is certainly an important aim for English teachers, it is problematic that many of these publications do not refer to Gender Studies as their reference discipline. Instead of making use of academic knowledge on gender as a social category, some of the authors combine everyday knowledge about gender with methods and aims of the foreign language classroom. Sometimes, this results in a reproduction of stereotypes and a lacking awareness of discrimination and social hierarchies in lesson proposals, risking reinforcement of contemporary gender relations in students rather than creating a critical awareness for them. (König/Lewin/Surkamp 2016: 23)

This necessary call to caution points to the problem that well-meant attempts to include gender in the classroom can lead to crude realisations in practice that run counter to the insights offered to TEFL by contemporary Gender Studies. More generally speaking, any 'new' facet of Otherness that enters the TEFL landscape can be similarly subjected to an unreflected incorporation into the classroom. To prevent the incorporation of gender issues at school, but also generally at university (e.g. in teacher education) or in research, from becoming what Decke-Cornill and Volkmann call a "professional failure" (2007b: 8), which would involve conceiving of gender "in a trivialized, everyday, unquestioned form" that leaves "the common-sense belief in an essentialist, self-evident existence of 'women' and 'men' [...] uncontested"

(ibid.: 7), they also call for systematically accessing Gender Studies as an important link discipline of TEFL. The obvious challenge that derives from Decke-Cornill and Volkmann's claim is the following: How can the complexities of gender and Gender Studies be 'captured' and condensed into reflected and theoretically grounded teaching frameworks without becoming trivial? How can the insights provided by Gender Studies be didactically transformed so that they become accessible to teachers in a systematic way? And what, after all, are powerful links between existing didactic concepts and newly emerging gender-oriented approaches that can facilitate the engagement with gender in the classroom? In the following section, I will address these questions by systematising existing research on explicitly incorporating gender into TEFL, which I expect to be highly insightful for generally conceptualising the incorporation of a 'new' line of cultural difference or Otherness into the classroom.

4.3 Teaching Gender in TEFL: Conceptual Considerations

When 'gender' is supposed to move centre-stage in the EFL classroom as an explicit topic, the questions of why it should be taught *in the EFL classroom*, and *how* it can be taught in the EFL classroom, move similarly centre-stage. To rephrase these questions slightly, it is necessary to ask what is the specific relevance of gender for the EFL classroom, and what are theoretically substantiated, yet applicable concepts that make it possible to 'teach gender' and that can ideally be linked with existing concepts for teaching and learning English as a foreign language. The questions of 'why' and 'how' to teach gender are inextricable from the pedagogic and normative need to affirm difference and Otherness – or to speak with Decke-Cornill, to affirm "gender and other suspects" (2007: 240) –, since a careful and sensitive foundation and conceptualisation of teaching practice is necessary to avoid a simplistic and blunt affirmation of the Other (e.g. through simple inclusion via literary texts) and a reifying reproduction of existing gender orders and normativities. To date, the questions of 'why' and 'how' to integrate a focus on gender in the classroom have most intensely been grappled with by König (e.g. 2012; 2014), König/Surkamp/Decke-Cornill (2015b) and König/Lewin/Surkamp (2016). Their insights will provide the main rubric to structure this sub-chapter, but they will constantly be interwoven with other positions that have engaged with the question of why and how to teach gender as an explicit topic in the EFL classroom. I will begin with addressing the 'why' and develop an argumentative zooming-in that retraces the relevance of gender from a general social and personal level to the school level down to the level of the EFL classroom, culminating in a collation of existing learning objectives for 'gender' in the EFL classroom. I will continue with the 'how' and provide an overview of conceptual frameworks that link gender with the EFL classroom.

To begin with, EFL teaching and learning does not take place in a social vacuum in which pre-fabricated concepts of gender would play no role at all. The EFL classroom is part of a wider social and educational context that is not immune to gender as an omnipresent and influential social variable. Therefore, any legitimisation of why gender should have a place in the EFL classroom begins with acknowledging the general social relevance of gender as such. As König, Lewin and Surkamp (2016: 19; cf. also König/Surkamp/Decke-Cornill 2015b) point

out, social concepts and norms of gender (masculinity/femininity) and of romantic and sexual relationships permeate the social sphere. In the family or in peer groups, through online media or through films, but also at schools as significant agents of socialisation, students are presented with a variety of norms, concepts and options regarding gender and sexuality, which show them how they should be, but also how they could be (ibid.: 19-20). As König, Lewin and Surkamp point out, studies from developmental psychology and socialisation theories (e.g. Flaake 2006; Bilden 2002) show that questions of gender and sexuality become increasingly important during adolescence when students develop their gender and sexual identity:

On the one hand, teenagers today are presented with a variety of concepts regarding gender and relationships. This allows for space for individual ways of life and encourages them to explore different options, but also forces them to make their own decisions which might lead to uncertainty [...]. On the other hand, traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity continue to impact on the life spheres of teenagers. This requires them to negotiate contradictory concepts of gender. (König/Lewin/Surkamp 2016: 20)

What follows from this is that any gender-oriented teaching, also in the EFL classroom, must begin with acknowledging that students come into the classroom as differently, but distinctly gendered and sexual beings. The strong link to personal identity and emotions make gender and sexuality highly sensitive topics, and it cannot be expected that students will at once embrace these topics with enthusiasm – even though they are highly relevant for themselves (cf. Volkmann 2007: 167; Decke-Cornill 2009: 15). But rather than eschewing these topics altogether in attempts to protect students in their difficult and painful processes of identity formation, Volkmann stresses that “a high degree of carefulness and sensitivity is needed by educators to really provide sources of liberating paths to personal growth and an empowering knowledge of the world” (2007: 167). Furthermore, Decke-Cornill (2007: 243) cautions that students must not feel the pressure to speak about their own identities, but that they still must be given the opportunity if they choose to do so. Volkmann therefore argues that a gender-informed pedagogy must not set normative or prescriptive objectives for teachers and learners, but must sensitively consider a web of determinants such as the learners’ and the teacher’s attitudes towards gender and sexuality, or the climate in the classroom.

In acknowledging the need for sensitive approaches to teaching gender, König highlights the responsibility of schools as instances of education, and not just as instances of socialisation, to enable a gender-sensitive education and engage students with the topic of gender:

Unterricht bietet die Möglichkeit, [gesellschaftliche] Strukturen explizit zu thematisieren, eine kognitive Auseinandersetzung zu fördern, Reflexionsprozesse anzuregen und neue Perspektiven zu eröffnen. In Bezug auf Geschlecht lassen sich so didaktisch und methodisch aufbereitet Diskurse über Männlichkeit und Weiblichkeit in ihrem Konstruktcharakter thematisieren, Heteronormativität sichtbar machen und Zugänge und Positionierungen vermitteln, die jenseits eines binären Geschlechterverständnisses liegen. (König 2014: 371)

Generally speaking, König conceptualises schools and classrooms as spaces that are suitable for thematising and challenging gender differences and relations, the exclusions and inclusions they bring about, and the limiting and regulatory power of gender norms. This can foster in students an awareness of, and a critical distance towards, the omnipresent power of concepts of gender

and sexuality. Such a gender-informed education is also in line with the general educational mandate of schools in Germany that aim at “support[ing] students in developing fundamental ethical principles, which include respect, justice, tolerance towards others, and gender equality” (König/Lewin/Surkamp 2016: 21). This positive agenda of achieving equitable and ethical educational goals, however, does not diminish the need to carefully design didactic settings, as König calls to mind in her position quoted above, which again highlights the necessity to think about how this can be achieved.

The increasing interest in turning schools into gender-equitable and gender-sensitive spaces, alongside providing spaces for an explicit thematisation and reflection on gender issues, is mirrored in a wide range of pedagogic publications (cf. Elsner/Lohe 2016b; König/Lewin/Surkamp 2016). To name but a few, Wedl and Bartsch (2015) offer a timely collection of articles that present a comprehensive overview of reflective approaches to incorporating gender sensitively and critically in school education, including a wide range of practical teaching examples. A major focus of this edited volume also lies on the education and training of future and in-service teachers by suggesting concepts to prepare educators for the sometimes delicate and challenging task of teaching in a gender-critical way. This edited volume also builds a bridge into individual school subjects and explores the potential contribution of existing subject-specific concepts to a gender-informed education, including three articles for foreign and English language education (Mittag 2015, König 2015a, Lewin 2015). Other publications in the field include Jösting and Seemann (2006) on the role of schools to challenge the hierarchical gender relations that they are prone to reproducing. Mörtz and Hey (2010) collect various articles for the pedagogic-didactic contexts of schools, universities and adult education that seek to challenge fixed binary gender orders. Rieken and Beck (2014) have collected a set of articles that explore the possibilities of implementing a gender-critical and gender-sensitive education at schools and universities from the vantage point of teachers’ professional competences. Eisenbraun and Uhl (2014) present a similar topic range, but do include an article that focuses on the visibility of homo- and bisexuality at schools (Bittner/Lotz 2014). From a meta-perspective, these publications show that there is a productive pedagogic discourse that aims at (re)constructing the engagement with gender in diverse institutionalised educational settings. This also calls for TEFL to contribute to this large-scale pedagogic development by linking the pedagogic need to include a focus on gender at schools with existing TEFL-specific concepts. In other words, what does TEFL have to offer to make a gender-informed education possible? This question will be explored in the following section.

In establishing such links, König (2012, 2014) activates the triad of language, culture and literature as TEFL’s three core domains into which a focus on gender can be located, and existing publications usually relate the engagement with gender to any of these three domains (e.g. Lütge 2012a; Mittag 2015; Lewin 2015). What needs to be mapped onto these domains is the question of suitable materials and (literary) texts that provide a sound source for gender-informed teaching, and the classroom methodology that can be used to approach these materials. While I will explore these questions below, it needs to be said that researchers such as König, Lewin and Surkamp (2016: 22) argue that gender as an overarching topic can bring back

relevance to the language classroom, which recent political-educational changes towards output-orientation and standardisation have rendered “void of content” (ibid.). The missing content specifications in the new educational guidelines (e.g. Kultusministerkonferenz 2004a) require TEFL as a discipline to reconsider what topics are actually relevant, and gender is a highly suitable topic to fill this content gap: “[T]he topic of gender and the relevance it has for learners can be means to teach in an output-oriented, yet content-based way” (König/Lewin/Surkamp 2016: 22). Furthermore, the question of learning objectives is also central, as they provide a general imperative (although not a prescriptive one) to teaching about gender. When it comes to learning objectives, Volkmann (2016) and König, Surkamp and Decke-Cornill (2015b) have developed first descriptions that are specific to the field of TEFL, which will be combined in the following overview²⁷:

- **discourse competence (*Diskursfähigkeit*)** describes a student’s ability to speak about and negotiate gender issues and to voice emotional responses, also from a meta-level (e.g. to speak about gender norms in a reflective way); this requires the acquisition of a stock of vocabulary, and careful scaffolding on the side of the teacher; ultimately, such a *Diskursfähigkeit* is meant to enable learners to participate in various discursive formations, including discourses about gender as a highly relevant and much-contested sociocultural issue (cf. König/Surkamp/Decke-Cornill 2015b: 4; Volkmann 2016: 116);
- **reflection and awareness** involves the ability to reflect on the role of language to constitute gender norms and gender identities, and to expose, challenge and debunk stereotypes and norms (cf. König/Surkamp/Decke-Cornill 2015b: 4; Volkmann 2016: 116); Volkmann (2007: 166) also wishes to enable students to demystify existing gender concepts so that learners gain more control over the gendered choices they make, which adds an empowering dimension to this objective; I also find Elsner and Lohe’s (2016b: 13) three-step procedure of ‘identify’, ‘reflect’ and ‘deconstruct’ helpful in this context: ‘identify’ means to consciously realise a gender concept, e.g. that asking a woman whether she is married to a man assumes a heteronormative worldview; ‘reflect’ means to think about where such assumptions come from and in how far they influence one’s experience of the world; ‘deconstruct’ means to think about alternative

²⁷ Volkmann (2016), for example, suggests using the terms gender competence and gender awareness as possible umbrellas to frame the articulation of learning objectives, but simultaneously seems to call these concepts into question again: “[T]he concept of ‘gender’ competence is a rather elusive one. A first working definition in our context here could be that it describes the knowledge, skills and attitudes a person possesses concerning the social construction of gender. This encompasses the changing social attitudes towards gendered identities, gendered behaviour, cross-dressing, same-sex relationships, bisexuality, transgender and intergender identities. [...] Crucially, ‘gender competence’ means the ability to question the ‘givenness’ of gender identity and gender formations. Instead, gender awareness consists of insights into how gender is socially acquired, contingent and ambivalent. It includes the awareness how concepts of gender are highly influenced by film, literature, narrative and visual texts” (Volkmann 2016: 119). This initial suggestion is, from my point of view, not clearly distinctive, as the awareness of the multimodal construction of gender in a film could as well be articulated as the competence to question that very gender construction in a film. Furthermore, I am not convinced that the critical and reflective impetus gender offers is ideally to be married with the restrictive, content-free and output-oriented competence paradigm that is currently perpetuated in the educational standards. Therefore, I suggest conceptualizing learning goals for gender-informed EFL education without necessarily following the impulse to combine everything under the umbrella of ‘competence’.

options, e.g. to ask someone if they have a long-term partner (gender-neutral and non-heteronormative language); it needs to be added that reflections and awareness-raising moments can cause moments of crisis (cf. chapter 1.3) when long held assumptions and cherished truths are called into question (e.g. the recognition that not all biological men identify as male, or that not everyone is either exclusively heterosexual or homosexual), but such moments of crisis might be ideal starting points for further reflection;

- **change of perspectives and de-centring** are borrowed objectives from the field of inter- and transcultural learning; in exploring various gendered identities and concepts, also in other cultural contexts (e.g. through literature or films), students change into other worldviews or alternative ways of living a gendered life, which involves a reflection and relativisation of one's own norms, values and imprints; König, Surkamp and Decke-Cornill emphasise: "Die Dezentrierung von eigenen Vorstellungen und Einstellungen ist gerade angesichts ihrer Allgegenwärtigkeit, die unsere Wahrnehmung stark strukturiert, Voraussetzung dafür, dass die damit verbundenen Normen überhaupt erst als solche gesehen und reflektiert werden können" (König/Surkamp/Decke-Cornill 2015b: 5);
- **textual competence and multiliteracies** at the intersection of gender describes the ability to understand how a text (understood as any signifying system) is constructed according to the category 'gender', and to decode the various modes of meaning making, e.g. how is gender visually constituted in a film, or how are masculinity, femininity or trans*-identities constructed in advertisements or online narratives (cf. Volkmann 2016: 121; Stark 2013).

Each of these learning objectives centralises the engagement with gender, but they also draw on existing learning objectives such as multiliteracies or *Diskursfähigkeit*. In this case, the notion of gender gives existing objectives a relevant and new dimension and a specific focal point to which this learning objective can be applied. The idea that gender-oriented learning objectives are not articulated as separate competences, but indeed as traversing existing frameworks, is to be welcomed, as this supports the attempt to integrate a gender focus into TEFL. Furthermore, these learning objectives can also be developed at the dimensions of language, culture and literature, which I will now introduce in their potential to accommodate gender-informed teaching (cf. König 2012, 2014). In mapping gender onto this tripartite focus, König suggests a convincing framework that makes it possible to locate gender in the core dimensions of TEFL, and to identify in how far gender can become relevant for each of these three domains. Such a systematisation is helpful in that it condenses the complexities of gender-informed approaches to TEFL into concrete focal points for teaching, and shows a range of possible anchoring points to which a gender focus can be 'hooked'.

Language

Language, or other symbolic systems such as the visual, provides the system through which gender is discursively produced, which establishes and instant link between 'language' and

‘gender’. In developing their language, students must also recognise how language impacts on gender, e.g. when developing an inventory of gender-sensitive or gender-neutral language (cf. König 2014: 373; Linke 2012: 162). Furthermore, language is a crucial prerequisite to take part in foreign language discourses in which gender issues are negotiated. Since the negotiation of gendered meanings is a sensitive issue and can cause fear or reluctance among learners, König, Surkamp and Decke-Cornill (2015b: 4) argue that the *foreign* language can have a facilitative role. They argue that emotionally charged and normatively connotated meanings in the first language are not yet connected with similarly loaded cultural meanings in the foreign language, which might make it easier to articulate opinions, reflections, or concerns. This line of reasoning is encapsulated best in Decke-Cornill’s conceptualisation of the foreign language as a “Schon- und Distanzraum” (2009: 14), i.e. a protective space that “can help to create a distance from the immediacy of one’s own linguistic environment” (König/Lewin/Surkamp 2016: 21) and enable students to speak more freely. Yet it must also be noted that the negotiation of gendered meanings in the foreign language can also slow down the process, which necessitates patience and time, but also a careful scaffolding that can help students to express their views. What seems to be crucial is the development of an inventory of vocabulary and linguistic means that support students in participating in discourses about gender, which also includes a meta-vocabulary to reflect on and talk about gender (e.g. the practices of ‘doing gender’ in an advertisement) (cf. König/Lewin/Surkamp 2016: 22). A last aspect to be mentioned is a pragmatic issue: the EFL classroom relies on authentic communicative situations for practicing and using the foreign language, which in turn requires motivating and challenging speech incentives – these are ideally to be drawn from relevant and meaningful topics, of which gender is one (cf. König 2014: 373)

Culture

In principle, the localisation of gender in cultural learning profits from the current shifts in conceptualisations of culture and cultural learning, which I discussed in the second chapter. The turn away from non-essentialist, primarily national conceptions of culture towards an open and fluid concept of culture that is also subjectively understood and constructed by individuals benefits the incorporation of gender into the cultural domain of the EFL classroom (cf. König 2014: 372). In arguing for the link between culture and gender, König (2014: 372) develops a two-fold line of reasoning. On the level of *content*, a focus on gender allows for exploring culturally, but also historically differing understandings of gender. In particular, it might become a viable point of departure to identify in how far gender in foreign cultural contexts is constituted in different or similar ways compared to one’s own cultural context – without, however, using such a focus to reinvigorate the notion of two distinct and homogeneous cultures along the gender line. Rather, as König stresses, the insights that gendered meanings and concepts might as well be constituted differently can increase the awareness that gender is indeed a social construct. The aspect of content is closely linked to established *processes* of cultural learning: in encountering new cultural patterns of gender, learners can change their perspective into other ways of living and expressing one’s gender and decentre in a reflective

manner from their own gendered concepts. In this in-between-space of shifting meanings, König argues, learners can interrogate gender-specific norms and imprints they have been culturally socialised into.

In the context of gender and culture, I consider Mittag's (2015) proposal of gender as an 'empty signifier' an illuminating concept that can frame the open-minded engagement with different cultural gender meanings. Mittag (2015: 252) remarks that the ongoing disappearance of a clear-cut and unambiguous gender polarity has caused gendered meanings to shift and become unfixed, leading to a proliferation of possible gender expressions that open up new possibilities for living one's gender identity. To grasp this proliferation conceptually, Mittag draws on Laclau (1996) to suggest thinking about gender as an empty signifier that is open to interpretation and meaning:

Vielmehr wirkt Gender als 'leerer' [...] und damit deutungsoffener Signifikant, der je nach kulturellem und sozialem Kontext neu gefüllt werden kann. [...] [D]er leere Signifikant [bedeutet], dass Geschlechterrollen auch eine Frage der kulturellen Verortung und damit eine Frage der Performanz sind. (Mittag 2015: 252)

I consider the notion of gender as an empty signifier into which a vast spectrum of signifying opportunities and options can be articulated a highly valuable heuristic for cultural learning. When gender can be variably filled with meaning, this can create an open mind-set that learners and teachers can employ to explore how gendered meanings are negotiated, reconstructed or dissipated in other cultural contexts, but that can also give learners the opportunity to critically reflect on their own gendered meanings. This flexibility, Mittag (2015: 257) argues, can help overcome thinking of gender in strict dichotomies (e.g. powerful masculinity vs. marginalised femininity), and instead look for ways to constantly fill the signifier with new meanings without positing these as absolute. Gender as an empty signifier is also a powerful concept for literature teaching, where learners can play with the gendered representations a text offers and shift and fill them with new or alternative meanings. Such an understanding of gender can support the proliferation of creative re-imaginings of gender at the example of a given text and its protagonists.

An innovative connection between cultural learning, gender aspects and film education – thus adding a specific medium to the intersection of culture and gender – is suggested by Lütge (2012a). At the example of the films *Anita and Me* and *Whale Rider*, she develops an approach to an intercultural film education (cf. also Blell/Lütge 2009) that incorporates both a focus on gender – to avoid one-dimensional and narrow perceptions of cultural Otherness as national or ethnic –, and a focus on gender-in-film – to initiate an understanding of how gender as a facet of cultural Otherness is visualised and constituted through cinematic devices. Thus, Lütge maps gender as a transcultural phenomenon of experiencing difference onto two films that are suited for intercultural learning, and in doing so, broadens the focus of the *intercultural* paradigm towards a greater interwovenness, multi-layeredness and dynamic of 'different differences' that go beyond cultural-ethnic lines of demarcation only (cf. 2012a: 34). This allows for a triple change of perspectives, thus defying easy or binary categorisations, into the protagonists of the films, who are simultaneously gendered, growing up, and a member of an ethnic minority. At the same time, Lütge harnesses the potential of films, or more properly

speaking, of two novels that have been turned into films, to foster the visual dimension of perceiving difference. In creative product- and action-oriented approaches, students can imagine how the textual constitution of cultural difference, including aspects of gender, can be visualised or transformed into a visual medium ('imagining Otherness'). At the same time, in reception-oriented approaches, students can experience how cultural Otherness has actually been visualised in the respective films ('imaging Otherness') (cf. *ibid.*: 35-36, 40). The complex interplay of culture, gender and film on the one hand, and the diverse methodological approaches on the other hand that become possible given this triple focus, generate a challenging, yet enriching teaching scenario that includes, but is not exclusively limited to, a focus on gender, as it also aims at fostering an understanding of how films mediate images of cultural (and gendered) Otherness. Such a film-based engagement with Otherness can potentially also be mapped onto other lines of demarcation, e.g. "sexuality, [...] queer and men's issues" (Lütge 2012a: 34), which shows how prolific the intersection of culture, 'other Others' and films can be.

Literature

The EFL literature classroom is conceptualised in research as the ideal site for negotiating and reflecting on gender. König (2014: 374), Decke-Cornill (2010b: 14) and König, Surkamp and Decke-Cornill (2015b: 8) highlight the two-fold potential of literary texts. On one level, literature transports cultural and hence, also gendered meanings into the classroom. It can therefore offer insights into yet unknown or unusual perspectives on gender, e.g. when a certain literary text negotiates and creates a non-heteronormative world, or plays with fixed or binary gender assumptions. From this point of view, the challenge is one of text choice, which means that a text should be chosen according to its potential "to challenge stereotypical expectations, make students aware of the sociocultural constructedness of gender and provide opportunities to reflect on a broad palette of gender identities" (Volkman 2016: 122). In this sense, literary texts can provide what Volkman calls a "fictional laboratory" (2016: 116) that provide opportunities for learners to engage, for example, with a narrative voice that does not allow for easy gender ascriptions, or with LGBT protagonists who defy and work against given norms of gender or sexuality. If teachers have the freedom to choose literary texts bar from curricular requirements, then König (2014: 375) encourages them to select exactly such 'unusual' texts for the EFL literature classroom.

In view of the personal sensitivity of gender-related topics, literature makes it possible for learners to talk about gender norms and gender concepts at the example of a text's protagonists and its specific literary constellations. This takes away the pressure from learners to talk about gender with reference to themselves, as the literary text offers a substitute space for negotiating those aspects of gender that would otherwise be difficult to talk about as they might be too close to the learners' identities. At the same time, however, literary texts can still provide an incentive to voice individual concerns, and to establish links to oneself, if learners choose to do so, ideally in a classroom climate that is facilitative for inserting one's voice (cf. König/Surkamp/Decke-Cornill 2015b: 8; König 2014: 374). This exact potential of literature

becomes particularly relevant in the context of gender or sexual Otherness. A well-chosen literary text makes it possible to bring ‘Other’ voices into the classroom and engage with Othernesses that would otherwise remain invisible or marginalised. At the same time, however, the ‘protective space of fictionality’, as König (2014: 374) calls it with reference to Decke-Cornill (2009), does not require ‘Other’ learners in the classroom to make explicit their ‘Other’ identities (e.g. to come out as lesbian or transgender), but still, such learners could experience their ‘Other’ voices being represented in the literary text.

A further potential of literary texts does not only rest in the content they offer, but also in the methodological repertoire and the learning objectives they engender. It is the interplay of these three aspects – text, method, objective – that bring a text to life in the classroom, and that connect a text with a pedagogic-didactic rationale for using it. Most importantly, the learner moves centre stage in the EFL literature classroom, as Volkmann emphasises in an esteemed reader-response manner: “It is not just the issue of what gender does with individual readers, but also what individuals do with gender – in our context, what individual readers, students, teachers do with the gender concepts presented in literature” (Volkmann 2016: 122). Volkmann’s distinction allows for accessing a range of analytical, reflective and dialogic methods, but also creative, product- and action-oriented approaches, for example (cf. König 2014):

- **analytical approaches:** analysing the stylistic and literary devices of a literary text, but also the cinematic devices of a film, in view of their function to construct gender on the textual, linguistic or visual level, and to guide the reader’s or viewer’s perception of gendered meanings (e.g. the deliberate non-usage of pronouns and other person markers that defy an easy categorisation of somebody’s gender);
- **reflective approaches:** critically reflecting on the reading experience, on the meanings a text conveys, and on the reactions it evokes; such reflections could be transferred to a classroom or group dialogue as the subsequent communication after having read a text or text passage (*Anschlusskommunikation*); it is also possible to implement silent reflections in which students write down their ideas and reactions without requiring them to speak about them openly – this might be preferable if the reflection is on a very sensitive issue;
- **creative approaches:** using the text as a basis for further creative tasks, e.g. to rewrite a passage from another person’s perspective (facilitating a change of perspective), to fill a gap the literary text has left open (e.g. speculating about the motifs for a certain action), or to use action- or drama-oriented techniques (e.g. to build a character constellation into a freeze frame, to act out a scene).

In principle, the whole range of available methods for teaching literature can come into play, and I argue that there is no necessary need to ‘invent’ specific methods that are only suitable for engaging with gender. Rather, the challenge is to fine-tune available methods with other determinants such as the learning objective, the text and its content, and the learner to meet the requirements of gender-informed teaching in the EFL literature classroom.

A further systematisation that condenses Gender Studies into workable foci for TEFL has been put forward by König (2014, 2015a; also: König/Lewin/Surkamp 2016). She stresses the need to access Gender Studies as a link discipline (also: Decke-Cornill/Volkman 2007) for TEFL, but she acknowledges that the heterogeneity within Gender Studies is too broad to allow for an easily applicable transfer into practice. She identifies three major, yet shifting strands: “Dabei verschiebt sich der Fokus der Analyse von der Benachteiligung von Frauen auf die Wechselverhältnisse zwischen den Geschlechtern in einem System von Zweigeschlechtlichkeit bis hin zu einer Hinterfragung dieses binären Systems unter Einbeziehung von sexueller Orientierung” (König 2014: 364). König points out that these approaches might be contradictory at times, e.g. in that they either draw on an essentialist understanding of women for political recognition claims, while others prefer a non-essentialist stance to gender and stress internal diversity. But rather than preferring one particular strand of Gender studies over others, König (2014: 365-369) conceptualises these different strands as a pool of possibilities from which teachers can draw to frame their lessons. In particular, König draws on the three-fold distinction that Nina Degele (2008) has put forward in *Einführung Gender/Queer Studies* and distinguishes between a socio-critical, a constructivist, and a deconstructivist perspective. The following overview describes the scope and possibilities of each perspective:

- a **socio-critical perspective** works with gender as a social category and seeks to expose structural inequalities, exclusions and inclusions; the focus is on roles and positions of women and men, on gender relations, on disadvantage or on empowerment; in teaching practice, this can entail using a film to tease out the discrimination or sexual harassment women experience (König 2014, 2015a);
- a **constructivist perspective** assumes that gender is not an essential category, but created in social interactions in which the complex cultural codes of gender are constantly reproduced, but not invariably so, e.g. through voice, facial expression, language, gesture, clothing; in practice, this ‘doing gender’ can be analysed at the example of gender representations or gender behaviour in films or advertisements (König 2014, 2015a; also: Lewin 2015);
- a **deconstructivist perspective** takes as its point of departure that gendered meanings are an effect of discourse; the focus lies on critique against the binary gender order and heteronormativity; in practice, this perspective allows for a deconstruction of the assumption that one is either female or male, or heterosexual; this perspective can entail looking for homoerotic moments, male bondings, or cross-dressing in texts, e.g. at the example of Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* (König 2014, 2015a).

Such a typology is helpful to capture the increasing complexity that a differentiated integration of gender into TEFL brings about, and it allows for varied approaches to engage with the issue of gender at different personal, social, cultural and textual levels.

4.4. Gender in TEFL: ‘Other Others, Different Differences’

The ongoing establishment of gender perspectives in TEFL is a telling example of how a particular sociocultural category of difference has gradually found entry into the realm of TEFL. As such, gender can be regarded as one of those contested ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ that have, in their gradual advent, contributed to diversifying the TEFL landscape by integrating into it a particular focal point. The previous discussion has shown that this integration of gender came with the price of intense recognition claims and theoretical struggles. In making ‘the voice of gender’ accessible and visible, e.g. in an increasing body of publications, researchers have carved out the position for gender it has today in TEFL discourse. Considering the immense effort that has been invested, e.g. in developing sound conceptualisations for ‘teaching gender’ in the EFL classroom or in shedding carefully crafted new nuances on the selection and use of literary texts, gender has made an immense leap in TEFL – from having a marginalised position in the 1980s and 1990s (cf. Decke-Cornill 2004) to becoming a recognised ‘member’ of the set of cultural diversity TEFL engages with.

Yet for another reason, the gender discourse in TEFL proves to be a second interesting case in point in view of my research angle. Not only did gender as a particular line of difference contribute to diversifying TEFL. It is also in the discourse of gender within TEFL that new orientations and openings are currently being generated into which even more ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ can be located. It emerges that the gender discourse has somewhat of an inevitable developmental logic or a dynamic genealogy that brings about new and shifting concerns. In evaluating the heterogeneity of gender-informed approaches in TEFL, König observes:

Dabei verschiebt sich der Fokus der Analyse von der Benachteiligung von Frauen auf die Wechselverhältnisse zwischen den Geschlechtern in einem System von Zweigeschlechtlichkeit bis hin zu einer Hinterfragung dieses binären Systems unter Einbeziehung von sexueller Orientierung. (König 2014: 364)

In saying this, König does not mean that ‘older’ approaches to teaching gender in TEFL have become obsolete in being superseded by ‘newer’ issues. Rather, König’s position indicates that a focus on gender in TEFL can generate several theoretical points of entry, constituting a complex fabric from which to choose a specific angle for ‘teaching gender’. Interestingly, the latest newcomer to this fabric is an explicit focus on sexual orientation and an interest in gender identities that defy the binary logic of the existing gender order. This shift within the gender discourse in TEFL mirrors the dynamic of the shifting lines of demarcations in cultural learning that I have investigated in the second chapter. It seems that, from various directions, TEFL is reconstructing its sensitivity to ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’.

Among the researchers working from the theoretical vantage point of gender, the interest in including non-heteronormative sexual and gender identities into the scope of TEFL has most clearly been articulated by Decke-Cornill (2004, 2009, 2010b), König (2012, 2014, 2015a) and Volkmann (2007, 2016). Furthermore, the publication of the special issue ‘Negotiating Gender’ in the practice-oriented TEFL magazine *Der Fremdsprachliche*

Unterricht Englisch also includes a focus on heteronormativity (König 2015b) and queer identities in autobiographical online narratives (Merse 2015b) into the larger rubric of gender.

In 2004, Decke-Cornill called for a more thorough dialogue between Gender Studies and literary didactics. It is into this dialogue that she also placed an emphasis on affirming a broader spectrum of hitherto marginalised and silenced voices, i.e. those that are unintelligible in Butler's heterosexual matrix. In particular, she confronts the field of literary didactics with the following harsh criticism:

[S]o kann [...] von einer Auseinandersetzung mit der normativen heterosexuellen Matrix in der Literaturdidaktik und ihrer Theoriebildung nicht die Rede sein. So lange das so ist, folgt dieses Institut dem kulturellen Gebot, das die Existenz oder Existenzberechtigung der 'Sonstigen' bestreitet, das sie mithin als solche konstituiert und stigmatisiert. Die Literaturdidaktik erweist sich [...] als Instrument der Normalisierung der kulturellen Matrix der Heterosexualität. Sie operiert natürlich nicht mit offener Gewalt, sondern unterstützt mit der Routine des Ignorierens, Verschweigens und Tabuisierens [...]. (Decke-Cornill 2004: 199)

In writing this, Decke-Cornill lays bare the complicity of literary didactics with perpetuating the heterosexual regime of the normal through constantly excluding the developmental failures and logical impossibilities (Butler 2006 [1990]) of the heterosexual matrix. It appears that literary didactics prefers to continue its insidious routines of ignoring, silencing and tabooing, rather than to confront its own deficits. It is through the refusal of putting the voices of the sexual and gendered 'Other' – the identities that cannot exist, as Butler postulated (ibid.) – on the guest list of the literature classroom, to speak with Decke-Cornill (2004: 202), that literary didactics is responsible for

- not making accessible relevant cultural knowledge to learners,
- not enabling them to critically engage with gendered norms and subversive practices,
- not accepting non-normative behaviours and desires beyond a bipolar gender order as equally legitimate,
- forcing students into the mechanisms of exclusion, self-denial and non-solidarity (cf. Decke-Cornill 2004: 200).

She urgently calls up the field of literary didactics to reconsider its workings, e.g. by reflecting more deeply and more theoretically on its own practices, and by initiating a canon debate under the aegis of gender and sexual identity (ibid.: 203). She concludes with demanding the inclusion of a broader scope of non-normative identities into literary didactics:

Gender Studies lassen sich als dekonstruierende Entdeckungsreise betrachten. Am Anfang stand die Entdeckung "der Frau", dann die der "anderen" Frauen und der Männer. Nun sind die Abweichler/innen von der heterosexuellen Matrix – homosexuell, lesbisch, *gender-bending* usw. – entdeckt und stellen sie in Frage. Wenn diese nun alle in den Horizont des Literaturunterrichts gerückt sind, wenn sie alle sichtbar wären und ihnen Anerkennung [...] zukäme, wäre dann nicht das Ziel der Reise erreicht? (Decke-Cornill 2004: 203)

For the German TEFL context, Decke-Cornill has been the first researcher to radically articulate the inclusion of silenced and overheard voices from the sexual and gendered margins right into the horizon of the EFL literature classroom. She repeatedly rearticulated this call in various other publications (e.g. Decke-Cornill 2009, 2010b; Decke-Cornill/Hermann/Kleiner/Rhein

2008) so that the question emerges if, from today's perspective, the end of the journey – which Decke-Cornill envisions in the position quoted above – has already been reached, or if the journey has only just begun.

Indeed, it appears that TEFL research has only slowly embraced Decke-Cornill's call for reconsidering its own theories and practices, but her call has not been unheard of. Volkmann, for example, relates to Decke-Cornill (2004) and introduces a focus on "different sexualities" (2007: 176) into his article on Gender Studies and literature teaching. He proposes to re-read texts from the traditional canon which "upon closer scrutiny, abound with deviations from the heterosexual norm" (ibid.), including

- a discussion of William Shakespeare's sonnet 18 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day' as addressed to a young nobleman, which would be true to its original context; this fact is often overlooked when the sonnet is used in the classroom, where it is often read as an ardent declaration of beauty from a man to a female addressee;
- using Shakespeare's plays, which abound with gender bending, mistaken identity and comical confusion resulting from the device of disguising the leading female role, e.g. in *As You Like It*; often, "the issue of same sex attraction is playfully experimented with on stage" (2007: 177) so that watching an actual performance of a suitable play might offer an opportunity to explore subtle sexual meanings;
- scrutinising homophile subtexts in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, which are otherwise often overlooked, but could be focused on in close readings.

He goes on to deplore the usual lack of texts in text selections for EFL classes that normally do not contain different forms of sexuality, masculinity, or femininity (Volkmann 2007: 178). He does, however, show that some text collections published for the EFL classroom do indeed, at closer look, contain texts that subvert or expose privileged gender concepts, e.g. a film script of *My Beautiful Laundrette* by Hanif Kureishi. Generally speaking, Volkmann's search for texts that are already available for the classroom can be read as an encouragement to suggest further texts with 'different sexualities' to be included in reading lists. In a more recent publication, Volkmann (2016) observes that "there is an unfailing emphasis on including ethnic minority authors and female authors in the selection of literature representing English speaking countries in the EFL classroom" (Volkmann 2016: 123-124), whereas sexuality as another focal point is still missing. He concludes with a call for diversifying and intersecting various difference perspectives and other social issues: "Gender-sensitive approaches here need to be aligned with other critical approaches exploring social class, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, ability status, age, ecological matters and other important global issues such as poverty, unequal distribution of wealth, etc." (Volkmann 2016: 122).

So far for the German TEFL context, the only other researchers who have more rigidly embraced a focus on diverse sexualities, genders, and also heteronormativity, are König (2014) and Merse (2015a, 2015b, 2014, 2013). König (2015b), for example, juxtaposes a queer reading of Shakespeare's sonnet 18 with a contemporary young adult fiction short story to enable explorations of heteronormativity (in this case, the heteronormative reception history of

Shakespeare's sonnets) and gay perspectives. Another noteworthy literature recommendation coming from König (2012) is her TEFL-specific reading of Eugenides' novel *Middlesex* that is suitable for exploring non-normative gender identities. Similarly, Merse (2013, 2014) has proposed to widen the scope of texts used in the EFL literature classroom by turning to LGBT-themed literature. In two other practice-oriented publications, Merse (2015b, 2016) suggests using queer autobiographical online narratives or the coming-out narratives of famous people to expand the scope of identity positions in the classroom. Up to now, however, no thorough investigation has been carried out that links the insights of Queer Theory with the German TEFL context. Although a range of publications have emerged internationally, in particular through the ongoing efforts by Cynthia Nelson, there seems to be little dialogue between the national German context and international ELT developments, where queer thinking about language teaching has already gained some ground. It comes as no surprise when Gutenberg (2013) suggests that the application of Queer Theory to TEFL provides a desideratum, which this dissertation seeks to fulfil. To conclude with, gender-oriented research in TEFL proves to be a productive discourse that not only in itself is a 'difference' that has been integrated into TEFL, but that also produces new 'other Others' and 'different differences' within its own lines of thinking.

Outcome of Part A – Groundwork for Diversity in TEFL

In the previous chapters, I have teased out the complexities that a theoretical engagement with the critical concepts of Otherness and difference engenders. By drawing on a broad range of link disciplines, including structuralist and poststructuralist theories, feminist thought, Foucault's notion of discourse, postcolonial theory and pedagogy, I have shown that an engagement with Otherness and difference in TEFL necessitates

- a move beyond the limiting scope of thinking of difference in terms of a clear-cut dichotomy so as to liberate a broad range of identity expressions and differences that have previously been locked in the dichotomy; it remains possible, however, to retain the binary opposition as a point of departure for critical analyses;
- an acknowledgement of marginalised Others who are, on a sociocultural level, the inferior pole of a binary; it is from the viewpoint of the Other, however, that a thorough critique of the very norms that produce the Other in the first place becomes possible;
- an understanding that Otherness and difference are no ontological absolutes;
- a deliberate turn to the power of discourse to produce and renegotiate cultural meanings pertaining to difference; this includes a focus on 'othering', too;
- a pedagogic focus on diversity in which difference and Otherness are affirmed; to avoid the endless reification of the Other as Other, it is necessary to challenge cultural norms alongside representing the Other, or providing a climate for the Other to speak.

Then I continued to investigate the specific discourses of cultural learning, literary learning, and gender-informed approaches in TEFL regarding their current renegotiations of cultural difference and Otherness. These critical concepts are central to the discourses I explored and form constitutive elements of the conceptualisations these research and practice strands of TEFL operate with. I could show that the fields of literary and cultural learning are generally attuned to embracing a turn away from essentialising binary oppositions of 'Us' vs. 'Them' towards representing a greater repertoire of differences and Othernesses. Thus, TEFL turns out to be deeply concerned with acknowledging and affirming Otherness and the Other. While these discourses are generally marked by an evolving and shifting rubric that is open towards diversity (e.g. as becomes apparent in the 'loss' of the core cultures of the UK and the US), there are at the same time limitations in view of the axes of difference and Otherness that actually move into the focus of attention. Thus, I argued that the generally flexible and open rubric of cultural and literary learning is renegotiable to be inclusive of greater diversity. In the main, such a renegotiation can serve to complement the national-ethnic line of demarcation that is given primary privilege in constituting what counts as 'cultural'. What is called for is an endorsement of other 'cultural' axes of demarcation that must also be reflected in the EFL literature classroom via a changed and updated 'literary canon'. Gender-informed approaches, as I have shown, constitute a particularly insightful case in point in the TEFL landscape of difference and Otherness. Over the past two decades, gender was in itself a category of

difference and Otherness that struggled for integration in TEFL research and classroom practice. The status that gender has today is indicative of the capability of TEFL discourse to incorporate new axes of difference and Otherness if they are carefully legitimised. At the same time that gender-informed positions strived for being heard, they also moved into view ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ that have hitherto been widely ignored in TEFL, namely those that defy the heteronormative and bi-gendered order, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identities. It is in the field of gender in TEFL that the call for implementing a queer-theoretical perspective becomes most tangible, although the discourses of cultural and literary learning also point into this direction.

In bringing all lines of argumentation together, I have shown that the dimensions of culture, literature and gender point towards, or actually demand, a more sensitive and broad inclusion of ‘other Others’ and ‘different difference’ into the horizon of TEFL. It is the theoretical achievement of Part A to have shown that TEFL research and practice can arguably accommodate greater diversity. Therefore, I propose that the outcome of Part A is the legitimisation of a conceptual ‘docking station’ which can be used to inscribe ‘new’ axes of difference and Otherness into TEFL as a discipline of research and classroom practice. This conceptual ‘docking station’ intends to encourage research into those lines of difference and Otherness that are yet underrepresented in TEFL, and provides a connection to other research areas that are similarly interested in difference and Otherness. As such, the theoretical argumentation and legitimisation of a more pronounced acknowledgement of diversity in TEFL is to be regarded as an important groundwork providing a cornerstone for further renegotiations. Above all, the purpose of such renegotiations – which are theoretically called for and endorsed – is to avoid the fossilisation or canonisation of a cultural or literary ‘status quo’ in TEFL. While the theoretical floor has opened up to begin researching other axes of difference and Otherness that can newly be inscribed into TEFL, I will use the second larger part of this dissertation to zoom in on ‘queer’ as an exemplar of those ‘peripheral impulses’ that are yet on the waiting list of TEFL. This serves to make accessible sexual and gender diversity as one ‘type’ of the ‘new’ ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ from the vantage point of queer-informed thought.

PART B: Diversifying English Language Teaching: The Potential of Queer Perspectives on TEFL

Part A has shown that the renegotiations of culture-, literature- and gender-specific discourses in TEFL are yielding an epistemic space for inscribing hitherto largely unacknowledged ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ into TEFL research and practice. My line of reflection and argumentation developed in part A embodies an invitation for further research to keep an open eye for the blind spots and the forgotten voices that are yet lying at the margins of TEFL discourses and that have not yet found their way into concrete teaching practice. It is also intended to establish a common ground for further theorising and problematising in what ways TEFL can and should achieve to accommodate a greater diversity of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ in order to keep alive an evolving dynamic for cultural, literary, and gender-informed learning into which innovative nuances and perspectives can be integrated that may serve to avoid a certain fossilisation of traditional and ‘canonised’ lines of difference and Otherness. Against the backdrop of these theoretical and conceptual considerations, I will argue in what will unfold as part B of this dissertation that a turn towards sexual and gender diversity can generate one of these ‘fresh’ nuances and perspectives that can serve to advance the evolving dynamic of TEFL.

In part B, I will therefore investigate and exemplify how the epistemic space carved open in part A can be filled with sexual and gender diversity as a particular force field of cultural difference and Otherness. In thoroughly theorising and problematising the integration of sexual and gender diversity into the scope of TEFL, I seek to illustrate at a very specific example how the call for building new specimen of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ into TEFL research and practice can be realised. Yet at the same time, sexual and gender diversity is not intended to serve simply as a utilitarian or arbitrarily chosen example of how to broaden the horizon of cultural difference and Otherness in TEFL. I do follow the assumption that sexual and gender diversity *in its own right* holds in store an inherent educative value for teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Therefore, I will also use part B to legitimise why this particular angle is worth integrating into the scope of TEFL. In doing so, I will close a particular research and practice gap and engage with the desideratum that sexual and gender diversity has so far received only little attention in German TEFL discourses. The dearth of research and practice-oriented considerations for the German context stand in stark contrast to international ELT research, where issues of sexual and gender diversity have received remarkably more attention. Consequently, international research literature that has so far been put forward in this field will prove a paramount anchoring point for the conceptual considerations and theoretical reflections I will develop in part B.

I will construct the integration of sexual and gender diversity into the scope of TEFL by employing a queer-informed lens. Not only is the term queer used as a shorthand umbrella term to encompass lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identities. Queer has also come to be associated with particular forms of academic theorising, political activism, and pedagogy. In part B, I will interrogate Queer Theory and its coterminous fields of politics and pedagogy as

regards their potential and their implications for TEFL research and practice. What will emerge is a queer-informed theoretical framework for mapping sexual and gender diversity onto the horizon of TEFL. This framework will be based on the key insights of queer thought, yet it is also constructed critically in that I seek to sound out the limitations of Queer Theory, politics and pedagogy, i.e. those aspects that are not easily transferrable to or reconcilable with TEFL theory and classroom practice. This framework will integrate, but also expand on, queer-informed thinking that has already been developed in the field of international ELT research. Ultimately, this framework is intended to serve as a conceptual rubric that illuminates how sexual and gender diversity can be mapped systematically onto the horizon of TEFL under the aegis of queer as a new angle of cultural difference and Otherness. Thus, I aim at providing an innovative nuance to complement and diversify more established axes of difference and Otherness in view of cultural learning, the EFL literature classroom, and gender-oriented approaches to TEFL.

I will present part B in two chapters. In chapter 5, I will develop a careful line of argumentation to legitimise why sexual and gender diversity should receive more attention as an integral part of TEFL research and practice. This includes a thorough analysis of a select range of German TEFL curricula and other additional educational frameworks. This analysis, carried out for the first time in the German educational context from this particular vista, is meant to show in how far these educational documents endorse or even require that a focus on sexual and gender diversity be employed in TEFL. I will continue with a brief overview of pedagogic research in Germany, calling on schools and individual school subjects to grapple with issues of sexual and gender diversity. Furthermore, chapter five will also provide an introductory overview of international research formations located at the intersection of English Language Teaching and sexual and gender diversity. I will read this nascent body of research as a call to overcome the dearth of queer-informed research emanating from, and referring to, the German TEFL context. At the same time, my reading of this particular branch of international ELT research also seeks to identify further reasons for linking a focus on sexual and gender diversity with English Language Teaching.

The outcome of chapter six will be a systematic framework for ‘queering’ TEFL research and classroom practice. To construct this queer-informed framework, I will first of all shed light on the rich and contradictory meanings of the term queer in order to explain the semantic baggage that one imports into TEFL by embracing a queer perspective. I will then engage with three specific and interrelated arenas where queer’s “most important and epistemic promise” (Eng 2010: 193) – that is, critique – is playing out productively, including queer political activism, Queer Theory, and queer pedagogy. In critically evaluating the potential, but also the limitations, of queer-informed thought for TEFL, I will identify several anchoring points at the nexus of queer and TEFL that serve to provide an informed and systematic rubric for making sexual and gender diversity a deliberate component of the EFL classroom. Each of these anchoring point will be elaborated on in detail in view of the contributions, but also the challenges, it poses for cultural, literary and gender-oriented learning in TEFL.

5 Sexual and Gender Diversity: Legitimising a New Dimension of Otherness and Difference in TEFL

The reasons for choosing to establish a perspective on sexual and gender diversity in Teaching English as a Foreign Language might not be immediately transparent. For some, this thematic link might combine two domains that, at least at first sight, share no common ground. For others, sexual and gender diversity might come across merely as a new add-on to an already overcrowded curriculum, causing skeptical reactions among those who now would have to cover yet another impulse emanating from TEFL research. Some, however, might readily welcome this new impulse as something that has long been overdue in an educational system that is located in a pluralistic, equitable and democratic society. Still others might perceive the call for including sexual and gender diversity into the EFL classroom, but also into education at schools in general, as a downright provocation, as it moves a domain that is felt to be an area of either taboo or private concern into the spotlight. In this chapter, I will adopt a position that mediates between these possible initial reactions and construct a line of argumentation that serves to show why sexual and gender diversity has a legitimate place in the EFL classroom. This legitimisation will unfold along three specific lines of interrogation:

- In what ways, if at all, do current German TEFL curricula posit a focus on gender and sexual diversity as an educational requirement? What are the implications of other important educational frameworks such as school laws or sex education guidelines for TEFL in view of sexual and gender diversity?
- What do current pedagogic considerations have to say about acknowledging sexual and gender diversity in education at school, and what are the resulting implications for TEFL?
- In what specific ways are aspects of diverse sexual and gender identities already discussed in international ELT research, calling upon German TEFL research to enter a mutually enriching dialogue on this emerging educational challenge?

Each of these questions will be explored to shed light on the status of sexual and gender diversity in German TEFL research and practice. What will be gained from this exploration is an understanding in how far a queer-informed approach to TEFL is legitimately called for after all. The fine-tuned argumentative fabric I will develop in chapter 5 will serve the purpose to sensitise the field of TEFL to its shifting educational mandate and to point out a range of reasons why issues of sexual and gender diversity can no longer be ignored in research and classroom practice.

5.1 The Curricular Dimension: Sexual and Gender Diversity in German TEFL Curricula and Educational Guidelines

Educational guidelines and subject-specific curricula are an important source of information and a valuable object of investigation to find out about the status of sexual and gender diversity in education. This also renders educational frameworks a valuable point of entry to seek out in how far they can be used to legitimise and establish a focus on sexual and gender diversity in the EFL classroom. The value of educational guidelines and curricula for such a legitimisation particularly lies in their status of being official administrative, legal and normative documents that function to define the aims and the content of education at school and to constitute a general pedagogical vision of what education should ideally strive for (cf. Salden-Foerster 2010: 169). Being the result of political decision-making and mirroring the democratic will of the public, such documents indicate what is officially and socially considered to be educationally relevant. In other words, if certain content or certain goals have been uplifted to the height of curricular specification, in this case the engagement with sexual and gender diversity at school and in classrooms, then these documents become a viable source to legitimise and enter new pedagogical approaches that were unthought of before, and also to draw conclusions about the trajectories of EFL education. Against the backdrop of these considerations, what will emerge in this subchapter is a critical reading of current German TEFL curricula, as they show how TEFL as a school subject stylises its own engagement with sexual and gender diversity. This reading of TEFL curricula is combined with an investigation of select educational guidelines that provide the overarching regulatory framework into which TEFL as a school subject is embedded. What they have to say about sexual and gender diversity is bound to be relevant for TEFL, too. To contextualise my investigation, I will at first turn to the immense political struggles that took place in the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg when the Ministry of Education announced the inclusion of sexual and gender diversity as a mandatory aspect of school education. In the following section, I will provide a brief overview of the German educational system so that my analysis of curricula and educational guidelines becomes locatable in its specific context. This is followed by a critical discussion of the German educational standards for foreign language education, which seeks to identify in how far these standards – in view of the immense critique they have harnessed – can contain a queer dimension at all. In the last section, I will present the results of my analysis in view of the status of gender and sexual diversity in the German curricular landscape.

5.1.1 The Case of Baden-Württemberg: Public Struggles over Sexual Diversity in the New Educational Guidelines

Educational guidelines and curricula are far from being inert documents that exist somewhere in an administrative vacuum, unacknowledged by the wider public and, at best, interesting only to in-service teachers. On the contrary, the development of educational guidelines is embedded in a complex web of political decision-making and can all too quickly become the subject of heated public debates and complicated negotiation processes between those who welcome and those who reject certain curricular developments and innovations. A particularly striking example of this can be found in the context of educational reforms that were planned by the Ministry of Education in the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg under the aegis of the governmental coalition of the Green Party and the Social Democrats. In the late of 2013, a preliminary sketch of what would become known as *Bildungsplan 2015* came to public notice as a working paper, stating explicitly the intent and scope of the educational reform²⁸. Apart from working towards a general revision of subject-specific curricula towards standardisation and competence orientation, the Ministry of Education was planning to implement five so-called *Leitprinzipien* as over-arching and cross-curricular key principles of a modernised and future-oriented education that were to be interwoven into all individual school subjects. These principles included *Berufliche Orientierung* (professional orientation), *Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung* (education for sustainable development), *Medienbildung* (media education), *Prävention und Gesundheitsförderung* (preventive healthcare and health promotion) and *Verbraucherbildung* (consumer education).

It was, however, not for these five key principles as such that the *Bildungsplan* became the public bone of contention. Rather, what caused public argument was the intention to integrate into all of these key principles, and hence across all school subjects, an explicit focus on accepting sexual and gender diversity, for which the working paper employed the acronym LSBTTI (i.e. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender and intersexual). In the field of media education, for example, the intention was to encourage learners to reflect on the representation of sexual diversity in media, to develop an awareness of stereotypes, and to use digital media to find information about the lives and experience of LSBTTI people. It was this exact focus on LSBTTI issues that caused both public outcry and public applause. On the side of the skeptics stood those who charged the *Bildungsplan* for overemphasising sexual and gender diversity, undermining the social value of heterosexual and reproductive relationships, following ideological indoctrination, and sexualising children at too early an age. The welcoming side collected those voices which approved of the new *Bildungsplan* and its aim to reduce LSBTTI stereotypes and prejudice, enable an open dialogue and reflection on sexual and

28 Here, I am referring to a working paper that was issued by the Ministry of Education as a basis for the work of the commission for the new *Bildungsplan*. This working paper is archived and accessible online: https://web.archive.org/web/20140124070408/http://www.kultusportal-bw.de/site/pbs-bw/get/documents/KULTUS.Dachmandant/KULTUS/kultusportal-bw/Bildungsplanreform/Arbeitspapier_Leitprinzipien.pdf [Online, 14 September 2016]

gender diversity, mirror sociocultural diversity, foster tolerance and respect, and to discuss issues of sexual and gender diversity not only in biology classes but across a range of school subjects. Both proponents and opponents of the *Bildungsplan* organised public rallies and demonstrations, negotiated the new plans in at times highly polemic debates, and finally started petitions for and against the *Bildungsplan*.²⁹ After continued processes of negotiation and political decision-making, the new *Bildungsplan*, alongside new subject-specific curricula, was passed in 2016 for being implemented in the school year of 2016/2017.

A close look at the *Bildungsplan* in its final form reveals that the term *Leitprinzip* has been more moderately formulated as *Leitperspektive*, and that the focus on sexual and gender diversity has been merged with other markers of diversity into an additional and new *Leitperspektive* titled ‘Bildung für Toleranz und Akzeptanz von Vielfalt’, i.e. education for tolerance and acceptance of diversity, the key passage of which reads as follows:

Der konstruktive Umgang mit Vielfalt stellt eine wichtige Kompetenz für die Menschen in einer zunehmend von Komplexität und Vielfalt geprägten modernen Gesellschaft dar. In der modernen Gesellschaft begegnen sich Menschen unterschiedlicher Staatsangehörigkeit, Nationalität, Ethnie, Religion oder Weltanschauung, unterschiedlichen Alters, psychischer, geistiger und physischer Disposition sowie geschlechtlicher Identität und sexueller Orientierung. Kennzeichnend sind Individualisierung und Pluralisierung von Lebensentwürfen. Kernanliegen der Leitperspektive ist es, Respekt sowie die gegenseitige Achtung und Wertschätzung von Verschiedenheit zu fördern. Grundlagen sind die Menschenwürde, das christliche Menschenbild sowie die staatliche Verfassung mit dem besonderen Schutz von Ehe und Familie. Schule als Ort von Toleranz und Weltoffenheit soll es jungen Menschen ermöglichen, die eigene Identität zu finden und sich frei und ohne Angst vor Diskriminierung zu artikulieren. Indem Schülerinnen und Schüler sich mit anderen Identitäten befassen, sich in diese hineinversetzen und sich mit diesen auseinandersetzen, schärfen sie ihr Bewusstsein für ihre eigene Identität. Dabei erfahren sie, dass Vielfalt gesellschaftliche Realität ist und die Identität anderer keine Bedrohung der eigenen Identität bedeutet. (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg 2016)

As this passage clearly shows, the encompassing term LSBTTI has been removed in favour of gender identity and sexual orientation, which now appear on the same level as the other markers of diversity mentioned in the *Bildungsplan 2016*, rather than being singled out as in the initial working paper from 2013. The new *Bildungsplan 2016* foregrounds the constructive engagement with and tolerant awareness of today’s social complexity and diversity as an important learning goal, which includes sexual and gender diversity as *one* component. Interestingly, this *Leitperspektive* also mentions Christian values and the constitutional protection of marriage and the family. On the one hand, this can be read as a reconciliation with the most skeptical positions directed against the new educational plans. On the other hand, this strategic move within the *Bildungsplan* stresses the coexistence of various values and ways of being, rather than being too one-sided about particular concerns, without, however, foreclosing the possibility of critically reflecting on existing sociocultural norms and identities in education.

²⁹ I reconstructed this brief sketch of the public debate that revolved around the new *Bildungsplan* in Baden-Württemberg from what I followed attentively in media coverage and several online news articles (cf. Burchard et al. 2014, writing for *Der Tagesspiegel*; Schmoll 2014, writing for *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*; Stuttgarter Nachrichten 2014; Stuttgarter Zeitung 2014; taz 2014).

In contrast to the widely shared assumption within queer-informed pedagogical and ELT literature that schools and classrooms are monosexual spaces that reproduce a widespread silence around non-heterosexuality and marginalise LGBT phenomena and identities to the brink of invisibility (e.g. Bedford 2002; Nelson 2006 and 2009; Gray 2013b; Hartmann 2015), the Baden-Württemberg case offers a pointed example of how educational guidelines and curricula have achieved to legitimise and endorse a focus on sexual and gender diversity as an educational requirement, thus providing a solid cornerstone to counter the deplored silence and invisibility of LGBT issues in schools and classrooms. At the same time, the specific case of Baden-Württemberg illustrates well that sexual and gender diversity as a topic in schools is still a contested and sensitive issue. While this is no reason to stop the inclusion of sexual and gender diversity into curricula or guidelines, it still points to the careful legitimisation that is necessary to communicate the advent of new educational focal points to the public.

5.1.2 The Educational System in Germany: Overview

In Germany, education at schools is under the authority of the state, as the German *Grundgesetz*, the constitutional law for the Federal Republic of Germany, clearly states in its seventh article: “Das gesamte Schulwesen steht unter der Aufsicht des Staates” (Deutscher Bundestag 2015: Artikel 7). In federal Germany, however, education at schools is not centrally organised by a national body, but instead by the sixteen individual federal states of Germany, called *Bundesländer* or *Länder*, and their respective Ministries of Education. The federal principle of the so-called *Kulturhoheit der Länder* ensures that the authority over framing, regulating, developing and implementing school education and the general responsibility for aspects pertaining to the educational system lie in the hand of the federal states. As a result, each federal state in Germany issues their own *Länder*-specific educational guidelines and subject-specific curricula (cf. Christ, Ingeborg 2007: 71-72; Salden-Foerster 2010: 168). Even though school education in Germany is a federal issue, all sixteen Ministers of Education form a permanent conference, the *Kultusministerkonferenz* (KMK), which is the shorter name for what is officially called *Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* or, in its English translation, *The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany*. On the official website, the KMK describes its own role “as an instrument for the coordination and development of education in the country” and as “a consortium of ministers responsible for education and schooling, institutes of higher education and research and cultural affairs, [which] formulates the joint interests and objectives of all 16 federal states” (Kultusministerkonferenz 2016a). The KMK seeks to reach a consensus among all federal states about major educational issues that concern the whole nation, e.g. to keep all federal educational systems and qualifications comparable and to strive for educational standards that secure the quality of the educational systems (ibid.). The KMK is no official constitutional body with the right to pass its own legislation. The decisions took by the KMK are nonetheless highly influential in that they are the result of mutual agreement and, in effect, intended as political obligations which the individual federal states implement in their educational systems. A major example of the

KMK's political power was the 2002 decision to develop and introduce nationwide educational standards for select school subjects, including English and French as foreign languages. This resulted in the publication of a report by Klieme et al. (2003) that explicated the foundation and structure for educational standards; this report is called *Zur Entwicklung nationaler Bildungsstandards: Eine Expertise* (cf. Leupold 2010: 50). From 2003 onwards, the KMK has begun to publish educational standards for different school subjects, school types and levels of qualification. The new educational standards resulted in what some call a paradigm shift (e.g. Hallet/König 2010: 55) for the design of subject-specific curricula from the description of teaching input, e.g. in terms of content and teaching procedures, to a clear specification of the learning output in terms of competences (cf. Küster 2006: 18; Leopold 2010: 50). The effects of these standards on foreign language education will be discussed in the subchapter below (5.1.3), combined with critical and skeptical perspectives on such standards.

To continue the description of school education in Germany, it needs to be added that all *Bundesländer* have their own school laws, usually called *Schulgesetz*, which serve as overarching administrative and legal frameworks for the federal educational systems. At the example of the *Bundesland* North Rhine-Westphalia (cf. Ministerium für Schule und Weiterbildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen 2005/2016), the main purpose of a *Schulgesetz* is to provide the general conditions, duties and aims of all state-administered education at schools. The *Schulgesetz* applies to all schools equally, but leaves it to the responsibility of each school to implement its regulations in school-specific ways, thus transferring the legal framework of the *Schulgesetz* to the pedagogical practice of each individual school (cf. *ibid.* §§ 3 and 6). Furthermore, the *Schulgesetz* requires the federal Ministry of Education to develop school type-specific and subject-specific curricula (usually called *Lehrplan/Lehrpläne* in German) that determine the aims, the content and the expected learning outcomes (as educational standards) of each school subject, including English as a Foreign Language. Next to subject-specific curricula and the general school law, one also finds a number of additional guidelines (often referred to in German as *Richtlinien*) that regulate specific concerns of school education, for example the guidelines for sex education (*Richtlinien zur Sexualerziehung*) issued by most of the federal states. One could also read what a few states have passed as *Bildungsplan* as an encompassing educational guideline to provide new stimuli and define new priorities for the educational system, often with the intention to implement these stimuli and priorities across the various school subjects³⁰. These educational guidelines add new areas of responsibility to school education that cannot be contained within one specific subject area and are considered to

30 The federal states that have passed such general guidelines for education include Baden-Württemberg (where these guidelines are called *Bildungsplan 2016*, cf. Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg 2016), Hamburg (where there are specific guidelines for each school type, e.g., *Bildungsplan Gymnasium Sekundarstufe I: Aufgabengebiete*, cf. Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg: Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung 2011), or Berlin and Brandenburg in a joint cooperation (where these encompassing guidelines are published in two parts, one titled *Teil A: Bildung und Erziehung in den Jahrgangsstufen 1-10*, cf. Berliner Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft/Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport des Landes Brandenburg 2015a, and the other *Teil B: Fachübergreifende Kompetenzentwicklung*, cf. Berliner Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft/Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport des Landes Brandenburg 2015b).

be taught and learnt best in a cross-curricular manner (e.g. media education, environment education, sex education or global learning as stated in the Hamburg *Bildungsplan*).

To round up this overview of school education in Germany, it also needs to be said that there are various school types in Germany that allocate learners to specific schools according to age, achievement or purpose. This makes it highly difficult to provide only a short introduction to the school types within the German educational system, which is further complicated by the fact that each federal state can have its own specific system in place to name and organise the various school types. The basic structure of the educational system in Germany is sketched out in a diagram provided by the KMK in English, which will serve as the basis for the subsequent overview (cf. Kultusministerkonferenz 2016b). Generally, school education begins at primary level in what is called *Grundschule*. After the primary level, i.e. after the first four years of education, students continue school education at secondary level. Entering the first phase of the secondary level (*Sekundarstufe I*), students are allocated to various school types usually according to their level of achievement. Roughly speaking, there is a distinction between *Hauptschule* (lower level), *Realschule* (medium level) and *Gymnasium* (upper level). Whereas all federal states have the *Gymnasium* as a specific school type, some federal states sometimes combine certain achievement levels and school types into comprehensive schools (which are called, for example, *Gesamtschule*, *Oberschule*, *Mittelschule*, *Regelschule*, *Sekundarschule* or *Stadtteilschule*). Education at primary and secondary level normally follows a broad educational agenda, called *Allgemeinbildung* in German, covering a range of disciplines, e.g. Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Foreign Languages (including English), German, History, Geography, Social Sciences, aesthetic subjects, etc. Having finished *Sekundarstufe I* (usually after nine or ten years of school education), students can, for example, begin to pursue a qualification for a profession, which often involves continued education at a vocational school (*Berufsschule*). Another option is, qualification and certificate permitting, to enter the second phase of secondary education (*Sekundarstufe II*) at a *Gymnasium*, a comprehensive or a vocational school, where students who pass through what is called the *Gymnasiale Oberstufe* can take their final exams to obtain the *Abitur*, which is the German matriculation qualification that provides entry to continued education at university level. This startling array of possible educational paths also leads to an astounding plethora of TEFL curricula within the whole school education landscape in Germany. In almost all federal states, TEFL curricula are issued specifically for school types and subsequently for achievement levels (e.g. *Gymnasium*), and also for the phase of education (e.g. *Sekundarstufe II*). Given the *Kulturhoheit der Länder*, it needs to be added that each *Bundesland* has its own set of TEFL curricula, although some federal states such as Berlin and Brandenburg have begun to cooperate and pass joint curricula. This sheer breadth of TEFL curricula within Germany necessitates a limitation to keep my investigation of how TEFL curricula deal with sexual and gender diversity at a manageable level. Yet before I explain my selection of TEFL curricula and other educational guidelines for this investigation, a further remark on the nature of German TEFL curricula is called for to lay a more solid foundation for their investigation.

5.1.3 The German Educational Standards for Foreign Language Education

The latest generation of German TEFL curricula is closely modelled towards meeting the statutory requirements set by the KMK in the educational standards for foreign language education. From 2003 onwards, the KMK has issued several documents that define these foreign language-specific educational standards for certain school types and achievement levels. As of 2016, there are three of these documents in place:

- *Bildungsstandards für die erste Fremdsprache (Englisch/Französisch) für den Mittleren Schulabschluss. Beschluss vom 4.12.2003* (Kultusministerkonferenz 2004a);
- *Bildungsstandards für die erste Fremdsprache (Englisch/Französisch) für den Hauptschulabschluss (Jahrgangsstufe 9). Beschluss vom 15.10.2004* (Kultusministerkonferenz 2005);
- *Bildungsstandards für die fortgeführte Fremdsprache (Englisch/Französisch) für die Allgemeine Hochschulreife. Beschluss der Kultusministerkonferenz vom 18.10.2012* (Kultusministerkonferenz 2014).

The educational standards follow a strict orientation towards output and competences, which becomes clear in Leopold's brief definition of the term educational standard:

Bildungsstandards sind Leistungsstandards, die fachbezogene Kompetenzen beschreiben, über die Schülerinnen und Schüler am Ende eines Lehrgangs verfügen sollen. Kompetenz- und Outputorientierung sind Grundlage des Konzepts. Outputorientierung bedeutet, dass der Unterrichtserfolg an der Leistung des Lernalers am Ende eines Lehrgangs gemessen wird. Die traditionelle begriffliche Unterscheidung von Fähigkeiten und Fertigkeiten des Lernalers wird aufgegeben zugunsten eines Kompetenzbegriffs, in dem Wissen und Können verschmelzen. (Leupold 2010: 50)

What follows from the implementation of educational standards is that they clearly determine the output, i.e. clearly delineated results, of what school education and learners must have achieved at a certain level of their educational career. The educational standards with their output- and competence-orientation have gradually and subsequently been implemented, or are still in the process of being implemented, by the federal Ministries of Education into new TEFL curricula. While the various *Länder* are bound to follow these educational standards, Leupold (2010: 52) points out that federal curricula can still contain *Länder*-specific priorities as, after all, it is the *Länder* that ultimately develop and pass new curricula, and the KMK decisions do not supersede the authority of the individual federal states. In effect, this means that no federal TEFL curriculum is exactly like the others. The investigation of guidelines and curricula carried out below in this subchapter will indeed show that several federal states have used this freedom to introduce additional educational objectives or content specifications to the new core curricula.

The backbone of the educational standards are the competence areas devised by the KMK. They can be grouped into three areas: functional-communicative competences (including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and orthography), intercultural competences and methodological competences. The area of functional-communicative competences follows the description levels of the CEFR, which was spearheading the shift from the input of teaching to

the outcome of learning, including the testing of these competences (cf. Grimm/Meyer/Volkman 2015: 11; Quetz/Vogt 2009; Hu et al. 2008). This competence area includes listening and viewing (*Hörverstehen* and *Hör-/Sehverstehen* in German), reading, writing, speaking (dialogue/monologue) and mediation. The fine-tuned description levels that can be found for the functional-communicative competence are not applied to the other competence areas. Accordingly, the descriptions for intercultural and methodological competences are formulated in a much simpler way. Roughly speaking, intercultural competences include sociocultural knowledge about Anglophone cultures (usually called *soziokulturelles Orientierungswissen*), the empathetic engagement with cultural difference, and the ability to master intercultural encounters (cf. Leupold 2010: 51; Grimm/Meyer/Volkman 2015: 11). Methodological competences are formulated for *Hauptschule* and *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* to include, for example, learning strategies, techniques for text reception and production, presentation techniques and language learning awareness. This area of methodological competences is separated and spelt out as further individual competence areas for the *Abitur* as text and media competence, language awareness and language learning competence (cf. Kultusministerkonferenz 2004a, 2005, 2014). In contrast to the oftentimes meticulously detailed competence descriptions, what immediately springs to mind is that the educational standards do not define any specific content that is to be covered in the classroom, or that can be used to demonstrate that certain competences have been achieved (cf. Leupold 2010: 52), which leads Hallet and Königs to state: “Die nationalen Standards [...] sind ‘inhaltsleer’” (2010b: 58). A look into individual federal ELT curricula reveals, however, that this content gap has been filled at least with a minimum specification of possible content for the EFL classroom (e.g. the *Kernlehrplan* for *Sekundarstufe I, Gymnasium*, in North Rhine-Westphalia), and also the curricula for the *Gymnasiale Oberstufe* tend to specify at least some content domains.

The advent of national educational standards for foreign languages and their subsequent translation into federal curricula have caused intense controversy among professionals and researchers working in the field of foreign language didactics. This controversy about the values or the drawbacks of educational standards is exemplarily mirrored in collections of essays by Bausch, Burwitz-Melzer, Königs and Krumm (2005) as well as Lüger and Rössler (2008), and also in several individual positions, articles and monographs, e.g. Zydatiś (2005), Hallet (2012), Bredella (2005, 2006) and Küster (2013). Furthermore, the German ELT magazine *Der Fremdsprachliche Unterricht Englisch* has published an issue on *Bildungsstandards* in 2006 in which several critical voices on educational standards are collected, including Hallet and Müller-Hartmann (2006), Vollmer (2006) and Küster (2006). The controversy around educational standards is probably epitomised best in a conflictual dialogue between a position paper by the board of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Fremdsprachenforschung* (DGFF) (Hu et al. 2008) and a subsequent critical response to the positions laid out in this paper by Quetz and Vogt (2009)³¹. The critical reception and discussion of educational standards in foreign

31 In the main, Quetz and Vogt (2009) argue vehemently against the uncritical import of the CEFR scales and descriptors into the educational standards for foreign language education. From their point of view, Hu et al. (2008)

language education has also found its way into current introductory texts and handbooks, e.g. Decke-Cornill and Küster (2014), Hallet/Königs (2010a), Leupold (2010) and Grimm, Meyer and Volkmann (2015). A range of these positions is, at least partly, sympathetic towards the introduction of educational standards. They welcome the opportunity to secure and increase the quality of the educational system by defining standards that have to be reached, to reduce the differences in educational success between the German federal states, and to hold educational institutions accountable for their pedagogic efforts and final achievements (e.g. Leupold 2010: 50; Hu et al. 2008: 50; Hallet/Müller-Hartmann 2006: 2). Among the outspoken critics of at least certain aspects of the educational standards one can clearly identify reproachful positions that charge the standards for expressing too little concern for actual *Bildung* to take place in the classroom, and for their utter neglect of relevant and meaningful content. Questions of content and *Bildung*, however, are immediately linked to engaging with sexual and gender diversity as a theme for critical reflection, as I will show below.

A major aspect of criticism launched against the educational standards entails the observation that their utilitarian focus clearly reduces relevant content and thus generally impoverishes the quality of foreign language education (cf. Quetz/Vogt 2009: 69; Rössler 2008: 44; Grimm/Meyer/Volkmann 2015: 13). In view of the lacking specification of content, both Küster (2006: 20) and Rössler (2008: 51) fear that the content and themes in the foreign language classroom could become completely arbitrary and trivial as long as they serve the purpose of achieving the competence objectives. This criticism is epitomised in Zydatiś' sweeping dismissal of the content that is actually offered in the example tasks accompanying the standard descriptions:

Die Trivialität der Themen und Inhalte ist erschütternd; denn sie sind 'generisch', austauschbar und dekontextualisiert, was ihre geografischen, historischen, sozialen, gesellschaftlichen und kulturellen Koordinaten betrifft. [...] [sie] blenden faktisch die gesamte allgemein- und persönlichkeitsbildende Dimension des Fremdsprachenunterrichts aus. (Zydatiś 2008: 31)

Rather than giving in to the 'contentlessness' and output-only-orientation of the standards, Hu et al. (2008: 170), Bredella (2006: 54) as well as Hallet and Königs (2010b: 58) urge to enter into a fresh discussion and reconsideration of content that is suitable and educationally relevant for foreign language education. Optimistically speaking, the content gap that has been laid open by the standard descriptions can be filled creatively with carefully legitimised themes. Here, queer concerns or LGBT issues can become valuable content to fill the void. In response to Zydatiś' point of view above, such content would be an example of *non-trivial content* whose specific historic, social and cultural trajectories can be critically explored and experienced, e.g. at the example of literature, films, online media or non-fictional texts, so that learners can develop an open mind-set and a self-reflective position towards themes revolving around sexual and gender diversity (e.g. the gay and lesbian liberation movement in the US in the context of the struggle for civil rights taking place in the 1960s and 1970s).

did not voice too skeptical a concern against simply adopting the CEFR standards to the educational standards for the German school system. Both positions, however, seem to agree on the lack of content and the diminished role of aspects of *Bildung* in the standards.

Closely linked to the discussion of relevant content, various critical voices have made it very clear that the *educational* standards fail to live up to their own promise of fostering *education*. Küster, for example, provocatively asks if the educational standards may, in fact, be “Bildungsstandards ohne Bildung” (Küster 2006: 20), and Zydati complains that the term *Bildung* in *Bildungsstandards* is dishonest labelling or “Etikettenschwindel” (2008: 17). This causes Quetz and Vogt to draw the conclusion that the educational or *Bildungsstandards* are more properly speaking only *language* standards (2009: 64). But what does foreign language education lose if the educational standards ignore to foster *Bildung*? A comprehensive review of critical positions sheds light on the following concerns, indicating what is actually meant by *Bildung* in foreign language education contexts:

- personal growth and the development of the whole individual (e.g. Grimm, Meyer and Volkmann 2015: 13; Rssler 2008: 49), in particular also through intercultural understanding and decentering from one’s own positions and norms (Hu et al. 2008: 172);
- developing a sense of orientation in the world and maintaining an interrogating attitude towards the world (e.g. Grimm, Meyer and Volkmann 2015: 13; Kster 2006: 20);
- remaining open towards calling into question the premises of one’s own assumptions and ways of thinking (Rssler 2008: 50);
- allowing for multiple experiences of alterity in a heterogeneous world to achieve a positioning of the self in that world (Rssler 2008: 50; Kster 2004: 197), while critically engaging with cultural norms and cultural differences (Kster 2006: 19);
- a meta-cognitive reflection of the learner’s own attitudes towards what is learnt, how it is learnt, and in how far this impacts on the learner’s view of the world (Kster 2013: 52), which Zydati summarises as “die Reflexion des Selbst- und Weltverstndnisses” (2008: 17);
- the ability to make ethical and responsible judgements, and to critically evaluate sociocultural phenomena and issues (Hu et al. 2008: 172-173);
- imaginative and emotional access to other worldviews and life-worlds, e.g. through literary texts (Bredella 2006: 52; Rssler 2008: 50);
- intellectual depth, complex negotiations of meaning, critical thinking, and careful decision-making (Hu et al. 2008: 172-173; Zydati 2008: 30-31).

This overview shows that the critical, reflective, and imaginative aspects of foreign language education that have long been held to be crucial to foster *Bildung* might disappear from the classroom in the wake of an overpowering focus on cognitive growth only alongside accumulating standardised and testable competences. It is not difficult to read these positions as an urgent plea to maintain a thorough sense of *Bildung* as an integral part of the long-term project of foreign language education at school. In view of queering TEFL, the overview of those elements that are considered to be important for *Bildung* read like a blueprint in which to embed a critical, reflective and imaginative position towards sexuality, gender, and their aligned

norms, as an encompassing aspect of the learners' sense of the world. In view of queer thinking about foreign language education, I strongly believe that exactly these dimensions play a vital role, e.g. when it comes to critically reflecting on heteronormativity or the cultural aspects of sexual and gender identity, or to experience LGBT issues in literary texts. Therefore, I also critically distance myself from too reductionist a focus on (pragmatic and utilitarian communicative) competences, especially as the imbalance this focus creates would potentially outrule the possibility to locate queer perspectives within foreign language education.

To round off this critical discussion of the German educational standards for foreign language education, I consider it appropriate to introduce a reconciling remark to counterbalance the sheer weight of criticism collected above. While I still subscribe to those positions pointing out that the educational standards *as they are* neglect the role of relevant content and fostering *Bildung*, I wish to emphasise that one must not fully succumb to the regulatory power of the standards to define what foreign language education is ultimately all about. Surprisingly, it is the KMK itself that relativises the defining impact standards have on education. In the paper *Bildungsstandards der Kultusministerkonferenz: Erläuterungen zur Konzeption und Entwicklung*, the KMK writes:

Schulqualität ist aber selbstverständlich mehr als das Messen von Schülerleistungen anhand von Standards. Der Auftrag der schulischen Bildung geht weit über die funktionalen Ansprüche von Bildungsstandards hinaus. Er zielt auf Persönlichkeitsentwicklung und Weltorientierung, die sich aus der Begegnung mit zentralen Gegenständen unserer Kultur ergeben. Schülerinnen und Schüler sollen zu mündigen Bürgerinnen und Bürgern erzogen werden, die verantwortungsvoll, selbstkritisch und konstruktiv ihr berufliches und privates Leben gestalten und am politischen und gesellschaftlichen Leben teilnehmen können. (Kultusministerkonferenz 2004b: 6-7)

Indeed, the KMK clearly states that concerns of holistic education and relevant content on the one hand and a functional view on education on the other hand do not have to be mutually exclusive. This statement can be used productively to recall Bredella's viewpoint in which he makes a strong case for stepping back from the dichotomous alternatives of following either input-orientation or output-orientation and to reintroduce aspects of what was previously known as input (i.e. aspects of content and *Bildung*) back into standardised guidelines and curricula (2006: 54). In concisely capturing the possibility to 'subvert' what the educational guidelines seem to 'prescribe' as 'irrevocable', I find Hallet and Müller-Hartmann's conclusion very convincing:

Diese Relativierung der Bedeutung der Standards für den Prozess schulischer Bildung ist also Teil der Konzeption und ist gerade für den Fremdsprachenunterricht von großer Bedeutung, der ja nicht nur auf eine funktionale kommunikative Kompetenz, sondern auch auf Persönlichkeitsentwicklung, Einstellungen wie Bereitschaft zur interkulturellen Verständigung und Toleranz oder auf ästhetische Verstehens- und Ausdrucksfähigkeit zielt. Umgekehrt bedeutet dies: Der Fremdsprachenunterricht kann und soll sich auch im Sinne der Bildungsstandards ausdrücklich nicht auf den Erwerb jener funktionalen Kompetenzen beschränken, die schließlich operationalisierbar werden und Gegenstand externer Überprüfungen sind. (Hallet/Müller-Hartmann 2006: 3)

From my point of view, this quote pointedly illustrates that foreign language didactics as a practice-oriented discipline *must* act self-confidently with a view to defining and redefining the core aspects of foreign language educations that might not be covered by the educational

standards, and hence go beyond clearly delimitable and testable outcomes. Queer thinking about foreign language education, I argue, can contribute to this critical challenge of invigorating the discussion of relevant and meaningful content and the potential for *Bildung* that foreign language classrooms hold in store.

5.1.4 Legitimising Sexual and Gender Diversity in TEFL – An Analysis of German TEFL Curricula and Educational Guidelines

In this subchapter, I will explore if sexual and gender diversity already feature as a content dimension in German TEFL curricula, and in what ways other educational guidelines might already have constituted sexual and gender diversity as a topic relevant for *Bildung*. This investigation of TEFL-specific and more general educational guidelines serves the twin purpose of taking stock of the current status of sexual and gender diversity in these documents, and – provided that a focus on this topic does indeed feature in some way – of using these findings from curricular and educational policies to legitimise the need for continuous queer-informed research in TEFL. Given the broad spectrum of educational guidelines and TEFL curricula across all school types, I will restrict my analysis of the status of sexual and gender diversity in educational frameworks to the following documents:

- all three available **national educational standards for foreign language education** as they were issued by the *Kultusministerkonferenz*;
- the **TEFL curricula for the school-type *Gymnasium***, including *Sekundarstufe I* and *Sekundarstufe II*; such a restriction is necessary to keep the analysis manageable;
- a selection of **general educational documents**, as they define the context into which EFL education is embedded and also impact on the EFL classroom; the documents include **the federal school laws** (*Schulgesetze*), in particular their sections on sex education, called *Sexualerziehung* in German, and also the guidelines that most (but not all) of the federal states have published additionally to determine the scope and the details of what should be covered in sex education (usually called ***Richtlinien zur Sexualerziehung***); the aim is to find out how each federal state conceptualises sex education for its schools, also in view of diversity;
- the new general **educational plans** that some federal states have developed to define cross-curricular tasks and responsibilities (such as the *Bildungsplan 2016* for Baden-Württemberg mentioned at the outset of this subchapter).

To draw as complete an image as possible of the whole situation in Germany, I will look at the respective documents of all sixteen federal states, which are: Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria (*Bayern*), Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Hesse (*Hessen*), Lower Saxony (*Niedersachsen*), Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, North Rhine-Westphalia (*Nordrhein-Westfalen*), Rhineland-Palatinate (*Rheinland-Pfalz*), Saarland, Saxony (*Sachsen*), Saxony-Anhalt (*Sachsen-Anhalt*), Schleswig-Holstein, and Thuringia (*Thüringen*). I always took the latest and most current documents available. An overview of all curricular documents used for my analysis can

be found in the bibliography section of this dissertation under the rubric ‘German TEFL Curricula and Educational Documents’, where they will be sorted by federal state. Each of these documents has received an index (e.g. BW 1). I will use these indexes to provide the individual sources for the findings I collate here. Most of the German TEFL curricula have already been updated by incorporating the educational standards and therefore provide a very recent insight into the scope of the subject. A few remaining curricula, however, have not yet been renewed. While acknowledging that these documents might be outdated rather soon at some point in the future when implementing the educational standards, I still included them to complete the scope of German TEFL curricula. This means that my analysis is a temporary snapshot of the educational situation in Germany as of September 2016, when I last accessed these documents. Fortunately, all of the necessary educational documents are available online on the websites of the federal Ministries of Education, often as downloadable PDF documents, which made access to these documents easier. I approached and scanned through the educational guidelines and TEFL curricula with the general question in mind if, and in how far, they do endorse or require an engagement with issues pertaining to sexual and gender diversity in the classroom. I will first present the findings that summarise and evaluate the current state of sex education in German schools. These findings were constructed on the basis of the school laws, existing guidelines for sex education, and the requirements set by the new educational plans that have been published in some federal states. What comes second is an overview of the results regarding the status of sexual and gender diversity in TEFL curricula, including the educational standards. Rather than discussing the very details of all documents for all sixteen states in elaborate length, I permit myself to synthesise my findings whenever possible and to provide exemplary insights into the documents selected to illustrate certain findings.

Sexualerziehung at German schools

None of the German federal school laws prohibit the inclusion of sexual and gender diversity as a thematic focus in schools. One important finding is that almost all states (apart from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) explicitly define sex education as a cross-curricular responsibility. Eleven out of sixteen federal states make an explicit reference to sexual and gender diversity as a topic within sex education. The overview in **Table 1** collates these findings: it is sorted by federal state, cross-curricular approach to sex education, and explicit mentioning of sexual and gender diversity. What emerges from this overview is that in most of the German federal states, sex education is a cross-curricular responsibility which is also required to cover an explicit focus on sexual and gender diversity as a topic. This requirement is either located in the respective school laws, in the additional specifications of individual guidelines on sex education, or in further educational plans that generally define cross-curricular tasks of education at school. Consequently, also the subject of English as a Foreign Language has to contribute to the larger educational task of sex education in most of the federal states. This poses the challenge for TEFL to live up to this educational requirement and develop concepts for integrating a focus on sexual and gender diversity into its repertoire of teaching concepts.

Federal state	Sex education as a cross-curricular responsibility	Sex education with an explicit focus on sexual and gender diversity
Baden-Württemberg	+ (BW 2)	+ (BW 2)
Bavaria (Bayern)	+ (BY 3)	-
Berlin	+ (BB 4)	+ (BB 4)
Brandenburg	+ (BB 4)	+ (BB 4)
Bremen	+ (BR 1)	+ (BR 2)
Hamburg	+ (HH 5)	+ (HH 5)
Hesse (Hessen)	+ (HE 2)	+ (HE 3)
Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen)	+ (LS 1)	-
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	- (MV 1)	+ (MV 4)
North Rhine-Westphalia (Nordrhein-Westfalen)	+ (NR 1)	+ (NR 2)
Rhineland-Palatinate (Rheinland-Pfalz)	+ (RP 2)	+ (RP 2)
Saarland	+ (SA 2)	+ (SA 2)
Saxony (Sachsen)	+ (SX 1)	-
Saxony-Anhalt (Sachsen-Anhalt)	+ (SA 2, SA 3)	+ (SA 2, SA 3)
Schleswig Holstein	+ (SH 1)	-
Thuringia (Thüringen)	+ (TH 1)	-

Table 1: Sex education at German schools as a cross-curricular responsibility and as explicitly referencing sexual and gender diversity as a topic (+ = yes/ - = no). The index for the respective source is given, e.g. BW 2; it directs to that particular source document in the section ‘German TEFL Curricula and Guidelines’ in the bibliography.

To give an example of how sex education is defined more specifically, let me quote from the school law of North Rhine-Westphalia:

Die fächerübergreifende schulische Sexualerziehung ergänzt die Sexualerziehung durch die Eltern. Ihr Ziel ist es, Schülerinnen und Schüler alters- und entwicklungsgemäß mit den biologischen, ethischen, sozialen und kulturellen Fragen der Sexualität vertraut zu machen und ihnen zu helfen, ihr Leben bewusst und in freier Entscheidung sowie in Verantwortung sich und anderen gegenüber zu gestalten. Sie soll junge Menschen unterstützen, in Fragen der Sexualität eigene Wertvorstellungen zu entwickeln und sie zu einem selbstbestimmten und selbstbewussten Umgang mit der eigenen Sexualität zu befähigen. Darüber hinaus sollen Schülerinnen und Schüler für einen verantwortungsvollen Umgang mit der Partnerin oder dem Partner sensibilisiert und auf ihre gleichberechtigte Rolle in Ehe, Familie und anderen Partnerschaften vorbereitet werden. Die Sexualerziehung dient der Förderung der Akzeptanz unter allen Menschen unabhängig von ihrer sexuellen Orientierung und Identität und den damit verbundenen Beziehungen und Lebensweisen. (NR 1: §33)

Interestingly, this passage follows a broad understanding of sexuality that is not limited to biological aspects only (e.g. the body, reproduction, contraception). Indeed, sex education also has to address ethical, social and cultural questions pertaining to sexuality. This specification provides a valuable anchoring point for linking sex education, and hence a focus on sexual and gender diversity, with TEFL. If sex education needs to cover the cultural dimension of sexuality, then a focus on the cultural ramifications of sexuality can be mapped onto the scope of cultural learning in TEFL. This could include, for example, explorations of how sexual identity is enmeshed in culturally normative systems (i.e. heteronormativity) that produce a cultural margin of sexual or gendered Others. It is also possible to retrace how sexual identity is produced and enacted on a discursive level (e.g. through the practice of coming out), or one could adopt a historical perspective to discover how LGBT rights movements fought, and are still fighting, for recognition and civil rights in diverse cultural contexts (e.g. in the USA or in South Africa). This broad notion of sexuality, including social and cultural viewpoints on sexuality, runs centrally through the specifications of sex education issued by the federal states.

As the analysis has shown, most of the federal states also include a focus on sexual and gender diversity into their guidelines. The exact formulations might differ from state to state, but Bremen is a representative example of how sexual and gender diversity is incorporated and stated explicitly in the guidelines:

Schulische Sexualerziehung bietet den institutionellen Rahmen, die Lebenswirklichkeiten, Fragen und Themen der Schülerinnen und Schüler sachlich und fachlich angemessen aufzugreifen. Geschlechtsspezifische, soziale und gesellschaftlich relevante Themen der Sexualerziehung werden thematisiert, methodisch vielfältig sowie alters- und entwicklungsangemessen bearbeitet. In vielen Klassen finden sich Kinder, Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene, die bezüglich ihrer sexuellen Identität unsicher sind und ein Recht darauf haben, in diesem Lebensraum angemessen unterstützt zu werden. Ein offener und respektvoller Umgang mit Schülerinnen und Schülern und allen an Schule Beteiligten bezüglich ihrer sexuellen Identität gehört zum Selbstverständnis von Schule. Schulische Sexualerziehung gibt Schülerinnen und Schülern Orientierung, begleitet und unterstützt sie in dem Prozess der Entwicklung einer verantwortlichen, gesundheitsbewussten, selbstbestimmten Sexualität. Sie schafft ein Bewusstsein für die Gleichberechtigung der Geschlechter in allen Lebensbereichen und für ein verantwortliches, gewaltfreies und partnerschaftliches Verhalten. Sie verfolgt das Ziel, die gesellschaftlich noch vorhandenen Stereotype gegen Homo-, Bi- und Transsexuelle abzubauen und greift deren Lebenswirklichkeit auf. Zielvorstellung ist, dass auch dieser

Personenkreis in unserer Gesellschaft einschließlich der Schulen leben kann, ohne verbale und körperliche Gewalt befürchten zu müssen. (BR 2: 2)

This passage provides valuable insights regarding how sex education is pedagogically embedded. On one level, schools are described as suitable spaces in which learners can voice their concerns and receive adequate information on issues related to sexuality. Also the EFL classroom as a part of the larger institutional context that a school provides must be prepared to respond adequately to specific questions and issues related to sexuality, or take a more proactive role and include such issues into regular teaching scenarios, whenever suitable. Furthermore, this passage is indicative of the liberatory, affirmative and emancipatory pedagogy underlying modern sex education. The main objective is to support students in finding their own identities and create a safe space in the school environment in which learners feel welcome. To contribute to this pedagogic demand, the EFL classroom could offer various patterns for expressing and living one's gendered or sexual life, e.g. through literature or films with varied and balanced identity representations. Furthermore, the EFL classroom can become a space in which students are given the opportunity to reflect on and negotiate issues of gender and sexuality, and broaden their horizon by changing into other viewpoints and recognising the limiting power of fixed normativities. Since the focus in the EFL classroom is also on language, one further contribution would certainly be to challenge harmful discourse in which stereotypes are cited and perpetuated, and develop a sensitivity for a more inclusive and empathetic language use.

A further, highly interesting finding of how the dimension of sexual identity is mapped onto the educational sphere can be found in the newly published educational plans in Hamburg (*Bildungsplan Gymnasium Sekundarstufe 1: Aufgabengebiete*). Similar to other federal states such as Berlin, Brandenburg or Baden-Württemberg, Hamburg has recently defined a core of cross-curricular educational requirements that all school subjects must contribute to. One of these cross-curricular educational requirements is called intercultural education, which is defined as follows:

Interkulturelle Erziehung geht von einem erweiterten Kulturbegriff aus. Kultur ist nicht nur im Sinne von ethnischer Herkunft zu verstehen – vielmehr besteht jede Gesellschaft aus sich ständig verändernden Teilkulturen. Diese werden bestimmt vom sozialen Milieu, der regionalen Herkunft, dem Geschlecht, der Generation, dem Glauben, der sexuellen Orientierung etc. Jeder Mensch ist somit Träger unterschiedlicher Kulturen und kann – je nach Kontext – unterschiedliche Facetten seiner kulturellen Prägung in Kommunikationssituationen einbringen (Modell der „Mehrfachzugehörigkeit“). (HH 2: 23)

Interestingly, the new educational guidelines work with a very broad understanding of culture that does not privilege one cultural domain over others (e.g. ethnicity). This mirrors the recent tendency in cultural learning discourses of TEFL, where the emphasis is increasingly on a wider understanding of culture that exceeds national or ethnic lines of demarcation. What one finds here, at the example of Hamburg, is a curricular endorsement of a wide view on culture, including sexual orientation, which opens up multiple paths of redefining what cultural learning is about, e.g. by becoming attuned to other facets of culture, or other lines of cultural difference, that have hitherto not found their way into the classroom. While I have so far transferred educational requirements, such as a broad understanding of sex education, to the EFL classroom from the outside and legitimised the inclusion of queer foci into TEFL via general educational

guidelines, I will now take on an inside perspective and show how TEFL curricula themselves deal with or incorporate issues of sexual and gender diversity.

Sexual and gender diversity in German TEFL Curricula

My investigation of the German curricular landscape of TEFL shows that the main educational documents, that is, the three available specifications of the educational standards for foreign languages, do not contain any reference to sexual or gender diversity. This might not seem surprising, precisely because these documents have been criticised time and again for lacking any concrete description of educationally relevant content. What is nonetheless possible, I argue, is to engage with the specifications these educational standards offer and interpret them in an open and progressive way. When they posit the engagement with *cultural difference* as a central component of cultural learning, for example, it is within interpretive reach to apply a broad understanding of culture to that specification. Consequently, “Fähigkeiten im Umgang mit kultureller Differenz: Umgang mit Stereotypen, Erkennen von eigen- und fremdkulturellen Eigenarten, Fähigkeiten zum Perspektivwechsel“ (Kultusministerkonferenz 2014a: 10) can be read as follows: sexuality can be understood as one possible line of cultural difference, so that a focus, for example, on LGBT issues can be read into the educational standards. Furthermore, dealing with stereotypes, or changing one’s perspective into different cultural contexts and worldviews, could be similarly mapped onto the scope of sexual and gender diversity. As a result, what one could conclude is that as soon as a TEFL curriculum mentions something along the lines of cultural openness or diversity, it becomes possible to argue for an open interpretation and include sexual and gender diversity.

Since the educational standards are transferred into individual federal TEFL curricula by the individual federal states, the interesting question is whether new and actual content specifications have re-entered TEFL curricula through the back door, so to speak, when these federal TEFL curricula were designed. What one does find indeed in each of the TEFL curricula, both for *Sekundarstufe 1* and for *Sekundarstufe 2*, is at least a short list of rather broad suggestions or options for suitable content the EFL classroom can be filled with. But do issues pertaining to sexual and gender diversity have a place in these added content specifications? The most specific and elaborate reference to sexual diversity can be found in the TEFL curriculum for *Sekundarstufe 1* in Lower Saxony, which defines the educational mandate of TEFL as follows:

Das Fach Englisch thematisiert soziale, ökonomische, ökologische, politische, kulturelle und interkulturelle Phänomene, Probleme der nachhaltigen Entwicklung sowie die Vielfalt sexueller Identitäten und trägt dazu bei, wechselseitige Abhängigkeiten zu erkennen und Wertmaßstäbe für das eigene Handeln sowie ein Verständnis für gesellschaftliche Entscheidungen zu entwickeln. (LS 2: 6)

What reads like a preamble is the description of the general contribution of TEFL to education at large. It appears that this preamble offers a general pool of topics and issues the EFL classroom can draw from, including the diversity of sexual identities. Since these topics provide the larger framework of orientation for EFL education in Lower Saxony, it must be said that

they are not articulated as possible options or mere suggestions, but rather as obligatory topics that must find their way into the classroom. In lieu of a more detailed specification, however, the question remains how a topic such as ‘Vielfalt sexueller Identitäten’ can actually be broken down into smaller thematic units that make this large-scale topic accessible to learners. A further issue is the lack of a suggestion of possible media, materials or (literary) texts that can be used to transport this topic into the classroom. While it might not be up to a rather general curriculum as such to make these refined suggestions, it remains as a challenge to the individual teacher to transform the topic of sexual diversity in such a way that it becomes teachable and learnable.

The prominent position of the diversity of sexual identities in the Lower Saxony TEFL curriculum is unique compared to all other German curricula, where references to sexual and gender diversity are usually not explicitly mentioned. There are, on the whole, five further curricula that include a thematic option with some focus on sexual and gender diversity. These include:

- the TEFL curriculum for *Sekundarstufe II* in **Hesse**: for the larger topic area “conformity and rebellion”, one sub-area is “fighting for inalienable rights”, with suggested aspects such as social and religious discrimination, rights of homosexuals, and regulation of weapon ownership (HE 5: 39);
- the TEFL curriculum for *Sekundarstufe II* in **Saxony-Anhalt**: for the main phase of the *Sekundarstufe II*, “Aspects of Society” is provided as a larger topic focus, with optional subtopics such as “dealing with diversity”, which in turn includes “gender roles” and “sexual orientation” (SA 4: 33);
- the TEFL curriculum for *Sekundarstufe I* in **Rhineland-Palatinate** does not include any explicit mentioning of sexual or gender diversity as such; but what one does find at the very end of the curriculum is a list of suggestions for working on topics that are cross-curricular in nature and where TEFL can make a contribution; they list several “Erfahrungsfelder” (fields of experience), one of which is called “Selbstfindung” (finding yourself), where the goal is “Sexualität als Teil des Ichs begreifen” (understanding sexuality as a part of one’s identity), with a suggested link to the topic areas family, private life, relationships, sport, freetime, school and jobs that are mentioned in the TEFL curriculum (RP 3: 109);
- the TEFL curriculum for *Sekundarstufe II* in **Schleswig-Holstein** specifies “Individuality vs. mainstream conformity” as a larger topic framework, which includes as subthemes: “Ethnic distinction (Hyphenated Americans), Cultural distinction (Hudson River School of Painting), Social distinction (gay USA, sects)” (SH 3: 42)
- the TEFL curriculum for *Sekundarstufe I* in **Mecklenburg-Vorpommern** mentions several larger topic areas that cover years 7-10, including “No man is an island”; here, one can find the sub-area “being different (punks, homosexuals); attitudes and prejudices” (MV 2: 37).

While these topic specifications are often not more than suggestions, there is no guarantee that sub-themes which actually do make reference to issues of sexual and gender diversity are actually taught in the EFL classroom. But what needs to be highlighted is that, with these topics being explicitly mentioned in the curriculum, they move into the horizon of possibility. Furthermore, while some educational guidelines and the specifications on sex education they entail are rather vague and broad, what one finds here are concrete topic incentives, for example, the rights of homosexuals or gay USA. One could assume that such specifications make it easier for teachers to find a clearly definable focus for their EFL classrooms, but one can also conclude that – if the topic of sexual and gender diversity is to be covered in the EFL classroom – there is a need for more refined teaching suggestions and topic specifications.

The analysis of current TEFL curricula has shown that topics relating to sexual and gender diversity do indeed feature in the content descriptions, with the Lower Saxony curriculum as the example in which the diversity of sexual identities features most prominently. Even though curricular snapshots like these are still few and far between for the field of TEFL, it must be stressed that the inclusion of queer-oriented topics is also explicitly possible, at least in most of the German federal states, by arguing from the vantage point of a broad and cross-curricular understanding of modern sex education. In fact, if one brings all findings together, one can conclude that there is an overall educational requirement that also the EFL classroom should or even must contribute to increasingly diversified educational agendas that also give issues of sexual and gender diversity greater visibility. While Nelson observes that “queer issues and perspectives are rarely part of planned language curricula” (Nelson 2009: 211), my analysis has shown that the German educational context is an interesting case in point that provides a counter-example to Nelson’s perspective. In conclusion, then, it can be said that the integration of queer-informed topics into the EFL classroom can be legitimised for the specific educational contexts in most of the German federal states. What follows for TEFL research, I argue, is the growing need to begin with a reflection of how this new educational requirement can be put on a sound theoretical basis (e.g. by defining TEFL-specific learning objectives, materials, literary texts, or meaningful content domains). The challenge is to keep in sync with the emerging curricular changes and provide impulses that come from within the discipline of TEFL which can ultimately contribute to co-constructing the changing curricular landscape in Germany.

5.2 The Pedagogic Dimension: Research at the Intersection of Education and Sexual and Gender Diversity

As I have shown in the previous section, there is now a substantial number of educational guidelines, TEFL curricula and school laws in many federal states of Germany that make sexual and gender diversity a mandatory topic across the school subjects. But it is not only from a curricular perspective that the interest in sexual and gender diversity as a topic at schools seems to be rising. Recently, there is also a growing interest in the field of pedagogy to research the intersection of school, education, and sexual and gender diversity in greater depth. I will argue in this section that also the emerging interest in pedagogy provides an important legitimisation for the field of TEFL to engage with queer-informed research so as to contribute to, but also

benefit from, the nascent discursive formation that is currently forming around gender and sexual diversity. In what follows, I will provide an overview of existing pedagogic research in Germany that is currently shaping this specific discursive formation.

Most recently, the edited volume *Sexuelle Vielfalt im Handlungsfeld Schule: Konzepte aus Erziehungswissenschaft und Didaktik* (Huch/Lücke 2015a) provides a landmark contribution to making schools and individual subjects more inclusive of sexual diversity. Lücke and Huch (2015b) legitimise the need to integrate a diverse range of sexual and gender identities as a topic in schools with the educational mandate of schools:

Schule ist ein wichtiger gesellschaftlicher Ort für Jugendliche. Hier greift der Staat in die Lebenswelt von jungen Menschen ein, vermittelt Fachwissen, fördert Bildung und trägt zur Identitätsentwicklung bei. Junge Menschen sollen als Schüler/innen durch Teilhabe an einer demokratischen Schulkultur in einer vielfältigen heterogenen Gesellschaft der Zukunft vorbereitet werden. (Huch/Lücke 2015b: 7)

The main argument for integrating sexual and gender diversity into the school culture derives from the fact that today's society is expressively and increasingly more heterogeneous. On the one hand, schools must mirror this heterogeneity and cannot simply block it from view by ignoring certain lines of difference and diversity. On the other hand, schools must also actively prepare young people for a democratic participation both in school and outside school. A critical and ultimately a respectful understanding and position towards sexual and gender diversity are to be fostered. It is also noteworthy that Huch and Lücke's line of legitimisation is surprisingly similar to the argumentation in favour of integrating a focus on gender into schools that I have mentioned in chapter 4. On a meta-level, this shows that the type of argumentation, and the arguments put forward, are remarkably similar.

On another level, Huch and Lücke's edited volume is an immediate response to the growing curricular demand to actually integrate a focus on sexual and gender diversity into schools and individual subjects. As this can primarily be achieved through proactive action and explicit integration into the school curriculum, the individual school subjects are called for when it comes to linking their subject-specific inventory with the potentiality of teaching about sexual and gender diversity. Therefore, this edited volume is noteworthy in that it engages various school subjects and their related academic-didactic disciplines in this discourse: "[D]ie Fachdidaktiken einzelner Unterrichtsfächer [sollen] daraufhin befragt werden, welchen Beitrag sie zur Integration des Themenfeldes in das Wissen ihres Faches leisten können" (Huch/Lücke 2015b: 9). To date, this edited volume is the only available publication in Germany that transcends the general level of pedagogy and offers a perspective on individual school subjects and their contribution to sexual and gender diversity education. Yet for another reason, this edited volume is noteworthy. It does not include a single article on the contribution of the subject English as a Foreign Language to this pedagogic-didactic challenge, and neither is any other foreign language subject mentioned. This gap in view of English didactics is a convincing reason to embrace a queer perspective on TEFL.

5.3 International Research Discourses on the Queer Dimension of ELT

In the field of international English Language Teaching (ELT) research, one can observe a marked interest in transforming and updating ELT pedagogies by paying increasing attention to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identities and issues, and also by explicitly embracing a queer lens to theorise and reconceptualise specific aspects of ELT. Roughly over the past two decades, the intersection of sexual and gender diversity and ELT has emerged as a prolific and nascent focus of international research. Whereas up to the early 1990s the literature of English and foreign language education was permeated by a silence surrounding sexual and gender diversity, for the years that followed one can observe an initially slow, yet steadily growing stream of publications and also conference activities that address LGBT issues and queer perspectives in international contexts of ELT. This shows that sexual and gender diversity are increasingly being researched and discussed, thus countering the long-held absence of this specific focal point in ELT (cf. Gray 2013: 60; Nelson 2007: 63-64). Generally speaking, the proliferation of LGBT- and queer-informed research agendas at an international level precedes and outnumbers the research activities in this specific field that can be observed for the German TEFL context, where more often than not a focus on sexual and gender diversity has merely been suggested as a possibility for further research, or added to tentative ‘lip-service lists’ of diversity categories that one could also move into view. Seldom, however, has this specific focus been embraced as a research horizon in its own right (apart from the positions I discussed in the context of gender and TEFL in chapter 4.4). Therefore, it is my aim to bring international queer-informed research into a dialogue with the German TEFL context and feed my specific research back into the international ELT context. In what follows, I will retrace and identify certain nodal points that show how an ELT-related interest in LGBT and queer perspectives gradually gained ground internationally through publications and conferences. In addition to that, I will also extract key themes and issues from this academic work in order to highlight the lines along which a queer focus is connected to ELT, assuming that these insights are also insightful for the German TEFL context.

To begin with, it is probably wrong to assume that issues of sexual and gender diversity have never come up in ELT classrooms around the world, or that ELT teachers have never dared to mention and discuss LGBT-related issues and identities with their learners. What researchers such as Nelson have pointed out, however, is that the field of ELT has long been marked by “monosexualising tendencies” (2006: 1), by which she means that, for example, published research, but also planned language curricula, instructional materials or pedagogies have largely ignored discourses that form around sexual and gender diversity, or norms associated with sexual identities (cf. also Nelson 2009: 211). It appears that, if at all, a focus on sexual and gender diversity has at best been the exception than the standard in ELT research and practice. This situation began to change in the early 1990s when within the context of North American TESOL conventions, a lesbian, gay, and bisexual task force was formally called to live that brought the topic of sexual identities into more prominent attention (cf. Cummings/Nelson 1993; Nelson 1993a). This group expressed a decided interest “in including gay issues in materials, curricula, and teacher education, as well as in securing civil rights in the

workplace for gay faculty, administrators, staff, and students” (Nelson 1993a: 23). On one level, the group was centrally concerned with the invisibility of gay people in institutions despite their de facto presence in TESOL contexts and classrooms, and called for acknowledging the fact that “[w]herever there are people, there are gay people” (ibid.). In addition to this very fundamental awareness-raising about the existence of gay people in educational contexts and classrooms, the task force also articulated the need to find ways of addressing gay issues in classrooms as a topic, or to bring in these issues into classrooms via materials. This was considered to be a necessary step to engage all learners in discourses and themes relating to gay issues (ibid.). Such a move is noteworthy in that it did not restrict the educational need of gay inclusion to people who identify as gay. Instead, the task force highlights that ‘gay matters’ are a relevant subject for all learners alike, in particular because all learners get into touch with gay issues via media or the news, where discourses pertaining to sexual identities do indeed circulate (ibid.). Whereas the rhetoric of this task force mainly centralises around gay and lesbian issues, one can now observe a tendency to affirm a wider spectrum of sexual and gender identities, often under the umbrella of LGBT or queer identities (cf. for example Nelson 2015 or Merse 2015a).

In the two decades that followed, it was Cynthia Nelson who emerged as the most prolific researcher in the field. Her committed work sees the publication of a wide range of articles that brought LGBT and queer foci more firmly onto the agenda of international ELT (Nelson 1993b, 1999, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007). It is also Nelson who presented the first (and up to now the only) book-length theoretical and empirical study of sexual identities in English language education (2009). In 2007, Nelson put forward an overview article of published work in the field of ‘Queer Thinking about Language Teaching’ – which appeared in Decke-Cornill and Volkmann’s (2007) edited volume *Gender Studies and Foreign Language Teaching* and thus marks the first larger advent of international queer-informed research in the German TEFL context. In this article, Nelson collects thirteen publications and studies (three of which are her own) that “illuminate why and how sexual identities matter in the context of teaching, or learning, a foreign language or a second language” (Nelson 2007: 63). For Nelson, this body of research – even though it is still quite small – marks a turning point in language teaching contexts in that it challenges the peripheral status of issues of sexual identities in language education. Moreover, two special issues of research journals dedicated to LGBT issues and queer foci within ELT mark further nodal points adding to the dissemination of this newly emerging field. First, in 2006 the *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* featured a special issue edited by Cynthia Nelson that is titled ‘Queer Inquiry in Language Education’, including articles by Curran (2006), Dalley and Campbell (2006), Ellwood (2006), Moita-Lopes (2006) and Ó’Móchain (2006). Second, the summer 2015 edition of the British journal *Language Issues* contains four LGBT- and queer-related articles coming from speakers of the conference series Queering ESOL (see immediately below), including contributions by Jaspal (2015), MacDonald (2015), Merse (2015a) and Nelson (2015). Individual other publications that explore ELT at the intersection of sexual and gender diversity (mostly as a central, sometimes as a more peripheral focus) include articles by De Vincenti/Giovanangeli/Ward (2007), Gray (2013b), King (2008), Liddicoat (2009),

Norton/Toohey (2011), Pavelcyk/Pakuła/Sunderland (2014), Pavlenko (2004), and Shardakova/Pavlenko (2004). Notably, also the British Council has issued a research report on gender and sexuality in English language education with a specific focus on Poland (Pavelcyk/Pakuła/Sunderland 2015), which indicates that also a central institution for the worldwide ELT landscape has taken on an interest in sexual and gender identities, and that a queer-informed interest in ELT is increasingly being transferred to specific national ELT contexts.

Most recently, also academic conferences have added to the increasing momentum that a queer focus is currently gaining in ELT research and practice. In particular, I am referring to the seminar series *Queering ESOL: Towards a Cultural Politics of LGBT Issues in the ESOL Classroom*, which took place at King's College London, the Institute of Education of University College London and the University of Leeds in the UK from November 2013 to June 2015. In six individual seminars, this conference series explored how the provision of language education can be challenged and reconceptualised by incorporating a queer-informed framework into ESOL research and practice. This seminar series, organised by Mel Cooke, John Gray and Michael Baynham, set out "to identify how best to support the needs of LGBT students and teachers in the light of new institutional and legal frameworks" (Queering ESOL). This marks a response to new anti-discrimination laws in the UK, which highlight sexual orientation, transsexuality, and being in a civil partnership as three out of nine protected characteristics. But the seminar series is also attuned to new school inspection guidelines for England issued by OFSTED, which define a climate of respect towards diverse sexual orientations as an important criterion of a school's overall quality (cf. OFSTED 2015). Furthermore, this seminar series also established a fruitful ground for discussions and presentations, thus providing "a unique opportunity for exploring and making visible the inherently complex cultural politics of LGBT issues in ESOL" (Queering ESOL). In taking this approach, this seminar series counters the fact that the intersections of queer issues and language education remain under-researched, and that in general, sexual diversity is still largely invisible in many language teaching contexts. Another example of how the issue of sexual diversity begins to appear more prominently at international conferences is the Literature, Media and Cultural Studies SIG Day at the IATEFL conference in Liverpool 2013, with a talk and its proceeding publications focusing on LGBT literature in the EFL classroom (cf. Merse 2013, 2014).

While it turns out that there already is a distinct body of academic research and publications that engage with the intersection of sexual and gender diversity and ELT, the questions emerge with what reasons this emerging point of interest is legitimised (i.e. Why should sexual and gender diversity play a role in ELT?), and what key themes this existing research has projected onto the horizon of ELT. To begin with, it is a major recurring theme that ELT research has largely overlooked the domain of sexual identity, and that teaching practice in ELT either presumes or produces "a monosexualized version of the world within and beyond the classroom" (Nelson 2009: 44). The alleged monosexuality of ELT research and practice, however, does not mean that ELT is desexualised. Rather, Nelson argues, language education is constructed "as a heavily (and uncritically) heterosexualized zone, [...] excluding queer

perspectives and knowledges from our classrooms and our literature” (2006: 7). To name a few examples, this “compulsory heterosexuality” (ibid.), or for that matter, this monosexuality of the classroom, can become evident

- in the coursebooks that are used (i.e. in that they depict families, relationships, love interests or desires as exclusively heterosexual matters),
- in the teaching materials, literary texts or media that are chosen for the classroom (i.e. in that they tacitly presume and present heterosexuality as the norm, or in that they do not point to other, non-heterosexual ways of expressing one’s identity),
- in the way student cohorts are imagined (i.e. in that they are considered to be exclusively heterosexual, or in that they clearly belong either to the female or the male gender),
- in actual classroom discourse (e.g. in the way questions or tasks are posited as either open or limiting: “All girls are now going to describe their ideal future husband, and all boys their ideal future wives.” vs. “What are the qualities an ideal partner should bring into a relationship?”).

Following Nelson’s line of argumentation, it appears that heterosexuality has always been the prevalent and privileged, although not consciously recognised or interrogated status quo of language education. The effect is that non-heterosexual identities or issues have largely been overlooked both in research and for classroom practice, thus causing their exclusion and invisibility.

Certainly, Nelson makes a convincing point that the construction of language education as monosexual (i.e. as heterosexual) and heteronormative creates a blank space that renders, for example, LGBT identities as invisible, marginalised or completely excluded from research agendas or classroom practice. In critically reflecting on these notions of monosexuality or LGBT invisibility, I wish to point out that the mere absence of something from ELT research, teaching practice, coursebooks or curricula is in itself not a sufficient enough reason to demand its inclusion. Rather than jumping immediately from identifying a certain gap to at once filling that gap with what is thought to be missing, I argue that it is necessary to take the ‘detour’ of carefully legitimising why this gap needs to be filled, and in particular, why it needs to be filled in ELT. While I fully acknowledge that the privileging of heterosexuality at the cost of excluding and making invisible LGBT identities and issues is a deplorable condition in ELT, my call for legitimisation reflects a strategic move to link sexual and gender diversity sensibly and sensitively with concepts and concerns that are part and parcel of ELT research and practice. In doing so, I seek to prevent sexual and gender diversity from coming across as an arbitrary thematic add-on to the horizon of ELT that only gained this position by responding to an activist and social inequality impetus demanding its inclusion in *medias res*. The conceptual ‘docking station’ developed in part A for accommodating a greater diversity of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ in TEFL provides a crucial backbone for legitimising why a focus on sexual and gender diversity does have a place in German TEFL contexts and international ELT research.

Furthermore, I wish to point out that the notion of monosexuality in language education must not be generalised as the status quo of all ELT contexts. What is needed is a careful re-evaluation of this notion in view of the specificities of more local or national educational contexts (cf. Pavelcyk/Pakuła/Sunderland 2015). For the German TEFL context, for example, I claim that the assumption of a complete monosexuality and LGBT invisibility is no longer tenable. As I have shown in chapter 5.1, a range of educational guidelines endorse or even explicitly require sexual and gender diversity to become a topic in the EFL classroom, so that curricula cannot be said to presume or produce a monosexual worldview. Also when it comes to teaching materials and coursebooks, one can observe that previous allegedly monosexual grounds are beginning to shift. As I will show in chapter 8, some German TEFL coursebooks have begun to integrate queer perspectives and LGBT issues. Moreover, a handful of practice-oriented publications are now available in Germany that suggest innovative classroom materials and teaching ideas for countering a classroom's assumed monosexuality. These include, for example, Jay Brannan's song and music video *Housewife* to explore issues of same-sex relationships and marriages (Alter/Merse 2014), online autobiographical narratives of queer teenagers that provide insights into the nuanced, multifarious and contradictory acts of sexual and gendered self-identification (Merse 2015b), coming out videos and accounts of celebrities to engage learners in the experience of being publicly out as an LGBT star (Merse 2016), the use of 'global images' to explore queer political activism and protest as a global issue (Merse 2015c), the juxtaposition of Shakespeare's sonnet 18 with an LGBT young adult fiction short story to interrogate heteronormativity (König 2015b), or the suggestion of Jeffrey Eugenides' novel *Middlesex* for the EFL literature classroom to challenge heteronormative gender identities (König 2012). Moreover, as I have shown in part A of this dissertation, also German TEFL research is gradually opening up towards a greater diversity of 'other Others' and 'different differences', including a turn towards sexual and gender diversity. Although this specific 'newcomer' to the German TEFL context might still have a rather peripheral status, it nonetheless indicates that foreign language pedagogies are moving away from reproducing monosexuality and LGBT invisibility. A last question that remains is how much of these shifting grounds, reconceptualisations and new teaching ideas is actually transferred to concrete classroom practice. Is there still "an underlying sense that this [is] dangerous territory" (Nelson 2009: xiv), or are also teaching practices increasingly acknowledging and engaging with sexual and gender diversity (cf. *ibid.*)? To date, there are no empirical data available that would allow for illuminating this relevant question. But I would shy away from putting teachers under the general suspicion that they deliberately contribute to maintaining the EFL classroom as a monosexual bastion, and I know from my own anecdotal experience gained at workshops and conferences that there are committed teachers who teach English with a sensitivity towards sexual and gender diversity. What is still certainly needed is a broader conceptual basis and a convincing set of systematic strategies to support teachers in 'queering' the EFL classroom. Even though I have argued that a thorough and complete monosexuality and LGBT invisibility can most likely no longer be assumed for the German TEFL landscape, I suggest keeping the notion of the 'monosexual EFL classroom' as a useful and powerful conceptual metaphor for

EFL professionals to become consciously aware of those specific instances in which a monosexual and heteronormative worldview is still tacitly assumed or reproduced.

A look into publications on sexual identities and queer-informed approaches in ELT yields a set of arguments researchers put forward to legitimise the renegotiation of ELT pedagogies under the aegis of sexual and gender diversity. To begin with, Nelson makes a strong case for keeping language education socially relevant and up-to-date by responding to what she calls “the worldwide proliferation of increasingly visible lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identities and communities and the widespread circulation of discourses, images, and information pertaining to sexual diversity” (2009: 3). Even though discourses of sexual and gender diversity circulate globally and locally, e.g. through the Internet, films, pop songs, the news, political debates, human rights discussions, or in domains such as sports, arts, music, local communities, the family and peer groups, Nelson calls to mind that this discursive proliferation often stands in stark contrast to the almost systematic absence of these topics in language education classrooms (Nelson 2006: 1). This creates a somewhat odd and artificial rupture between what learners encounter as an integral part of their everyday realities and lives, and what they actually encounter in the world of the classroom. Not only does Nelson call for mirroring the infusion of public discourses with gender and sexual diversity in the classroom, she also proposes that learners “need to be able to comprehend, negotiate, and produce often nuanced and culturally variable meanings pertaining to sexual identities” (Nelson 2009: 205). This necessitates that the EFL classroom becomes a space in which learners are given the opportunity to critically engage with, and respond to, globally and locally circulating discourses of sexual and gender diversity. Therefore, such discourses need to be modelled into the classroom through a selection of media and texts that, for example, negotiate a range of LGBT issues. At the same time, the classroom needs to offer learners the opportunity to produce their own contributions to such discourses, e.g. in classroom discussions or through their own textual creations. As such, the legitimisation of sexual and gender diversity for the EFL classroom finds a central mainstay in the development of a learner’s overall discourse competence.

In close relation to this discursive dimension, Nelson (2009: 206) argues that being able to understand and communicate about gender and sexual diversity matters needs to be recognised as part of a learner’s developing linguistic and cultural fluency. This argumentation legitimises sexual and gender diversity as an integral part of the dimensions of language and culture that are central to language education. As Nelson describes it,

[L]earning a second or foreign language can be understood to involve grappling with myriad meanings; making one’s way without traditional anchoring points; and developing a heightened awareness of the centrality of language, the cultural specificity of knowledge, and the ways in which language and knowledge are infused with relations of power. (Nelson 2009: 12)

What can be deduced from Nelson’s position is that learners also need to learn the meanings pertaining to matters of sexuality and gender in new cultural and linguistic contexts. This fluency, according to Nelson (2009: 3, 206), is necessary to negotiate one’s own and others’ sexual and gender identities, communicate about sexual and gender diversity matters, and to interpret sexual and gendered cultural meanings that might be different from a learner’s original cultural imprint. This becomes particularly important when one understands sexual (and other)

identities with Nelson as discursively produced – not as “facts of life”, but as “acts of discourse” (2009: 12). She explains that accomplishing, constructing, negotiating, and regulating sexual identities involves language (cf. *ibid.*), the implication of which is that, in the classroom, learners and teachers can attend to the language acts by which diverse sexual and gender identities are accomplished so as to understand how these identities are constructed and interpreted through acts of speaking, listening, reading, and writing (cf. *ibid.*: 12-13). This, in turn, requires that learners can engage with such ‘acts of discourse’ in the classroom, for example by exploring how sexual identities are posited and negotiated in a text (e.g. a film, a literary text, a life narrative). In doing so, learners can gradually develop an inventory of linguistic means (e.g. vocabulary or chunks) and their language awareness in order to understand, reflect on, and communicate about and with the nuanced meanings involved in such linguistic acts of sexual identification.

From the vantage point of cultural learning, Nelson highlights that “sexual identities tend to be construed, interpreted and valued differently in different cultural settings and situations” (Nelson 2009: 206). What follows as a challenge for the classroom is to make learners familiar with the meanings, signifying practices, and norms of a specific cultural context in relation to diverse sexual and gender identities. Most of the existing studies (including all of Nelson’s studies, but also Curran 2006, King 2008, Jaspal 2015 and MacDonald 2015) are situated in contexts where adult migrants and refugees learn English as a second language (ESL) in Anglophone countries of the West (mainly in the USA and the UK, but also in Australia). Hence, the argument is that the understanding and exploration of the new cultural environment also involves learning about the cultural meanings and intricacies ascribed to identities and issues of sexual and gender diversity. But also in those studies that relate sexual and gender identities to *foreign* language learning (e.g. De Vincenti/Giovanangeli/Ward 2007; Liddicoat 2009; Merse 2015a; Ó’Móchain 2006; Pavelcyk/Pakuła/Sunderland 2014, 2015), researchers stress the need for learners to understand, and change perspectives into, the variable sexual and gendered norms, signifying practices, and values circulating in the respective other cultural contexts. Nelson (2009: 205) highlights that in today’s globalised classrooms (ESL classrooms in her contexts, but this equally applies to many EFL classrooms, also in Germany), learners come from diverse cultural backgrounds, and bring multiple perspectives and vantage points, rather than unanimously shared knowledges, about issues and identities pertaining to sexuality and gender into the classroom community. This makes the classroom an ideal site for exploring and discussing how sexuality and gender can be construed differently across various cultural contexts, which serves to highlight the constructedness of identities as opposed to their understanding as fixed and universal essences. In such diverse classrooms, the discussion of divergent cultural meanings can become particularly productive and fruitful. Nelson (2004a) describes a classroom setting in which both learners and the teacher explored the meanings of two women holding hands in public as culturally situated. Bringing in their various cultural perspectives, the learners raised various possibilities of how same-sex affection in public can be understood, negotiated and valued differently as a cultural meaning-making practice. This brought to the fore that what counts as normal, natural or obscure is socially created and that

sexual norms are managed and contested differently across cultural contexts, and are often enmeshed in power differentials when sexual identities are de-valued or misrecognised (cf. Nelson 2004a: 25; for similar examples cf. De Vincenti/Giovanangeli/Ward 2007 and Ó'Móchain 2006). In these specific examples, cultural meanings relating to sexual identities were carefully negotiated and compared in class, leading to a gradual built-up of understanding culturally-bound signifying practices relating to sexuality. Another classroom example, however, shows that the culturally diverse make-up of today's classrooms can also lead to misunderstandings and non-understandings, especially when sexual or gendered meanings are not yet shared in a classroom community. Nelson (2004b) reports a classroom example in which a lesbian teacher attempts to come out by talking about her same-sex parenting, which, however, one refugee learner from Vietnam fails to understand. This shows that in communicative interactions (e.g. in the classroom), culture-based inferences depend upon "knowledge of such concepts as domestic partnership arrangements, lesbian parenting, multi-household families" (Nelson 2004b: 37). This stresses that sexual references in communicative interactions can be ambiguous, and that to avoid disjuncture or failures to understand requires an on-going process of making cultural meanings relating to sexuality transparent to learners or interlocutors. All in all, the positions collated here indicate that sexual and gender diversity are inextricable from cultural meanings and meaning-making practices, and therefore should also become a particular focal point that is inextricable from cultural learning in language education.

Next to this nexus between sexual and gender identities, language, and culture, researchers also move the identity dimension of language learning into view to legitimise the inclusion of queer-related themes into ELT classrooms. Within the academic discourse on sexual identities and ELT, scholars have shown a particular concern for creating a classroom climate that is welcoming to learners of non-heterosexual identities (e.g. LGBT) and for acknowledging and valuing multisexual student cohorts (e.g. King 2008; Liddicoat 2009; Merse 2015a; Nelson 2009; Pavlenko 2004). In their state-of-the art article that explores the powerful relationship between language learning and identity, Norton and Toohey (2011) include a brief discussion of sexual orientation alongside other identity categories such as ethnicity and gender. They call into question if learners can fully invest in the language learning process if, for example, a classroom community is perceived to be homophobic. To overcome existing social power relations and inequalities, classrooms must become spaces where learners are able to claim their voice and speak from their identity positions, rather than feeling the urge to censor themselves because their respective identities are considered illegitimate (cf. Norton/Toohey 2011: 418, 421). Nelson (2009: 15) points out that this is particularly relevant for LGBT learners: Are these learners given opportunities to talk and write about their lives? Is the classroom felt to be safe and encouraging to reveal personal information? The point here is not to force LGBT learners to disclose details of their identities, but to create a non-oppressive and open atmosphere in which learners can speak about themselves as themselves if they choose to do so. In a similar vein, also Pavlenko (2004) argues that classrooms must be or become safe spaces in which learners can bring in their multiple identities and speak with their various social voices. Only if their "multi-voiced consciousness" (ibid.: 67) is acknowledged and valued can

the classroom become a space of authentic interaction, communication and self-representation. This multi-voicedness of learners is mirrored in studies such as King's (2008), who shows that individual language learners can have highly specific identity-related motivations for learning English. At the example of three Korean gay men, King shows that these men find it advantageous to learn English in order to gain access to imagined gay communities in English-speaking countries (cf. also Nelson 2007: 74). For Pavelcyk, Pakuła and Sunderland, studies like this indicate "the need to debunk the myth of the 'one-dimensional language learner'" and hint at "the importance of recognising all identities within different learning environments" (2015: 22), which also stretches out to the recognition and acknowledgment of non-heterosexually identified learners in classrooms.

On one level, this acknowledgement requires that overt homophobia and heterosexism are constantly challenged to avoid the intimidation or linguistic vilification of LGBT learners (cf. Nelson 1993). This does not only apply to the immediate context of the classroom, but generally to the whole school culture, in which heterosexuality might be the privileged identity location, establishing a hegemonic discourse that silences, for example, gay students (cf. Dalley/Campbell 2006). On another level, this involves including LGBT themes into curricula, learning materials, literature or text choice as a symbolic move to show that all identity positions are generally welcome and visible in class (cf. Merse 2015a: 15; Nelson 2006: 2). On yet another level, this means to construct the classroom discourse in non-heteronormative ways that do not assume all students to be heterosexual or either male or female. Liddicoat (2009) has shown that the intricate trajectories of heteronormativity in language classrooms can tend to position learners as heterosexual (e.g. when it comes to the questions directed at them). These might leave gay and lesbian students with the option to hide their real-world identity and take on the identity position assigned to them by the teacher, which clearly polices their identities and constantly invokes heterosexual norms. On the contrary, students might choose to challenge the teacher's heteronormative assumptions and speak as themselves, with the danger that the teacher considers this as linguistic failure in need of corrective feedback (e.g. in the confusing play of pronouns or referential nouns such as boyfriend or girlfriend, so that a teacher might correct a male learner's boyfriend into a girlfriend, cf. Liddicoat 2009: 193). Liddicoat concludes that in a heteronormative classroom climate, "[t]he expression of nonheterosexual identities becomes constructed as an enactment of limited linguistic competence rather than a performance of self" (2009: 201). What this comes down to is to construct classroom discourse and interaction in ways that assume students to occupy a broad range of sexual and gender identities, rather than just heterosexual ones. Generally, the legitimisation of a focus on sexual and gender diversity in ELT rests heavily on acknowledging and affirming the existence of LGBT students in classrooms, and providing them with opportunities to speak voluntarily as themselves, and not from a position of assigned heterosexuality, marginalisation, silence, or fear. This is certainly a powerful argument, as the non- or misrecognition of a certain portion of the student body is an unacceptable state. Yet it needs to be seen that a queer-informed pedagogy within ELT must be directed at all learners alike, allowing everybody to engage with issues and norms relating to sexual and gender identities and to acquire useful cultural and

linguistic knowledge in a specific, yet often unacknowledged thematic domain (cf. Nelson 2006: 7, 2009: 26).

In closing, the previous overview has shown that the merger of sexual and gender diversity with English language teaching is gaining increasing momentum and significance in international research and classroom practices. The academic and theoretical rigour with which this specific merger has been embraced internationally stands in stark contrast to the dearth of queer-informed research emanating from, and referring to, the German TEFL context. Hence, I read the nascent international research formations around English language teaching, sexual and gender diversity, and heteronormativity as a powerful call for the German TEFL context to join the bandwagon and engage with queer-informed research agendas in greater detail and depth. Certainly, the insights international research has produced so far embody a rich set of legitimising factors that establish a coherent and understandable link between sexual and gender diversity and English language teaching. These insights are highly relevant in that they can be imported into the German TEFL context, where they are to be connected with established concepts as they exist for cultural learning, the teaching of literature and gender perspectives on ELT. The broad renegotiation of these concepts I have unfolded in part A generally points towards a greater cultural diversity of 'other Others' and 'different differences'. To work towards closing existing blind spots, sexual and gender diversity is a particularly viable perspective, which I have legitimised in this chapter by pointing to new and progressive curricular requirements in Germany, to the increasing pedagogic interest in designing a diverse sex education as a cross-curricular project, and to the nascent body of international research formations around sexual and gender diversity in ELT. In taking all these lines of argumentation together, it will become increasingly impossible to argue against establishing queer-informed perspectives in German TEFL contexts, or to perceive of sexual and gender diversity as a mere add-on that is now loosely attached to research and practice in an impulse of political correctness. Since the merger of TEFL with sexual and gender diversity has so far remained precariously underresearched in Germany, the urgent call is to develop a sound and integrative framework that explains and exemplifies in what specific ways this newly emerging focal point can become part and parcel of the German TEFL landscape. The call is not only for closing the gap of (an assumed) monosexuality and LGBT invisibility, but also for showing how TEFL is indeed a fertile ground in which explorations of identities, norms and signifying practices relating to sexualities and genders can find a legitimate place. It will be argued in the following chapter that this transformation of TEFL towards sexual and gender diversity can be substantiated by accessing the trajectories of a queer-informed vantage point.

6 The Potential of Queer Theory: Mapping a Queer Focus onto TEFL

In this chapter, I will investigate the specific potential of queer thought – embodied in queer political activism, queer pedagogy, and most prominently in Queer Theory – to develop a theoretically-informed fabric into which sexual and gender diversity can be embedded for TEFL. In doing so, I will tap into an academic discourse formation that has so far not been thoroughly accessed as a potential link discipline for German TEFL, as Gutenberg points out:

Aktuell bilden Denkmodelle der Queer Theory möglicherweise die größte, spannendste, aber bislang am wenigsten beachtete Herausforderung für die Theorie und Praxis der Fremdsprachendidaktik. [...] Die Queer Theory kann aufgrund ihrer Skepsis gegenüber geschlechtlichen Kategorienrastern und ihres Aufweises der Normativität von Binarismen wichtige Impulse für den Fremdsprachenunterricht und seine Didaktik liefern, indem der analytische Blick auch auf Naturalisierungen von Heterosexualität gerichtet wird. (Gutenberg 2013: 115-116)

Clearly, Gutenberg emphasises that Queer Theory is expected to hold in store an enormous, yet unaccessed potential for TEFL in that its key concerns lie in challenging fixed categories, binaries and norms relating to sexuality and gender. Yet it needs to be said that Gutenberg's pointedly articulated desideratum mainly applies to the German TEFL context. Increasingly so, international research has already begun to grapple with the implications of queer thought for ELT (especially Nelson 1999, 2002, 2009), following the assumption that queer is an ideal reference point to frame sexual and gender diversity issues in research and practice. The specific points and aspects already raised here will be elaborated and expanded on in the following chapter, where I will combine them with my own critical reading of Queer Theory, queer politics and queer pedagogy into a systematic framework for 'teaching queer' in German TEFL settings. After explaining the various meanings pertaining to the term queer, I will continue this chapter with collating the major directions and issues that are discussed under the theoretical rubric of queer. My aim is not to lay authoritative claim to the term queer, but rather to interrogate its key directions and issues in view of their potential, but also their limitations, to frame the engagement with sexual and gender diversity in TEFL. The overall question is in how far queer is a viable concept to be imported into the scope of TEFL, and in how far an uptake of queer-informed thinking can be systematised so as to become productive in the EFL classroom. My response to Gutenberg's desideratum quoted above will be a set of anchoring points that illustrate several possibilities of linking sexual and gender diversity with TEFL under the aegis of queer.

6.1 The Semantics of Queer

I will begin with approaching the term queer by looking more closely at its semantics. Long before the term queer became attached to certain contexts such as political activism, academia, or education, it was firmly in place in the English language. The meanings of the term, flexibly shifting over time, are indicative of its contested nature. Before the term queer can be readily applied to a pedagogic framework for Teaching English as a Foreign Language, I consider it crucial to develop an awareness of queer's semantic past and present. In other words, if the term

queer is to be imported as an enhanced and critical perspective into TEFL discourse, one must know exactly what one is importing. To access the meanings of the term queer, the *Oxford English Dictionary* provides a sound historic overview of its shifting and at times contradictory semantics. In what follows, I will draw on the precise overview of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) and couple this with reflections on the term queer as they can be found in texts on Queer Theory (e.g. Degele 2005; Giffney 2009; Hall 2003; Kraß 2009). Broadly speaking, queer has three groups of meaning: queer as a term to describe something as negative in general, queer as a term to describe non-normative sexuality and gender as negative, and queer as a term to describe non-normative sexuality and gender as positive.

The OED traces back the meanings of queer to the 16th century. Its typical usages referred to a person or thing that is odd, strange, eccentric, or peculiar; a person of questionable character or someone dubious; and a person who is bad, untrustworthy and contemptible (OED 2016c). All of these usages link queer with a negative semantics for speaking ill of a person or a thing. While queer is used as an adjective here, it can also be used as a verb, with usages documented from the 18th century onwards. As a verb, queer can mean (cf. *ibid.*)

- to make a fool of, ridicule; to swindle, cheat,
- to puzzle, flummox, confound, baffle,
- to put out of order; to spoil,
- or to ask, to inquire, to question.

On the one hand, the usages of queer as a verb continue the negativity it has as an adjective. But on the other hand, it must be noted that queer as a verb also has the potential to ask, to unsettle, to call into question – a semantic impulse that is mirrored in Queer Theory’s critical impulse to call into question heteronormativity. All in all, these meanings, which are primarily negative, have been in use for centuries, although the OED indicates that these older meanings are hardly used today. Still, the negative past of queer, being replete with negative connotations, reverberates today and has never completely disappeared from the semantic history of queer. They remain as an aftertaste.

From the early 20th century onwards, queer underwent a semantic change and began to be related to homosexuals or issues relating to homosexuality. The OED describes this usage as colloquial, but more properly speaking, its usage became highly derogatory, which can be seen as a continuation of its earlier meanings. In her seminal work *Queer Theory*, Annamarie Jagose pointedly emphasises this usage of queer: “Once the term ‘queer’ was, at best, slang for homosexual, at worst, a term of homophobic abuse” (1996: 1). Other scholars provide similar stances on the meanings of queer. Hall, for example, describe queer as “a term commonly used to deride and vilify same-sex desiring people” (2003: 53), and Giffney sees queer “exercised as a slur predominantly for gay men” (2009: 2). Degele (2005) adds that queer could also refer to lesbians, and Rauchut (2008: 46) observes that queer was also employed as a slanderous slur against transgender people or homosexual men with overtly effeminate behaviour. What becomes apparent here is that queer has a functional dimension in language, which Judith Butler encapsulates as follows:

The term 'queer' has operated as one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names or, rather, the producing of a subject *through* that shaming interpellation. 'Queer' derives its force precisely through the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologization, insult. This is an invocation by which a social bond among homophobic communities is formed through time. (Butler 2013 [1993]: 19)

What follows from Butler's analysis is that queer epitomises a discursive practice to humiliate sexual and gendered 'outlaws', but its function is also to reinstall the heterosexual norm whenever queer is used as a slur, with the effect that it does not only create a group of homosexuals, but also a group of homophobic people who are united in their normativity. For Hark (2005: 295) then, whenever the term queer is used, it propels what is deviant into the consciousness of people, thereby reinvoking and reproducing heterosexual normativity. Newman (2007: 73) stresses that queer is still used today as a discursive practice to insult LGBT people. This derogatory usage of queer to vilify and marginalise 'sexual Others' is probably the reason why it is still met with skepticism today if applied to contexts such as academia.

In the wake of an emerging political activism in the late 1980s (cf. chapter 6.2), the meanings of queer changed when those who were originally vilified by the term reclaimed it for themselves. In a "process of 'inversion'" (Newman 2007: 77), the former targets of the homophobic slur took back the term and used it for affirmative self-description to show their pride (cf. Jagose 1996: 72; Degele 2008: 42). In contrast to its previous negative and insulting meanings, queer received a new impetus "to denote one's difference, one's 'strangeness', positively" (Sullivan 2003: v) and "to celebrate, rather than castigate, difference from the 'norm'" (Hall 2003: 55). Yet the previous negative meanings still resound in the reclaimed term, which causes this inverted usage to have a highly provocative twist. During that time, the term queer also became increasingly attached to political activism and academic thought, where it found new contexts in its process of being reappropriated (cf. Nelson 2009: 22; Jagose 1996: 97). While queer can also be used as an "auto-descriptive" (Jagose 1996: 97) 'label' for one's identity, Sullivan remarks that the transfer to political and academic contexts marks a departure from queer being used to encompass an identity. Rather, queer is to be understood as a theoretical positionality towards norms of gender and sexuality (Sullivan 2003: 44), or as a "provisional political identity" (ibid.) when it is employed in political struggles to represent a larger constituency of marginalised sexual and gender identities. Thus, the newly forged meanings of queer operate "mit einer sprachlichen Pointe – der Konvertierung eines diskriminierenden Wortes der Umgangssprache in einen analytischen Fachterminus" (Kraß 2009: 8).

The rich semantic inventory of queer, which oscillates between positive and negative meanings without ever having shaken off entirely the insulting aftertaste, calls into question its applicability to other contexts. Hall and Jagose comment on this problem as follows:

That English-language slur, turned defiantly against a social and discursive system abetting violence toward sexual nonconformists, reflects a culturally and historically specific dynamic of abuse and response in the US and UK. It does not translate well across languages and cultures. (Hall/Jagose 2013: xvii)

On the one hand, queer's semantic past is not readily available when it is used outside of Anglophone contexts. This at least requires an awareness of the deeply enshrined meanings queer carries with it. On the other hand, queer is not easily translatable into other languages as a word or concept, which makes its transfer into German academic contexts difficult, as Kraß argues:

Dass es den Queer Studies, die in den Vereinigten Staaten seit anderthalb Jahrzehnten fest etabliert sind, immer noch schwer fällt, an deutschen Unis Fuß zu fassen, hat nicht zuletzt damit zu tun, dass sich hierzulande kaum jemand etwas unter dem englischen Begriff *queer* vorstellen kann. Er bedeutet soviel wie 'seltsam, merkwürdig, verquer'. [...] Um den provokanten Impuls der Queer Studies zu verstehen, aber auch die Ablehnung, die ihnen entgegengebracht wird, muss man den Begriff einmal versuchsweise ins Deutsche übersetzen. 'Andersrum-Studien' – ein derart unverblümter Begriff ist im deutschen Wissenschaftsbetrieb nicht vermittelbar. [...] Man wird entweder nicht verstanden oder stellt sich mit den notwendigen Erklärungen ins Abseits. [...] Eine [...] Option besteht darin, nicht den Begriff, sondern das Anliegen der Queer Studies ins Deutsche zu übertragen. (Kraß 2009: 7)

In this dissertation I follow Kraß impulse to explicate the meanings of queer so that they become operative in TEFL and can be communicated to a larger audience. But I will continue to use the term 'queer', sensitive to its various meanings, to establish a continuation to the academic and political contexts in which queer has become a powerful and productive term.

6.2 Queer Fields of Contestation: Politics, Theory, Pedagogy

In the following chapter, I will further delineate the potency of the term queer in its political, academic and pedagogic contexts. Indeed, the term queer has become active in these fields to contest heteronormativity, to interrogate sexual and gender identities, and to achieve a greater visibility of non-heterosexual people, relationships and experience. While the generally critical and radical impulse of queer is equally tangible in the three fields I will now present, it also gains specificity depending on its location in each of these fields. Ultimately, the overview and discussion of these queer fields of contestation will serve as the backdrop against which to develop a framework for 'queering TEFL'. I will begin with the arena of queer politics, before I turn to Queer Theory and queer pedagogy.

6.2.1 Queer Politics

The term queer gained political currency in the specific social and political constellations in the USA of the late 1980s. It is this specific context that sparked new forms of political activism and coalition building that were rooted in former lesbian and gay movements, feminist movements, radical movements of colour, and in particular AIDS activism (cf. Hall/Jagose 2013: xvi; also: Jagose 1996; Hark 2005; Klappeer 2007; Sewell 2014). When former gay and lesbian rights movements, most prominently rooted in the New York Stonewall Riots in 1969, had achieved some level of public affirmation and visibility, "[t]he AIDS outbreak produced a backlash re-marginalizing the LGBTQ community" (Sewell 2014: 296). As Jagose (1996: 93) notes, many LGBTQ people were confronted with the disastrous effects of the AIDS epidemic, but they had to face a large-scale political indifference that considered those who were dying of

AIDS, but also LGBTQ people at large, a dispensable part of the population – AIDS was perceived and interpreted by many “as karmic revenge for wonton lifestyles” (Sewell 2014: 296). Simultaneously, right wing and Christian sectors within US society strived for an aggressive homophobic articulation, accusing LGBTQ people of social unrest and economic instability (cf. also Hark 2005: 291-292). Closely connected with this homophobic backlash and reemerging negative attitudes towards LGBTQ people, a political and ideological reinstallation of the monogamous heterosexual family as a source of reproduction and national stability was pressed forward at that time (ibid.).

The angry dissatisfaction of many gays and lesbians gained increasing force and condensed into the political articulation of queer (cf. Jagose 1996: 93). According to Hall (2003: 52), many LGBTQ people formed coalition groups (e.g. Queer Nation or the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, ACT UP) to demand public recognition and health care facing the severity of the AIDS crisis, and to challenge homophobic governmental policies and social attitudes with confrontational protests. It was in this “queer moment” (Hark 2005: 291) that the semantic reappropriation of the term queer took place:

[Q]ueer was an immediate response to the anti-gay hostilities that resurfaced with the [e]vent of AIDS. By appropriating a term once considered the vilest epithet, factions of the LGBTQ community reclaimed strategically important rhetorical ground. [...] queer gained momentum by identifying its constituency, then retroactively encompassing factionalized groups (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and the questioning) into an empowered collectivity. (Sewell 2014: 301).

Reclaiming a formerly negative term provided a provocative broad rubric “roomy and assertive enough for political intervention” (Jagose 1996: 93). Even though this reclaiming converted the term into a positive marker of pride, it must be noted that queer powerfully and strategically denoted difference: “To be queer is to be marginalized. To identify as queer is to align oneself with the marginalized” (Sewell 2014: 294).

It is important to note, though, that an increasing queer visibility that stresses the marginal status in society as different also became “a site for contestation” (Sewell 2014: 294). The aim was to challenge and contest the heteronormative order that so violently denigrated the queer Others. The famous slogan “We’re here, we’re queer, get used to it” (Hall 2003: 53) gained increasing currency in queer political activism, and those who united under the queer umbrella organised political actions such as marches, demonstrations, and in-your-face displays of same-sex affection such as kiss-ins. Richardson pointedly summarises the queer impulse to publicly contest the normative system:

Queer politics is characterised by confrontational, direct action strategies and aims to be transgressive of social norms. It is not about seeking social integration, but then neither is it desirous of remaining on the margins. What queer seeks to do is to contest the ‘mainstream’ as a heteronormative order by claiming this space. [...] Hence, the aim is not to assimilate into [...] the current sexual system, but rather to challenge and transform it in such a way that heterosexuality is displaced from its status as privileged, institutionalised form. (Richardson 2000: 42-43)

On the one hand, Richardson’s description shows that queer embodied a radically articulated impulse that was transferred to and activated in the public sphere. At the same time, queer

remains in an in-between position: it continues to stress difference, but that what one is different from – the heterosexual norm – becomes the object of critique. This transformational horizon is significant in that it propels a critique against the heteronormative order into the core agenda of queer.

At the same time as the newly emergent queer coalition was formed, a self-reflective impetus set in that caused queer activists to call into question their own ways of political mobilisation and representation. Before the AIDS crisis, Sewell notes, there was “a shaky pluralism of gay men and lesbians as ‘us’” (2014: 297). By relying on separate identities as the basis for community-building and political activism, former lesbian and gay movements created “insider/outsider distinctions” (ibid.). The strong sense of a coherent community, to speak with Jagose, induced “processes of marginalization and centralization” (1996). As a result, many sexual or gendered Others did not identify with existing lesbian and gay movements and communities, let alone felt to be represented by them. Among these critical voices were gays who felt alienated from a commercialised and elite gay culture, gays and lesbians of colour, other non-normative sexualities, people who fell in between the binary of homosexuality and heterosexuality, gender nonconformists, transsexuals, bisexuals, and butch lesbians (cf. Degele 2005: 15-16; Jagose 1996: 63; Sullivan 2003: 27, 39). These struggles of representation, inclusion and exclusion challenged traditional notions of a unitary lesbian and gay identity based on a unifying essence shared by all homosexuals alike (cf. Sullivan 2003: 38; Czollek/Perko/Weinbach 2009: 34). Degele (2008: 43) adds that the lived realities and experiences of the broad spectrum of LGBTQ people are too diverse to be pinned down in such a unifying essence. Oddly, while queer activism’s impulse was drawn from the violent exclusion from the heteronormative mainstream, queer activism itself produced its own Others within its constituencies. As soon as the notion of identity as limiting has been called into question, the ‘queer moment’ caused broader interrogations of binary identity oppositions such as male/female and heterosexual/homosexual (cf. Sullivan 2003: 38). As Giffney calls to mind, binaries leave “little room for identities, desires, practices and relationships that f[a]ll in between or outside such categories” (2009: 5). The further radical impulse emerging from queer thought is therefore not just to contest the heteronormative order, but to remain radically open to multiple sites of identifications and to identity ambiguities. Hence, the political choice of ‘being queer’ mirrors this radical position as it grants the “inherent right to sexually self-define as we wish” (Hall 2003: 3).

6.2.2 Queer Theory

In the wake of queer political activism, the term queer also entered the academic stage and initiated a new academic project that became known as Queer Theory or Queer Studies. Hall sees a close link “between a radical activist consciousness and the radical theorizations that would come to be known as ‘queer theory’” (2003: 52-53). Hence, a strict separation between queer-informed politics and queer-informed theory cannot be drawn. As Hall argues, “‘queer theory’ as it burst onto the scene of English and cultural studies departments in the 1990s was only describing, analyzing, and giving a certain intellectual nuance and depth to an already

existing phenomenon” (2003: 54). Consequently, queer theorists embraced the usage of the newly reclaimed term queer, continued the negotiation of the critical impulses that queer political activism has brought forward, and tried to make sense from a theoretical point of view of what was “an already deeply entrenched set of questionings and abrasions of normality” (Hall 2003: 54). Attempting to define or delineate the intellectual scope of Queer Theory has its epistemological stakes, as the term queer is notoriously difficult to pin down when attached to ‘theory’. Jagose writes that “part of queer’s semantic clout [...] depends on its resistance to definition” (1996: 1). This can be frustrating to those who seek to apply the term queer to a different domain such as TEFL, where at least an understanding of queer is a necessary basis to develop concrete focal points that can inform research and teaching practice. Even though, however, queer resists a clear-cut definition in its “persistent refusal to consolidate its object of study, to delimit the scope of its inquiry in advance” (Hall/Jagose 2013: xvi), I will attempt to delineate its core concerns. After all, queer also offers a “zone of possibilities” (Edelman 1994: 114), or is understood to be “a mobile field (Jagose 1996: 2). This opens up a horizon that can be accessed and probed for the possibilities that it offers for TEFL.

Queer in combination with ‘theory’ was first mentioned by Teresa de Lauretis (1991) at a conference held at the University of California in Santa Cruz (USA) in 1990, where scholars met to theorise lesbian and gay sexualities. In a subsequent conference-related publication in the journal *differences*, the new coinage ‘Queer Theory’ gained wider currency (Hark 2005: 286; Degele 2008: 44). Within de Lauretis’ conceptualisation of Queer Theory, “homosexuality is no longer to be seen simply as marginal with regard to a dominant, stable form of sexuality (heterosexuality) against which it would be defined either by opposition or by homology” (de Lauretis 1991: iii). This is clearly reminiscent of the political impulse of queer, which indicates that the ideas and critical challenges circulating in queer politics are also influential in Queer Theory. De Lauretis goes on to stress that gay and lesbian sexualities need to be “reconceptualised as social and cultural forms in their own right” (ibid.) that are not to be seen as “deviant vis-à-vis a proper, natural sexuality (i.e. institutionalized reproductive sexuality)” (ibid.). What becomes apparent here is that de Lauretis stresses the relational character between homosexuality and heterosexuality, which indicates that both are dependent on each other to become charged with meaning – in that sense, both are linked to each other in a binary opposition. De Lauretis further imagines gay and lesbian sexualities “as forms of resistance to cultural homogenization, counteracting dominant discourses with other constructions of the subject in culture” (de Lauretis 1991: iii). What is more, de Lauretis envisages a conceptual opening of queer in that it must not be exclusive to certain sexualities or genders only. It is here that queer’s “utility of [a] catch-all phrase” (Hall 2003: 55) becomes tangible, which turns ‘queer’ into a wide umbrella that is inclusive of sexual and gender diversity. In Hark’s (2005: 286) reading of de Lauretis, what can also be derived from de Lauretis’ thought is that Queer Theory itself must remain constantly critical and reflective of its own scope, rather than being critical of the heterosexual norm alone.

To develop a general understanding of what Queer Theory or queer studies is about, Hall and Jagose suggest a working definition that, in spite of queer's resistance to definition, serves as a valuable reference point:

In broad stroke, queer studies is the institutionalization of a new—or at least newly visible—paradigm for thinking about sexuality that emerged simultaneously across academic and activist contexts in the early 1990s, constituting a broad and unmethodical critique of normative models of sex, gender and sexuality. [...] More than shorthand for 'lesbian/gay'—or even the more capacious but still identity-bound LGBT—queer speaks to the unintended but profound naturalization of the dominant system of sexual classification [...]. (Hall/Jagose 2013: xvi)

This definition indicates major concerns of Queer Theory. For one, it foregrounds the study of sexuality. But as it is also strongly linked to critiquing the heteronormative order, it is more generally concerned with those positions that fall outside of this order (e.g. transgender or bisexual). The achievement of Queer Theory is to establish sexuality “as an analytical rubric” (Hall/Jagose 2013: xvi) that can be applied to a range of fields and interests. What also becomes apparent here is that Queer Theory is broad and unmethodical. On the one hand, this means that there is not a single set of procedures that one needs to follow to carry out queer-informed research. On the other hand, this openness challenges the researcher to develop a queer focus that works for a particular context but that is still attuned to the key concerns of Queer Theory. A strong line of critique also develops along the lines of normative models of sex, gender and sexuality, which also foregrounds the critical concept of heteronormativity that Queer Theory has introduced into academia (cf. Hark 2005: 291). What is more, queer must not (only) be understood as an umbrella for LGBT, but rather as a critical impulse to call into question the very system of sexual classification that creates LGBT identities in the first place. In what follows, I will map out the scope of Queer Theory in beginning with an understanding of sexuality as discursively produced, which links to the work of Michel Foucault. In a second step, I will conceptualise Queer Theory's key concept, heteronormativity, next to introducing Butler's notion of the heterosexual matrix. I will conclude with a most critical issue within Queer Theory itself, i.e. whether queer is anti-identitarian (cf. Kilian 2012: 211).

An important theoretical forcefield for Queer Theory derives from Michel Foucault's seminal understanding that sexuality is discursively produced. In *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (1978), Foucault explores the discursive formation of sexuality as a field of knowledge by delineating “the discursive explosion around sex” (Kilian 2012: 210) in the 18th and 19th century. The crucial tenet for Queer Theory in Foucault's work lies in the following insight:

The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature. [...] Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (Foucault 1978: 43)

Foucault shows that homosexual sex acts that were once taken to be sins were discursively transformed in medical and psychiatric discourse into a marker of an innate identity around 1870. Foucault shows that “rigid sexual identities are foisted on us to bolster preexisting power relations” (Sewell 2014: 299). As a result, sexuality is discursively situated in a binary system of what counts as normal (heterosexuality) or deviant (homosexuality). The all-pervasiveness of this binary is encapsulated by Sedgwick, who argues “that an understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition” (1990: 1). Her position emphasises that sexuality and binary definitions of sexual identity are deeply cultural matters. Since the sexual binary of homo- and heterosexuality is the result of discursive and cultural production, Queer Theory’s decided aim is to challenge the cultural and linguistic patterns that produce sexual identities. Hence, the interest lies in unmasking “heterosexual monogamy, and only heterosexual monogamy, [as] normalized” (Nelson 2009: 21) and to destabilise the clear-cut binary of homosexual and heterosexual.

Even though ‘queer’ is often considered to be synonymous with LGBT identities, its main critical impetus is to engage critically with heterosexuality as normalised sexuality. This impetus can be traced back to Michael Warner (1993), who formulated what soon became somewhat of a queer manifesto: “The preference of ‘queer’ represents [...] an aggressive impulse of generalization; it rejects a minoritizing logic of toleration or simple political interest-representation in favor of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal” (Warner 1993: xxvi). In taking up Warner’s call to resist the regimes of the normal, queer theorists have moved beyond focusing only on LGBT identities. Additionally, they put heterosexuality under severe scrutiny and unmask it as a normalising regime that determines what counts as natural sexuality. Jagose agrees that

the inflection of queer that has proved most productive [...] is the one that problematizes normative consolidations of sex, gender and sexuality – and that, consequently, is critical of all those versions of identity, community and politics that are believed to evolve ‘naturally’ from such consolidations. (Jagose 1996: 99)

The assumption is that normative sexuality is tangible on many social levels, precisely because it is a product of discourse, so that Queer Theory’s strategy is to make visible and unmask “the extensive range of ways in which notions of sexuality and gender impact – at times implicitly – on everyday life” (Sullivan 2003: vi). Ultimately, the epistemological achievement of Queer Theory has been to introduce the critical concept of heteronormativity into academic discussion, a concept that mirrors the impulse of Queer Theory to scrutinise the heterosexual norm. Heteronormativity is understood as an individual thought pattern and as a social regulatory system that ensures that heterosexuality and a clear-cut male and female gender dichotomy are naturalised and privileged and made to seem ‘normal’, while at the same time creating a hierarchy that marginalises everyone or everything that falls outside of its logic (cf. Degele 2005; Petrovic 2005; Yep 2005). Kraß (2009: 8-9) also calls to mind that heteronormativity is expressed in signifying practices, which makes it possible to ‘detect’ heteronormativity at the level of language, or in texts and images. The ‘trick’ of heteronormativity is to make everything

that is within its reign appear as normal, and it is the objective of Queer Theory to make this normality visible by analysing the conditions and effects of heteronormativity (cf. Kraß 2009: 9). This critical inflection of Queer Theory is probably best understood in accordance with Sullivan if one thinks of queer as a verb, so that the aim of Queer Theory is indeed “to queer – to make strange, to frustrate, to counteract, to delegitimize, to camp up – heteronormative knowledges and institutions, and the subjectivities and socialities that are (in)formed by them and that (in)form them” (2003: vi).

Closely linked to the concept of heteronormativity is the notion of the heterosexual matrix, which was originally put forward by Judith Butler (2006 [1990]) in *Gender Trouble*. The heterosexual matrix can be understood as a productive conceptualisation of the normalising power of heterosexuality and a bi-polar gender order. At the same time, it is an indispensable analytical tool to understand how non-normative sexual and gender identities are socially excluded and marginalised at the expense of ‘normal’ identities. The heterosexual matrix describes how sex, gender and sexuality are organised into socially approved forms. Butler defines the heterosexual matrix as follows:

I use the term *heterosexual matrix* to define that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders and desires are naturalized. I [...] characterize a [...] model of gender intelligibility that assumes for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality. (Butler 2006 [1990]: 208)

A central characteristic of the heterosexual matrix requires that identities are stable, meaning that neither the body, nor one’s gender, nor one’s sexuality change over time. This is difficult to align with poststructuralist thought, which posits fluidity and contingency as central for identity. Yet, within the logic of the matrix, any fluidity is per se ruled out as this would violate socially approved norms. Another feature of the matrix is the line of coherence that brings bipolar bodies and genders together through compulsory heterosexuality, i.e. the notion that everyone is heterosexual. Consequently, the matrix regulates which identities are ‘readable’, and what is readable depends on our “naturalized knowledge” (Butler 2006 [1996]: xxiii), i.e. we seem to know what is natural or real on the basis of our cultural experience, which indicates that the heterosexual matrix is deeply embedded in culture. In effect, the heterosexual matrix is a regulatory network of power that normalises, polices and secures heterosexuality and its related expressions of gender and sexuality. To add with Hark (2005: 289), the heterosexual matrix is constantly reproduced in discourse through repeated performative acts, also by excluding those identities that would introduce incoherence and instability into the matrix. In view of this, Butler explains:

The cultural matrix [...] requires that certain kinds of ‘identities’ cannot exist – that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not ‘follow’ from either sex or gender. ‘Follow’ in this context is [...] instituted by the cultural laws that establish and regulate the shape and meaning of sexuality. [...] precisely because certain kinds of ‘gender identities’ fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities. (Butler 2006 [1990]: 24)

Against the regime of the heterosexual matrix, there are bodies, genders and desires that do not follow its neat logic. They introduce inconsistency and incoherence into the matrix, and are in turn ruled out as logical impossibilities. But the very fact that these identities do exist means that “[t]he ‘unthinkable’ is fully within culture” (ibid.: 105), but as they fail to conform with the regulatory norms of the matrix, they are “fully excluded from *dominant* culture” (ibid.). It is exactly from this outside position that the “mismatches between sex, gender and desire” (Jagose 1996: 3) challenge the cultural validity of the matrix. Butler’s critical intervention summons us to think what is unthinkable, to think the discontinuities within the matrix as possible, and to challenge the heterosexual matrix by introducing “rival and subversive matrices of gender disorder” (Butler 2006 [1990]: 24). In critiquing the workings of the heterosexual matrix, Butler calls for a “pluralization of genders and sexualities” (Kilian 2012: 210) and imagines an ethical future with “a desire to live, to make life possible, and to rethink the possible as such” (Butler 2006 [1990]: xxi).

The most radical impulse emerging from Queer Theory lies in its “refusal of any identity-based foundational category” (Hall/Jagose 2013: xvi). This “anti-identitarian position” (Giffney 2009: 2) within Queer Theory is connected “with a call for dissolution of sexualized gender systems” (Richardson 2000: 40). Jagose explains that this view is based on the assumption that identities are total fictions, mere effects of discourse, and have no common ground. What is more, she explains that the usage of any minority label, as soon as it is mentioned, reinforces the superior identity in its position (Jagose 1996: 130). The idea that one claims to have an identity, only to be discriminated against for it, would ultimately require that one refuses to identify at all: “[Q]ueer functions as a kind of catalyst that strategically decentres identity positions without becoming a site of identity itself” (Kilian 2012: 211). This anti-identitarian position within Queer Theory, or as Sullivan calls it, the “post-identity ethos of Queer Theory” (2003: 46) is not undisputed. On the one hand, this relentless refusal to identify, or its drastic opposition to identity, makes Queer Theory useful to decentre normative structures and privilege. On the other hand, however, this radical position is “problematic as an instrument of intervention on behalf of the marginalised subject, whose very survival might depend on some degree of stability and anchoring” (Kilian 2012: 211). One could argue that this highly radical position is theoretically appealing, but not easily transferrable to individual people’s lives, where “[i]dentity persists because of a will to meaning” (Giffney 2009: 6). Butler suggests a mediating path in *Undoing Gender*: “The critique of gender norms must be situated within the context of lives as they are lived and must be guided by the question of what maximizes the possibility for a livable life” (Butler 2004: 8). Butler’s reflection is powerful in that it acknowledges the wish, or even the necessity, to bring forward a personal or a collective identity to achieve recognition and visibility (cf. also Baker 2009: 556). Oddly so, one could even argue that the stance of Queer Theory to ‘forbid’ or ‘discourage’ sexual or gender self-definition installs a new prescriptive normativity, which can hardly be the aim of an academic project that is at the forefront to deconstruct normativities. As a compromise, so to speak, Jagose (1996: 132) suggests keeping the critical impulse of queer to interrogate the effects and the preconditions of identity, without denying people the right to self-identify. Also Giffney

does not oppose identities, but rather than seeing them as fixed, she takes the view that “[i]dentities become not so much categories to be occupied, owned, protected or rejected, but spaces to be navigated, revisited, revised and elided on a moment-to-moment basis” (2009: 6). This couples the relentless interrogation of identity with a notion of fluidity that defies easy and eternally fixed categorisations, while at the same time it leaves a space that acknowledges the validity and significance of identity, especially for marginalised identities (cf. Hall/Jagose 2013: xvi).

6.2.3 Queer Pedagogy

“What happens when Queer Theory is brought to bear on pedagogy?” – This is a question that Luhmann (1998: 142) asks to approach the scope and function of queer pedagogy, which embodies the third field of contestation to which queer thought is applied. Generally speaking, queer pedagogy can be understood “as an approach to teaching and learning that grows out of the merger of Queer Theory with progressive pedagogy aimed at creating social change through the interactions of teachers, students, and knowledge in the classroom” (Franck 2005: 680). One strand of queer pedagogy would assume that students’ knowledge of LGBT identities is deficient given the “silence about nonheterosexuality” (Bedford 2002: 13) that might circulate at schools or in the curriculum. In order to counter the students’ assumptions – or naturalised knowledge – that everybody is heterosexual and fits neatly into existing gender categories (cf. DePalma/Atkinson 2009: 3), the call would be to increase the visibility of sexual and gender diversity in educational settings, or to use the terminology from Butler’s heterosexual matrix, to make the unintelligible intelligible. From this point of view, queer serves as a framework to introduce LGBT identities or issues into curricula and the school environment. Yet while the inclusion and awareness-raising of sexual and gender diversity is an important step to overcome the invisibility of non-normative sexualities and genders, this strand, if it were followed solely, would not live up to the full potential that queer has to offer. Indeed, this would embody what Kumashiro (2000) called *Education about the Other*: It is necessary to paint a more accurate picture of the diversity in society, but it would leave the norm and privilege of the dominant groups intact. Indeed, the inclusion approach assumes that “with representation comes knowledge, with learning about lesbians and gays comes the realization of the latter’s normalcy, and finally a happy end to discrimination”, as Luhmann (1998: 143) ironically remarks, but it does not intervene into the normal’s normalcy.

Therefore, queer pedagogy also seeks to harness the impulse of interrogation and critique that is so central to Queer Theory. The transfer of Queer Theory to education requires to challenge heteronormativity so as to fulfill what Kumashiro (2000) describes as an education that is critical of norms, othering and privileging. Meyer argues that queer in an educational context “seeks to explode rigid normalizing categories into possibilities that exist beyond the binaries of man/woman, masculine/feminine, [...] and gay/straight” (2007: 15). To link this back to Franck’s position introduced above that queer pedagogy engages with the knowledge students have, then this specific approach assumes that their knowledge is heteronormatively patterned. Hence, the call is to “disrupt and challenge traditional models of thought” (Meyer

2007: 26) by challenging the students taken for granted assumptions about sexuality and gender. This unlearning or unsettling of existing heteronormative knowledge would mirror “[t]he queer insistence on undermining idyllic stabilities of normalcy” (Luhmann 1998: 146). If learners are encouraged to decentre from a position of normalcy, then the appreciation of Otherness that queer pedagogy also seeks to achieve can be coupled with an understanding of one’s own normative lens (cf. Bedford 2002: 142). What follows is that a queer-informed pedagogy ideally follows both strands: to bring LGBT voices and positions into the classroom to broaden the horizon of possibilities and intelligible identities, but to couple this with making visible the naturalised heteronormative knowledges that regulate those identities whose inclusion is being achieved.

6.3 Systematising Queer for the EFL Classroom

In the previous discussion, I have delineated the concerns of ‘queer’ when applied to politics, theory, and pedagogy. Let me now systematise and condense the various focal points of queer thought in view of their potential for TEFL. The aim is to sketch out an inventory of possible anchoring points that can become productive in linking the concerns of queer politics, Queer Theory and queer pedagogy with the EFL classroom. In doing so, I will interweave existing international ELT research positions on queer into the anchoring points I will develop here. Generally, it must be understood that applying queer thought to TEFL research and practice does not engender a monolithic agenda with only one critical spearhead. If one conceptualises queer as a ‘zone of possibilities’ and as a ‘mobile field’ (cf. chapter 6.2.2), queer can become productive in TEFL on many levels in that it

- seeks to affirm non-heteronormative identities in their existence and move them into consciousness and visibility,
- aims at deconstructing heteronormativity and its formative and naturalising impact on cultural patterns, institutions, socialities and knowledges,
- points at the deep cultural embeddedness of sexual identities and the binary distinction of homo/heterosexual definition,
- interrogates the discursive production of sexual identities (e.g. as deviant or as rightful),
- is highly skeptical of culturally available sexual and gender identity ‘markers’ and sees identities as potentially fluid, shifting and indeterminable.

In international ELT research, it is Nelson who has already conceptualised a transfer of queer into ELT in terms of ‘inclusion’ and ‘inquiry’ (Nelson 1999, 2002, 2005b, 2009). In Nelson’s terms, inclusion means to bring in authentic representations of LGBT people and experience into the classroom, connected with the hope to reduce prejudice and stereotypes and to promote tolerance and acceptance of these ‘minority’ identities by affirming their existence (cf. Nelson 1999: 376; Nelson 2005b: 300). Nelson (cf. 2009: 206) points out rightly, however, that mere inclusion is not necessarily connected with an interrogation or a critique of *all* sexual and gender identities. Therefore, she clearly seems to favour critical queer inquiry over inclusion. I

argue, however, that it is impossible to simply move beyond thinking about inclusion, precisely because a carefully and diversely crafted inclusion can bring in multiple representations of sexual and gender identities into the EFL classroom as exemplars of a greater range of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ (cf. also Merse 2015a). On a pragmatic note, queer inclusion may serve as the necessary basis to launch inquiries, although I do concede that inclusion must not follow a minoritising or essentialising logic that singles out an individual, say, gay or lesbian experience in a tokenistic way.

Queer inquiry, then, provides a more critical way of framing queer teaching perspectives by adding a layer of critique and interrogation onto the classroom. According to Nelson, an approach of queer inquiry

means turning our attention to sexual matters (identities, norms, relationships) within everyday patterns of thinking, speaking, learning, and working, with a view to understanding the complex sociosexual dimensions and meanings that are part of day-to-day interactions, cultural practices, and social structures. (Nelson 2009: 206)

What becomes apparent here is that queer inquiry serves to problematise the broad cultural and discursive realm of sexuality. It is not restricted to legitimising ‘subordinate’ sexual identities, but encourages interrogating and reflecting on a diverse range of issues relating to ‘sexual matters’. This reflects the critically queer impulse to investigate the discursive production of identities, to engage with identities as culturally readable acts, and to problematise heteronormativity in all its facets (cf. also Nelson 2002). In drawing on my reading of queer politics, theory and pedagogy as well as on Nelson’s queer-informed thinking about ELT, I suggest the following four anchoring points as a systematising framework for locating queer perspectives in TEFL.

Anchoring point 1: Thinking about queer as a coalition of marginalised sexual and gender identities outside of the heterosexual matrix and outside of heterosexual normalisations

Probably the most intuitive approach to link queer with TEFL is to think carefully about the inclusion of a diverse range of sexual and gender identities that defy heteronormative logic. From this vantage point, queer is understood as an umbrella term that encompasses the coalition of identities that are linked with sexual and gender diversity and hence as a move that brings these identities into view with queer’s “determined push for visibility” (Pilcher/Whelehan 2005: 129). This increase in visibility through representing diverse sexual and gender identities in the classroom is generally welcomed (e.g. Pavlenko 2004, Merse 2015a), although it can only be the first step towards further engagement. Therefore, the advent of, for example, LGBT identities in literary texts or visual material can never in itself be enough. Nelson (1999: 376) warns that simply affirming ‘minority’ identities might reproduce their status as Others, while leaving heteronormativity unquestioned. Yet at the same time, I do argue that a varied and balanced representation of sexual and gender identities, carefully embedded in regular EFL lessons, is an important cornerstone for mirroring cultural diversity. In view of cultural learning, the inclusion of sexual and gender diversity can provide an important balance to the more ‘canonised’ national and ethnic lines of difference and Otherness and serve to increase the

complexity of cultural viewpoints that become accessible in the classroom. In terms of *Fremdverstehen*, changing perspectives into sexual or gender Others can lead to a more nuanced and varied interplay of perspectives that acknowledges sexual and gender identity as an important aspect of self-definition. As such, representations of sexual and gender diversity in cultural learning scenarios add to more complex perceptions of Otherness, thus avoiding flat or one-sided understandings or experiences of ‘the cultural Other’. Ultimately, the inclusion of, for example, LGBT identities can expand on the definition of what counts as ‘cultural’ in the EFL classroom. From the perspective of teaching literature, the challenge emerges how to represent sexual and gender diversity in the EFL classroom through text selections (cf. chapter 7.1 and 7.2). Although the nexus of ‘queer’ and ‘EFL literature classroom’ is still underresearched, what can be expected is an expansion on ‘the literary canon’ that pays increasing attention to the largely unaccessed body of LGBTQ-themed literature. When it comes to gender in TEFL, Decke-Cornill (2004) would argue that – at last – those identities that could for such a long time not exist in the heterosexual matrix of the classroom have now made it into visibility.

Anchoring point 2: Thinking about queer as a critical understanding of how sexual and gender identities are produced in discourse

In common with Nelson, who emphasises that identities are “not facts of life, but acts of discourse” (2009: 12), I argue that a close scrutiny of the discursive practices with which sexual and gender identities are constituted can increase the learners’ awareness of how people discursively ‘make’ themselves or others regarding sexual and gender identity. This would also entail to engage with the discursive mechanisms by which some identities are constructed as Other in discourses of ‘othering’. On a broader level, paying increasing attention in the EFL classroom to the discursive dimension of sexual and gender identity can support learners in developing their what Hallet (2012) calls *fremdsprachige Diskursfähigkeit* in a culturally highly significant domain. Surely, the discursive aspect also entails decoding information and meanings pertaining to sexual identities that are encoded visually or multimodally, e.g. in images or films. Recently, I have suggested conceptualising sexual literacy as an EFL-specific learning objective and as a dimension of a learner’s developing multiliteracies (cf. Merse 2015a). The concept of sexual literacy establishes a strong link to discourse. I define sexual literacy as an

EFL learner’s ability to understand, communicate about and participate in complex sociosexual discourses, globally and locally, personally and publicly, in the classroom and beyond the classroom. To achieve this, sexual literacy requires that learners gradually develop a toolkit – consisting of linguistic resources and other semiotic modes of communication such as the visual – to engage in and to produce nuanced discourses revolving around sexuality. It also requires that learners develop a metalanguage to talk about and reflect on those instances where sexuality becomes tangible in discourse, and to deconstruct how sexual identities and sexual meanings are made in discourse. Closely linked to this, sexual literacy also entails an ESOL and EFL learner’s critical awareness about the practices and norms of the new language and the new culture in light of sexual diversity. Key concerns of sexual literacy also include the learner’s ability to recognise and describe how sexual difference as a marker of cultural diversity is performed and laid out in texts and conversations, and how sexual norms regulate communicative interactions in diverse cultural contexts. Thus, sexual literacy can become an

important dimension of an [...] EFL learner's overall multiliteracies as well as linguistic and cultural fluency that [...] EFL education is meant to achieve. (Merse 2015a: 16-17)

If sexual literacy should come to play a more prominent role as a learning objective of EFL education, this would make it necessary to establish a more nuanced focus on discourse in the classroom, i.e. by selecting, and then having learners engage with, a broad selection of texts that negotiate or depict discourses revolving around sexual and gender identities.

Anchoring point 3: Thinking about queer as a way to recognise and challenge heteronormativity

A major tenet of Queer Theory is to critique heteronormativity in its power to regulate sexual and gender identities into 'allowable' and 'illegitimate' identities. Queer Theory argues that heteronormativity is deeply enshrined into culture and individual thought patterns. This makes the explicit focus on heteronormativity in the EFL classroom an important component of the range of cultural norms that learners are supposed to reflect on and relativise from in cultural learning scenarios (cf. Lütge 2013a). Transferred to TEFL, this means to offer learning opportunities through which students learn to identify and recognise the effects of heteronormativity that make 'normal' genders and sexualities appear normal, and non-normative genders and sexualities seem Other. Since heteronormativity is a deeply naturalised and therefore oftentimes invisible (in that heterosexuality is 'unmarked') cultural phenomenon, I argue that queerly working along the lines of heteronormativity in the EFL classroom is an immense challenge that requires carefully designed and selected tasks, interactions, and materials. The difficulty is to make something visible that is oftentimes invisible and not consciously recognised. Yet at the same time, heteronormativity as deeply enshrined in culture must at least theoretically be accessible in a large number of texts from which it can be unearthed by employing a queer and critical mind-set. For example, a close scrutiny of advertisements could yield insights into how they construct desires, relationships, and identities vis-à-vis gender and sexuality, and in how far these constructions mirror heteronormative worldviews. Interestingly, the critical reflection on heteronormativity does not necessarily require, for example, a literary text with an LGBT perspective. Recently, König (2015b) has suggested a teaching scenario in which learners reflect on heteronormativity by engaging with their (heterosexually informed) assumptions about the nature of the love declarations they read into Shakespeare's sonnets.

Anchoring point 4: Thinking about queer as a way to make the understanding of identity fluid

The last anchoring point I suggest is linked to the anti-identitarian position that circulates within Queer Theory. But rather than using this position to argue against any representation of identity at all, I suggest adding a focus on identities as shifting or non-determinable. As such, learners can gain the insight that an all-too-easy ascription of identity labels is often neither possible nor desirable. Especially in view of intercultural and transcultural learning, this vantage point yields

valuable impulses. Sexual and gender identities might be construed differently in and across various cultural contexts, which mirrors Mittag's (2015) notion of gender as an empty signifier that can be filled with various and variable meanings (cf. chapter 4.3). Therefore, experiencing sexual and gender identities as potentially vague or shifting while resisting the urge to pigeonhole somebody into an identity category at once can contribute valuably to cultural learning objectives (e.g. de-centering from one's own assumptions, or entering cultural encounters with an open attitude). To initiate encounters with fluid or vague identities, I highlight the value of literary texts in which the identity positions of the protagonists are not clearly determinable. David Levithan's novel *A Lover's Dictionary: A Love Story in 185 Definitions* is one such example where the (male and gay) identity positions are not easily recognisable. This novel retraces the relationship of a New York couple. The story is told in 185 dictionary entries and therefore unfolds in an alphabetical, not a chronological order. The indeterminacy of the protagonists' gender and sexual identities emerges from the specific constellation of the narrative perspectives, in which an 'I'-narrator addresses his partner as 'you', as the following example shows:

abstain, v.

I'm sorry I was so surprised you didn't drink that night.

"Is something wrong?" I asked. It wasn't like you turn down a drink after work.

"Go ahead," you said. "Drink for both of us."

So I ordered two Manhattans. I didn't know whether to offer you a sip. I didn't know if it could be this easy to get you, for once, to stop.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

After a dramatic pause, you said, totally serious, "I'm pregnant." And then you cracked up.

I laughed even though I didn't feel like laughing. I raised my Manhattan, tipped it a little in your direction, then asked, "Whose is it?"

(Levithan 2011: 4)

The pronoun constellation does not give away the protagonists' genders, but the text contains a highly gendered reference, namely pregnancy. As such, learners could develop different assumptions about who speaks to whom, and who can speak about pregnancy to whom (e.g. Is this a joke between a gay couple? Does a wife proclaim her pregnancy to her husband?), and reflect on the identity indeterminacy of this situation.

The four anchoring points I collated here are meant to illuminate the potential and the implications of establishing queer perspectives in the EFL classroom. They derive from a transfer of queer-informed thought to a systematic framework that may serve to provide an informed rationale for 'queering' TEFL in that it offers various points of entry from which to integrate queer focal points into the classroom. They indicate that the link between queer and TEFL does not exhaust itself in solely including LGBTQ people, issues or experiences into classroom scenarios. Rather, they also show that the critical impetus of queer can engender challenging and complex reflections on heteronormativity, the potential indeterminacy of sexual and gender identities, and the inextricability of discourse from gender and sexuality. My attempt to 'fix' queer into a framework that might ultimately serve to make queer operable in the EFL

classroom is, admittedly, a highly ‘un queer’ thing to do, as the term tends to resist definition and determinacy (cf. Jagose 1996: 1). I argue, however, that queer must acquiesce in such systematisation if its potential is to play out productively in a pedagogic and didactic discipline such as TEFL, which in turn requires conceptualisations for making new impulses – especially those that bring in complexity and diversity through new ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ – accessible to learners and teachers in concrete EFL settings.

Part C: Queering TEFL – Practical Implications

In Part B, I have legitimised the integration of sexual and gender diversity into the scope of TEFL as a viable exemplar of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ by drawing on curricular, pedagogic and international research perspectives. I could show that curricular guidelines place an increasing demand on the EFL classroom to become a space where learners come to engage with and learn about the diversity of sexual and gender identities as an integral part of a pluralistic society. These curricular shifts are accompanied by pedagogic research that stylises education about sexual and gender diversity as a cross-curricular mandate. Individual school subjects are increasingly called for to respond to this mandate by identifying anchoring points in subject-specific concepts into which the education about sexual and gender diversity can be embedded. This also poses an immediate challenge for TEFL to identify such anchoring points. International research has already begun to grapple with the nexus of sexual and gender diversity and English Language Teaching, which I read as an encouragement for the German TEFL context to enter into a dialogue and launch a productive exchange of insights concerning why and how the landscape of ELT might benefit from updating and transforming its research and practice agendas under the aegis of queer. Since a ‘queer turn’ has so far almost completely failed to materialise in German TEFL research and classroom practice, I have initiated the access to Queer Theory and the related fields of queer politics and queer pedagogy in order to carve out their potential and their implications for being a link discipline of the German TEFL context. While I hope to have theoretically substantiated the potential of ‘queering TEFL’ and, in doing so, legitimised why a queer angle is a valuable ‘newcomer’ to cultural, literary and gender-informed learning, the practical implications of ‘queering TEFL’ have so far not been illuminated. If, however, a queer focus is to play out productively in the EFL classroom, the immediate challenge is to engage in practice-oriented reflections that achieve a transfer of queer-informed theoretical considerations into queer-informed concepts for teaching practice. After all, given the increasing complexity and the new concerns that a queer vista engenders for teaching practice, it becomes vital to break down this complexity into more palatable aspects and to illustrate what ‘teaching queer’ in the EFL classroom may look like. In the following two chapters, I will move into view two specific fields of practical application. First, I will access the field of LGBT-themed and queer young adult literature to exemplify how a queer focus can be mapped onto the EFL literature classroom. Second, I will critically investigate in how far the EFL coursebook as a central component of teaching practice can also contribute to queering the classroom. Admittedly, these two focal points only offer a limited scope in view of the myriad possibilities for bringing in a queer perspective into teaching practice, so further research is certainly necessary here. Nonetheless, the two aspects I do consider here may serve as fruitful starting points for further considerations.

7 Accessing LGBT-Themed And Queer Young Adult Literature for the EFL Classroom

In this chapter, I will centralise the EFL literature classroom as a site for implementing a queer-informed focus in teaching practice. In particular, I will elaborate on young adult literature (YAL) with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer themes and carve out the potential of these literary texts for establishing an explicitly queer perspective in literary learning scenarios. My turn towards the field of young adult literature reflects a recent trend in EFL literature research to access texts coming from this genre as a valuable resource for the EFL classroom (cf. Alter 2015a; Matz/Stieger 2015). From a queer vantage point, my assumption is that LGBTQ-themed young adult literature can give voice to queer identities and experiences that have up to now been absent from literature selections suggested for the EFL classroom. My aim is to show how these specific texts can encourage learners to change their perspectives into queer experience while enhancing their awareness of heteronormativity and sexual and gender diversity. I will begin this chapter by providing an introductory overview into the field of LGBTQ-themed young adult literature. In circling in key concerns of this YAL subgenre, I seek to introduce a body of texts that has so far not been thoroughly accessed for the EFL literature classroom. Therefore, knowing about central key concerns in LGBTQ-informed YAL research is an important backbone for practically implementing such texts in teaching scenarios (e.g. concerning what themes are typically negotiated in LGBTQ young adult literature, and how readers are positioned in relation to LGBTQ-themed fictional texts). In a second step, I will reflect on the critical issue of choosing suitable texts from this subgenre of YAL and provide reasons why it might be important not to foreclose too quickly the types of texts that are chosen. In the third part of this chapter, I will move into view David Levithan's novel *Boy Meets Boy*, illustrate its queer potential and suggest ways of using this novel in the EFL classroom.

7.1 LGBT-themed and Queer Young Adult Fiction: Circling in Key Concerns

From the perspective of 2017, there now exists a considerable body of young adult literature with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer content. This synchronic viewpoint must not deter from the fact, however, that the relative wealth of LGBTQ young adult literature that is accessible today stands in stark contrast to the rare and only gradually increasing inclusion of LGBTQ themes and characters into YAL texts in previous decades (cf. Cart/Jenkins 2006: xv; Crisp 2009; Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 120, 126). Prior to the 1960s, as Renzi, Letcher and Miraglia (2012: 120) observe, literature for young people hardly ever included a focus on gay, let alone lesbian, bisexual or transgender, themes or characters, mirroring the prevailing social attitudes towards LGBTQ people of that time. If anything, what did occur in YAL can be called the "incidental treatment of homosexuality" (ibid.), i.e. the often subtle as well as singular occurrence of homosexual themes in brief – and easily overlooked – scenes of YAL works. A prominent example of such incidental occurrence of homosexuality can be found in J. D. Salinger's novel *Catcher in the Rye* from 1951. In one scene, the protagonist Holden Caulfield

stays overnight at his favourite teacher's apartment, when the teacher pets Caulfield on his head, which for Caulfield is a highly disturbing encounter that causes him to leave at once (cf. Cart/Jenkins 2006: 6). Such rare scenes, however, a far from constituting a movement towards YAL becoming more inclusive of LGBTQ themes or characters (cf. Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 120). Things began to change slowly, however, with the publication of John Donovan's YA novel *I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip* in 1969. This novel is widely considered to be the first YA text that openly and frankly negotiates homosexuality as a central theme, namely at the example of the thirteen-year-old protagonist Davy Ross' growing awareness that he might be gay, which causes him disturbing feelings of guilt, shame and denial (cf. Cart/Jenkins 2006: 7; Logan et al: 31).

The decades that followed saw a slow, yet steady increase in YAL texts that depicted LGBTQ themes and characters. In *The Heart Has Its Reasons: Young Adult Literature with Gay/Lesbian/Queer Content, 1969-2004*, Cart and Jenkins present and discuss the more than 200 YAL texts that were published in the USA and also the UK between 1969 and 2004 (2006: xv, 185-192), with a particular increase occurring at the turn of the 21st century. Having looked at publishers' catalogues and online booksellers' lists, Crisp (2009: 334) adds that between 2004 and 2009, the release of such YAL titles has even accelerated more. For Cart and Jenkins, this proliferation of YAL titles with LGBTQ themes indicates a move away "from being an isolated or 'ghettoized' subgenre to becoming a more integrated part of the total body of young adult literature" (2006: 128). Not only does this indicate the end of LGBTQ invisibility that has long prevailed in the literature for young readers, it also shows that LGBTQ themes are depicted in ever more multifarious and varied ways. This includes, for example, spelling out the acronym LGBTQ into texts that are more positive and affirmative of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identities, or that take up the critical and emancipatory impulse of queer to depict a greater diversity of queer youth identities and more fluid constructions of sexualities and genders, or to deconstruct heteronormativity in the worlds of the literary texts (cf. Abate/Kidd 2011: 6; Crisp 2009: 340; Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 122). Doubtlessly, given the wealth of LGBTQ-themed YAL that exists today, it is not possible to provide a conclusive list of each and every title here. But let me point out a few titles that are frequently referred to in published research as landmark texts in LGBTQ young adult literature (e.g. Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012; Abate/Kidd 2011). There is, for example, Nancy Garden's 1982 novel *Annie on My Mind*, one of the first and among the most popular novels negotiating lesbian homosexuality in a sensitive portrayal of two lesbian high school seniors who fall powerfully in love with each other and remain a couple in spite of a homophobic environment. Another noteworthy title is the first collection of gay and lesbian short stories *Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence*. Edited by Marion Dane Bauer in 1994, the short stories collected here are affirmative in nature and infused with a stronger sense of pride while the characters come to terms with their lesbian or gay identities. The first YA novel to depict a transgender main character is Julie Anne Peters' *Luna* from 2004, retracing the transition of the transgender child Liam/Luna from male to female during adolescence. Finally, I wish to mention David Levithan's 2003 novel *Boy Meets Boy*. This book breaks new and 'queer' ground in that it features a cast of teenage protagonists

from a wide spectrum of sexual and gender identities who live in an unusual town that has debunked the heteronormative order and allows a queer diversity of lives, identities, and expressions to flourish in a non-repressive environment.

The label LGBTQ literature reflects the attempt to establish and classify YAL with LGBTQ content as a subgenre in its own right within young adult literature. While researchers tend to use words such as genre or subgenre (e.g. Gilligan 2010: 50; Cart/Jenkins 2006: xvii; Jenkins 1998; Kidd 1998), there has so far not been a conclusive discussion regarding whether LGBTQ young adult literature defines a genre in its own right. Notwithstanding this conclusive answer, I read the classification of LGBTQ YAL as a genre as a strategic move to counter the invisibility of and voicelessness of LGBTQ themes and characters that has long prevailed in YAL and hence, to positively assert and draw attention to the existence of this particular body of literature. In following Cart and Jenkins (cf. 2006: 128-129), I also wish to point out that the label LGBTQ young adult literature might also reflect a marketing decision to find a greater readership for these titles – which more often than not is conceptualised as an LGBTQ readership, as I will show below. Furthermore, the increasing quantity and quality of LGBTQ young adult literature, and hence their establishment as a rather distinct body of literary texts, is also mirrored in the practice of giving literary awards to outstanding LGBTQ young adult literature. The American Library Association's Stonewall Awards now also cover children's and young adult literature with an LGBTQ focus. Similarly, the Lambda Literary Foundation, which works towards promoting and preserving LGBTQ literature at large, has also reached out towards young adult literature by shortlisting and awarding excellent titles with LGBTQ content or by LGBTQ authors (cf. Merse 2013; Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 122). It appears that the defining feature of LGBTQ young adult literature is the open, frank and explicit portrayal and negotiation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer issues and identities in adolescent life worlds (cf. Cart/Jenkins 2006: 7; Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 121). This portrayal and negotiation can take on various forms, for example in that literary texts pose sexual identity as a problem in the face of hostile and homophobic environments, or in that they depict the acceptance and affirmation of non-normative sexualities (cf. Crisp 2009). Also, the centrality of LGBTQ issues or identities within a literary text can certainly differ. It can be a matter of degree in how far LGBTQ issues are *the* central theme of a novel, are just one out of several important themes, or play a more peripheral role. Similarly, the question is in how far one or several LGBTQ characters feature prominently as the key protagonist(s) of a text, or whether they only play a minor part.

To further the understanding of the myriad ways in which LGBTQ young adult literature negotiates and represents the experience of LGBTQ people, I now turn to the three-part heuristic proposed by Cart and Jenkins (2006: xix-xx) to systematically classify and evaluate young adult literature with LGBTQ content and characters. The heuristic Cart and Jenkins propose builds on Sims Bishop's (1982) three-part model to describe the representation of Afro-American characters in children's literature, and on Jenkins' (1998) earlier research on young adult literature with LGBTQ content. The categories of this heuristic are *homosexual visibility*, *gay assimilation* and *queer consciousness/community*, which Cart and Jenkins (2006)

apply to their critical discussion and evaluation of more than 200 titles of young adult literature with LGBTQ content published between 1969 and 2004. Blackburn and Clark (2011) point out that this heuristic is generally helpful in that it contributes to understanding what fictional texts can accomplish in depicting the experience of LGBTQ people, but they also highlight to use these categories flexibly, as any given text can be appropriately placed in either of the categories, or can contain a mixture of elements coming from two or all three categories. For my purpose to bring LGBTQ young adult fiction into the EFL classroom, this three-part heuristic can provide a general sense of orientation regarding the thematic and representational directions any LGBTQ text can possibly take.

Stories that fall into the category of *homosexual visibility* usually portray a single character who comes out as gay or lesbian, either voluntarily or involuntarily, and who has often not previously been considered to be gay or lesbian. Such stories centralise the interruption of a previously harmonious and sexually homogeneous society by the appearance of a gay or lesbian character, and it is this interruption and the responses to it that are the driving force and the dramatic substance of the story (Cart/Jenkins 2006: xx; Blackburn/Clark 2011: 149). Logan et al. (2014: 31) point out that in such titles, non-normative sexual identity – usually signified by coming out – is cast as a problem that the gay or lesbian protagonist as well as the people in their environment have difficulties coping with. Common themes explored in such novels include a gay or lesbian character's intense self-reflection (often in in-depth character portrayals causing dramatic tension for the story when the protagonists reflects on what might happen when the invisible becomes visible), the protagonist's struggle for self-acceptance and the acceptance of friends and family, and also negotiations of self-hate (cf. Cart/Jenkins 2006: xx; Logan et al. 2014: 31). Crisp argues that such stories heavily rely on homophobia as a literary foil or mechanism “for establishing believable ways in which the characters interact with each other and within the world in which they live” (2009: 336). The backdrop of homophobia against which a literary text is constructed can have two implications, often within the very same text. On the one hand, the gay or lesbian protagonist encounters hostile and negative reactions in a predominantly homophobic world, may be ostracised by family members and friends, or experience their life falling apart. This reinforces the view that gay or lesbian people are society's outcasts who are often targets of verbal and physical harassment (cf. Crisp 2009: 336; Blackburn/Clark 2011: 149). On the other hand, such novels can develop an affirmative and positive stance in that they depict the protagonist's brave and resilient self-affirmation and empowerment in an otherwise homophobic setting, which constructs the coming out and the ensuing struggles as a symbolic rite of passage of personal growth and social rebellion (cf. Crisp 2009: 336; Kidd 1998: 114). Certainly, such stories tend to perpetuate a paradigm that links a non-normative sexuality with problems, for which they harness at times massive critique in scholarship on LGBTQ young adult literature, in particular in view of the negative messages such texts might send out to LGBTQ adolescents. Still, Logan et al. point out that such texts “offered readers an opportunity to see protagonists acknowledging the existence of these identities” (Logan et al. 2014: 31) and achieve homosexual visibility. Certainly, such texts should not be discarded per se, as they might still be a valuable source for engaging critically

with issues of homophobia or LGBTQ prejudice in the EFL classroom, and as they might depict in a realistic way the struggles that (still) might be associated with coming to terms with one's sexual identity (cf. also Merse 2013: 17).

Gay assimilation stories create a world in which various sexual and gender identities are naturally assimilated into society. As Cart and Jenkins explain, “these stories include people who ‘just happen to be gay’ in the same way that someone ‘just happens’ to be left-handed or have red hair” (2006: xx). According to the heuristic model, this literary assimilation strategy tends to present gay or lesbian characters as no different from the other straight-identified characters except for their sexual orientation (cf. Blackburn/Clark 2011: 149; Cart/Jenkins 2006: 170-171). In contrast to the story type explained above, gay assimilation texts usually do not derive a major dramatic force from a person's sexual identity for developing and advancing the plot so that the sexual identity might have no significant meaning for the plot at all (cf. Logan et al. 2014: 31). It is important to point at a few fine distinctions, however, to critically reflect on the notion of gay assimilation. While in all cases of gay assimilation the sexual identity of a character is a given (rather than emerging in complicated coming out scenarios), the question remains how a protagonist's non-normative identity is still employed and negotiated in the piece of literature. First, if a protagonist's being gay or lesbian is not thematised further, this might contribute to ‘normalising’ the fact that someone simply is gay or lesbian and that such a person can turn to solving other, more important matters in the story. At the same time, however, gay assimilation might also remodel a protagonist's sexual identity back into invisibility by hushing up difference or Otherness at the service of what Cart and Jenkins call “peaceful coexistence” (2006: 171) of people in a literary text. Even though Cart and Jenkins included the category of gay assimilation into their heuristic, they simultaneously challenge if gay assimilation can be realistically implemented in young adult fiction in its strong form:

Indeed, it is hard to imagine a young adult novel [...] in which sexual orientation *could* realistically go unnoticed in the face of adolescents' hyper-awareness of sexuality of all stripes and persuasions. However matter-of-factly or neutrally it is presented, the revelation of a character's gay/lesbian identity is almost inevitably a notable event in YA fiction. (Cart/Jenkins 2006: 171)

This critical position may sensitise us to scrutinise in detail in what particular ways a character's gay or lesbian identity that is taken for granted in a story and constructed as a given might *still* project thematic trajectories into the story that are significant for the development of the plot.

To frame their last category, *queer consciousness/community*, Cart and Jenkins draw on the observation that

[u]ntil relatively recently, the overwhelming tendency in young adult literature with gay/lesbian content has been for writers to tell the story from a mainstream heterosexual perspective. The novels told readers how gay/lesbian people were viewed by others, but did not tell readers how gay/lesbian people viewed themselves. Judging from some recent titles, it is possible that this literature is finally beginning to be written. (Cart/Jenkins 2006: 171-172)

This indicates a shift in representation towards what one might call more authentic, candid and realistic portrayals of LGBTQ characters. Typically, queer consciousness/community stories feature a variety of LGBTQ characters rather than singling out the often problem-laden

experience of an individual gay or lesbian protagonist (cf. Blackburn/Clark 2011: 149). These stories also present LGBTQ teenagers in the context of their communities (often consisting of other LGBTQ people) and their families, which provide a supportive surrounding for LGBTQ characters living a full and well-rounded life (cf. Cart/Jenkins 2006: xx; Logan et al. 2014: 31). The literary strategies such stories employ usually make it possible to recognise or even celebrate the distinctiveness of the experience of being LGBTQ without at the same time reproducing the problem-laden paradigm that has marked so many homosexual visibility stories. What these stories contain then are more nuanced and varied representations of LGBTQ themes and characters.

In sum, this three-part model might prove useful in drawing attention to the general tendencies of YAL regarding how they accomplish to represent LGBTQ characters and issues. By their virtue of being a heuristic, these classifications can be useful for teachers or teacher educators who want to select from the range of LGBTQ young adult literature titles and seek to make an informed choice regarding the themes a certain literary text might negotiate and explore. Indeed, most of the texts making up the bulk of LGBTQ young adult literature are classified by Cart and Jenkins (2006: xx) into the category of homosexual visibility. Fewer titles appear to qualify as gay assimilation, and up to 2006, even fewer titles as queer consciousness/community, although Logan et al. (2014) emphasise that an increasing number of titles post-2006 can be categorised as such. At the same time, however, such heuristic categories can only ever provide a rough orientation, in particular as they hardly ever appear in a pure form. Even Cart and Jenkins tend to classify the literary texts they scrutinise into more than one category, which indicates that many LGBTQ literary texts indeed constitute a melange of themes and representational tendencies. Speaking from the perspective of 1998, Kidd already observes for LGBTQ young adult fiction that “[i]n recent years, the genre has become more sophisticated and harder to characterize. [...] What is often more interesting about literary texts, after all, is not how they fit certain categories, but how they complicate and/or evade them” (Kidd 1998: 114, 115). What follows from Kidd’s observation is that the field of LGBTQ young adult literature increasingly tends to evade easy categorisations, and that many perspectives and themes can be negotiated at the same time in one single novel – which is a tendency that is to be welcomed, as this increases a text’s multivoicedness and multiperspectivity that can fruitfully be harnessed in educational settings, including the EFL literature classroom. Furthermore, one has to caution against understanding these three heuristic categories as forming a clear-cut chronological or also qualitative development, with one tendency superseding a previous tendency by being allegedly superior. This might lead to the rather one-sided conclusion that newer LGBTQ stories are inherently better than older stories, in particular than those that centre on homosexual visibility in its nexus with problem-laden identities. As I will argue below, I prefer to remain generally open to the whole range of LGBTQ texts and critically judge their educational value, rather than discarding certain texts at once.

Further central aspects negotiated in scholarship on LGBTQ-themed young adult literature revolve around the perceived readership of such texts, how readers are positioned in relation to these texts, and what functions LGBTQ-themed YAL might serve for their readers.

When Cart and Jenkins ask if literary texts with LGBTQ content are “limited to readers from within the culture” or if “these titles are – *at least potentially* – for readers from all points on the sexual orientation continuum” (Cart/Jenkins 2006: xx; my emphasis), this clearly reflects the strong link research establishes between LGBTQ-themed young adult literature and LGBTQ adolescent readers as the main audience of these titles (cf. also Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 120). While such a link might follow an intuitive logic – of course it is LGBTQ adolescents who these texts are written for –, it establishes a problematic binary of ‘typical’ readers (those who identify as LGBTQ) and ‘atypical’ readers (heterosexually defined) for whom these texts are only *at least potentially* a viable choice. Interestingly, this binary is reflected in the tendency to ascribe a didactic function to reading LGBTQ young adult literature, also outside of educational settings (cf. Blackburn/Clark 2011: 153). This function is encapsulated in Bishop’s (1982) metaphor of literature as mirrors and literature as windows. Bishop originally developed this metaphor “as a way of understanding opportunities provided by multicultural children’s literature for readers both to see themselves and their own lives reflected in texts as well as to see through windows into other worlds” (Blackburn/Clark 2011: 149), which Blackburn and Clark transfer to the context of LGBTQ young fiction in order to conceptualise how potential readers of these texts can be defined.

Typically, these texts are understood to serve as mirrors for LGBTQ adolescents (cf. Blackburn/Clark 2011). Renzi, Letcher and Miraglia write that “LGBTQ young adult literature provides an opportunity for LGBTQ students to see themselves, to look into a mirror [...], and to reflect on their lives” (Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 119). Therefore, these texts cater for readers “for whom the heteronormative view is not their reality” (ibid.: 127). This link follows the gay-affirmative tradition of LGBTQ literature in that it nourishes the minds of LGBTQ readers and helps them to understand themselves and to develop mental strength and pride in who they are (cf. Cart/Jenkins 2006: xviii). In this sense, such texts provide what Logan et al. call “bibliotherapy” (2014: 30) to send out the message to LGBTQ adolescents that they are not alone or invisible, and that there is, to speak with Kidd, “the possibility of love and safe haven for lesbian and gay teenagers struggling with ostracism and depression” (1998: 114). On the other hand, LGBTQ young adult literature is traditionally conceptualised to serve as a window for non-LGBTQ readers through which to look into the lives and experience of LGBTQ people, to learn about issues that relate to LGBTQ identities, and ultimately to develop a sense of empathy and understanding for the experience of the LGBTQ Other (cf. Blackburn/Clark 2011: 153, 156). Here, LGBTQ young adult literature serves a particular function, as Cart and Jenkins emphasise:

Could these books perhaps play a positive didactic role in acquainting young readers with realistically portrayed gay/lesbian characters? And could those readers’ imaginations be pushed a bit further to see such characters from an empathetic, rather than simply a sympathetic, perspective? Could a young reader not simply feel *for* gay and lesbian people but also *with* them? (Cart/Jenkins 2006: xx)

Considering this evaluation of the role of LGBTQ literature, it becomes apparent that these texts are seen to function as an educative window for primarily heterosexually identified readers who are, so it seems, in dire need to broaden their horizon towards LGBTQ experience.

Such clear-cut assumptions, I argue, need to be troubled. This does not mean that I discard the idea of literature to function as windows or mirrors *per se*. I do believe that literature can work powerfully to affirm one's existence and also to introduce a reader to new experiences and life worlds hitherto unknown or unimagined. This mirrors the general potential that is ascribed to literature, also for educational settings and the EFL classroom (cf. chapter 4). What I do find problematic, however, is that *certain* readers are positioned in relation to *certain* functions that reading LGBTQ texts might fulfil. To deliberately oversimplify the matter for a moment, it assumes that LGBTQ readers are already fully knowledgeable about themselves and only need to read LGBTQ literature to recognise themselves in these texts. As such, an LGBTQ text is always a mirror for an LGBTQ adolescent. It further assumes that LGBTQ readers automatically identify with the people and perspectives an LGBTQ-themed literary text offers them. I argue, however, that there is not necessarily a deterministic link between being an LGBTQ adolescent, reading an LGBTQ text, and finding self-recognition and full identification through and in such texts. It is perfectly possible that LGBTQ adolescents might disagree with the specific perspectives offered them through the literary text, or with the way LGBTQ issues and identities are negotiated and depicted in any given LGBTQ-themed reading piece. Furthermore, LGBTQ adolescents might use LGBTQ-themed literature as a window to learn more, expand their horizons and imagine LGBTQ perspectives in ways that have been foreclosed to them beforehand, and not just to see their own self mirrored in a text.

On the other hand, LGBTQ YAL texts are primarily defined as windows for heterosexual adolescent readers. To oversimplify the matter again, such a perspective positions heterosexual adolescents as unknowledgeable about, or uninterested in, anything pertaining to LGBTQ issues or identities. Accordingly, this lack of knowledge or state of disinterest can be remedied by giving them an LGBTQ-themed text to read. Again, there is an at least hoped-for deterministic link, this time between achieving full understanding and empathy for LGBTQ people among heterosexuals, and reading an LGBTQ text that provides a pathway into LGBTQ worlds. Several problematic issues are at work here. First, it is untenable to position heterosexual adolescent readers as *per se* unknowledgeable about LGBTQ themes or perspectives, as today's prolific discourses on such themes, e.g. in the news or in media, or individual family or friendship constellations, might already have provided plentiful insights into LGBTQ life worlds. As such, LGBTQ young adult literature can equally well serve as a mirror, and not just as a window. Second, I wish to point out that heterosexual adolescents might also be genuinely interested in reading LGBTQ literature for the purpose of learning about LGBTQ perspectives, so that heterosexually identified adolescents can also count as viable and committed readers of these texts. And third, I seek to counter the hoped-for didactic outcome of fully understanding or agreeing with what an LGBTQ text offers a heterosexual reader. Not everything that such a text offers can or must be fully understood, leaving a space open for the unknowability or ineffability of the LGBTQ Other. Also, if a heterosexual reader is not required to fully understand everything, this leaves open a space for one's own positions, questions and reflections vis-à-vis the LGBTQ experience that the literary text conveys. Furthermore, if the focus is only on understanding the LGBTQ Other, an opportunity might be

lost for heterosexual readers to reflect on heteronormativity or heteronormative privilege. As such, a sole definition of LGBTQ-themed YAL as window might prevent a reflection on the reciprocal relationship between heteronormativity and sexual or gender Otherness. All in all, this problematisation of exclusively positioning certain readers in certain ways when they are engaged in reading an LGBTQ literary text serves the purpose to move away from easily ascribed categorisations and distinctions and to avoid delimiting in advance who reads, or has to read, an LGBTQ text for what particular purpose. Rather, I opt for staying open to the myriad motivations and interests readers of all sexual and gender identifications might have for reading and engaging with LGBTQ young adult literature.

Let me now turn to discussing the use of LGBTQ-themed literature in educational settings. While the discussion above has shown that reading LGBTQ texts is hardly ever completely free from any didactic intent even outside of learning contexts or classrooms, their transfer into an educational setting is more explicitly connected with didactic purposes and rationales. If, for example, the text selection in classrooms is found to reinforce a heteronormative worldview, e.g. by depicting mainly or only heterosexual relationships or desire, then the inclusion of LGBTQ literature can challenge and disrupt the heteronormative basis of text selections and establish a more inclusive curriculum (cf. Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 120; Merse 2013). Often, this rationale is closely linked to the notion that the lives and experiences of LGBTQ students are invisible or non-existent in school life. Hence, the inclusion of LGBTQ young adult literature is discussed for its potential to end this invisibility by bringing in LGBTQ experiences and lives through literature, and by providing an opportunity for LGBTQ students to see and reflect on themselves. This reflects the notion of literature as mirror, which I have problematised above. Ultimately, the strongest motivation for including LGBTQ-themed literary texts into classrooms lies in the hope that they might serve to end a culture of homophobia in school settings and to transform schools into places that are less hostile to LGBTQ students (cf. Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 119-120). Similarly, in reviewing scholarship on reading LGBT-themed literary texts in classrooms with adolescent learners, Blackburn and Cart (2011: 149) observe that the primary didactic rationale for having learners engage with these texts is to combat homophobia. This rationale is strongly reflected in the way teachers tend to position and define their learners. Blackburn and Cart have also shown teachers do not only position their learners as straight or as lacking any knowledge of gay and lesbian issues, but also as at times aggressively homophobic. Hence, it might come as no surprise that reading LGBTQ literature is mainly connected with the hope or didactic objective to overcome homophobia. It must be said that, clearly, ending homophobia is an important pedagogic objective, and maybe the reading of LGBTQ-themed literature can contribute to this objective, although maybe not in deterministic self-fulfilling prophecies. Blackburn and Clark, however, call to mind that literary texts have more to offer than being used, in a rather one-sided or utilitarian fashion, to combat homophobia:

While using texts in such didactic ways in classrooms is neither 'bad' nor uncommon, it concerns us that LGBT-themed literature seems to be used in *only* these ways. That these texts might provoke pleasure, humour, or self-recognition in their readers was rarely, if ever, a consideration. (Blackburn/Clark 2011: 153)

I read Blackburn and Clarks point as a call to recognise that LGBTQ-themed literature also has an inherently literary value that might be lost out of sight if it is solely instrumentalised to reduce or end homophobia. This carves out a space for reading LGBTQ literature for diverse purposes in diverse educational settings, including the queer-informed EFL literature classroom.

7.2 Choosing LGBTQ-themed Young Adult Literature for the EFL Classroom: Critical Reflections

In view of the EFL literature classroom, I locate the introduction of LGBTQ-themed young adult fiction within the ongoing attempts to diversify TEFL towards a more complex range of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’. So far, literary texts that explicitly negotiate sexual and gender diversity as a core theme have more often than not been absent from the classroom, although it must be said that the literature selection in TEFL is generally attuned to mirroring cultural diversity – albeit along a few very specific lines so far, as I have argued above (chapter 3.2). Hence, an active turn to LGBTQ-themed literature serves to increase the range of texts, and the range of cultural diversity, that teachers can choose from. While this line of argumentation positively stresses the productive potential of LGBTQ-themed literature for the EFL classroom, it is also possible to argue in favour of its inclusion in order to overcome a negative deficit prevailing in TEFL. Elsewhere, I have argued that the literature selection is prone to depicting heterosexual love, desire and relationship, and thus mirrors a heteronormative worldview (cf. Merse 2013). To make it very clear, this criticism does not reflect an accusatory tone that charges TEFL discourse with being complicit in deliberately creating a “conspiracy of silence” (Cart/Jenkins 2006: xvii) or perpetuating a heteronormative mandate. Rather, it can be argued that the literature selection has ‘naturally’ followed the heterosexual norm, and that the preference of texts where heterosexuality is implicitly assumed to be ‘normal’ is a by-product of a largely heteronormative world. For teachers to reflect on their choice of literature in the classroom, the following set of questions might be helpful:

Take an honest look at the literature and reading that you have students work with in your classroom. What types of conversations occur around this literature? What questions do you or your students pose? What do these readings say about sexuality? What do they say about gender? (Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 125)

If these questions are reflected on from a critically queer perspective, the heteronormativity of previous literature selections can be disrupted by introducing a diverse range of sexual and gender identities, issues, and perspectives that challenge heterosexuality as the only available way to live and express one’s sexuality in literary texts. Yet I wish to articulate the careful reminder that challenging the heteronormativity of the text selection as such does not automatically also has students challenge or interrogate heteronormative mind-sets. Here, the need for teaching techniques becomes evident that make heteronormativity visible to students and that evoke critical reflections and discussions on heteronormativity.

Drawing on LGBTQ-themed young adult fiction in order to ‘queer’ the EFL literature classroom generally ties in with the value ascribed to reading and engaging with literary texts. They open up an understanding for the range of possible human experience, enable students to

find new meanings and connect with something that lies outside of their own individual worlds, and encourage interrogations of the world as it is by offering visions and versions of new possibilities (cf. Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 119). Hence, reading LGBT and queer literature is also in line with the culturally pluralistic agenda of TEFL outlined in part A. They can invite students to reflect upon their own identity, de-centre from long-held assumptions and worldviews, and they can offer students anchoring points for identification. Furthermore, *Fremdverstehen* can be achieved from a new and different angle by stimulating encounters with sexual and gender difference through literature. As such, literary texts that negotiate and depict sexual and gender diversity offer innovative and maybe surprising textual nuances that could very well supplement the canon of post-colonial and ethnic minority texts used for inter- and transcultural learning processes. Yet the pressing question remains what criteria might possibly inform the choice for LGBTQ young adult literature so that the chosen text provides a valuable contribution to the overall orchestration of cultural diversity aimed at in cultural, literary, and gender-informed TEFL scenarios.

A look into scholarship that explores the use of LGBTQ-themed young adult literature in classrooms generally (no such explorations do exist up to now for foreign language education in particular) yields certain tendencies that are meant to guide educators through the process of selecting “the best of the YA queer literature for use in their schools” (Logan et al. 2014: 31). The aim of finding the best possible text indicates that such scholarship places normative restrictions and endorsements on the process of text selections. There is a strong demand for texts that bring positive, honest and accurate representations of LGBTQ people and experience into the classroom. Ideally, LGBTQ characters in such texts are fully accepted, loved and integrated members of society. This viewpoint clearly endorses texts that would fall into the heuristic category of queer consciousness/community (cf. Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 119-120; Cart/Jenkins 2006: xviii). At the same time that positive and accurate representation are favoured, texts that negotiate LGBTQ people and themes in negative or stereotypical ways are discarded. As Logan et al. demand, “[e]ducators should choose literature that discourages false images of queer persons” (2014: 33). This normative tendency also rules out those literary texts that follow a problem-laden paradigm, e.g. coming-out narratives in which the protagonist struggles against a homophobic environment. In their attempt to evaluate literature with LGBTQ content, Cart and Jenkins follow a highly normative agenda, identifying titles “either for their excellence or their failures” (Cart/Jenkins 2006: xviii). Even harsher, they believe that “what is stereotypic, wrongheaded, and outdated must be noted and what is accurate, thoughtful, and artful must be applauded” (Cart/Jenkins 2006: xviii). It appears that there is a strong tendency to discourage educators per se from using LGBTQ-themed young adult literature that would count as ‘failure’, whereas there is a one-sided preference for ‘the excellent text’.

Such normative claims fail to recognise that an LGBTQ-themed text that has been chosen for the classroom never stands for itself, simply sending out messages to its readers that are equally simply being taken up. In the classroom, a literary text is ideally embedded in a teaching methodology that encourages students to engage critically with a text, rather than taking for granted what the text says and represents. This is indicative of approaches to teaching

literature influenced by reader-response theory, which emphasise that learners are actively involved in constituting a text's meaning, rather than being its passive consumers. Therefore, I am highly skeptical of those normative demands that place an emphasis on only selecting texts that include positive or accurate portrayals of LGBTQ lives and perspectives. Transferred to the EFL literature classroom, this would severely limit the availability of LGBTQ-themed texts to a few texts that are rendered 'excellent', and misrecognise or ignore the rich literary heritage of LGBTQ young adult fiction, which also includes problem-oriented literary negotiations of LGBTQ life and experience. Rather than demonising some texts while clearly favouring other texts, I opt for an open approach to choosing LGBTQ-themed literature that potentially covers the whole continuum from 'problem-laden' to 'problem-free' fictional texts. I further argue that more emphasis should be placed on the methodology that frames the engagement with a literary text, and on the questions and discussions that occur around a text. Hence, it is not so much the text in itself that is the only important guiding criterion for text choice, but also the particular lens through which a text can be viewed, discussed, and critically reflected on in the classroom. If, for example, pervasive stereotypes of LGBTQ people and experience circulate widely in a literary text, learners and teachers can unmask these stereotypes and reflect on their function to vilify and homogenise the experience of LGBTQ people when in fact there is diversity and multivoicedness. A further option would be to disrupt the homophobic or heteronormative assumptions a literary text might convey by imagining alternative possibilities for the depiction of the text's setting, plot, and character development. What I also consider problematic is the reliance on accurate and honest portrayals of LGBTQ characters. Here, the question emerges what an accurate or honest portrayal might actually look like. Does accurate and honest mean that LGBTQ characters are depicted as safe from harm and as problem-free, which the tendency towards positive portrayals quite clearly indicates, or can accurate and honest also include the fears, problems and controversies that LGBTQ characters might even today see themselves confronted with. What I do want to caution against is the preference of a one-sided and possibly unrealistically uber-positive representation of LGBTQ people and experience in a literary text. Rather, I argue that the texts chosen should cover a range of perspectives that depict the multifaceted experiences connected to living a gendered and sexual life outside of heteronormative constellations. Such a broader notion of text choice can serve to counter the assumption that all LGBTQ people fall into one category (cf. Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 124). All in all, I follow Blackburn and Clark who "value literature that contributes to homosexual visibility and gay assimilation but recognize the need for literature that represents queer people in communities" (2011: 161). With such a position in mind, the call is for selecting a diverse range of LGBTQ-themed young adult literature that is coupled with an informed and critical teaching methodology, rather than choosing the one and only perfect text.

7.3 David Levithan's *Boy Meets Boy*: Queer Potential and Teaching Implications

To come back to the example novel that provided the introduction to this study, I will now turn to David Levithan's (2003) novel *Boy Meets Boy* to illustrate the queer potential and the teaching implications of an example text coming from the field of LGBTQ-themed young adult

literature. The novel can initially be described as a gay teen romance that centres on the life of the teenage protagonist Paul as he falls in love with his new classmate Noah, whom he first meets at a jamming session in a bookstore. Told from Paul's perspective, the novel retraces the developing relationship between Paul and Noah, their falling out of love and then falling back in love again. The development of their relationship is set against the backdrop of highschool life and the circle of Paul's friends (cf. Pattee 2008; Crisp 2009). Both from a queer and a literary perspective, it is interesting to see how Levithan constructs the setting of the novel. According to Pattee, Levithan presents his readers a fictional yet recognisable society that works as a "queer utopia" (2008: 156). In Paul's town, the heteronormative order has been turned on its head. Being different in one's expression of sexuality or gender is not stigmatised. Indeed, diverse identities from the queer spectrum can live and thrive in this town, turning it into a vibrant microcosm of sexual and gender differences in which being gay, bisexual, or transgender does not turn a person into the Other. Crisp (2009: 340) points out that, rather than attempting to portray a real world, Levithan seeks to demonstrate a world as it could be, and as Renzi, Letcher and Miraglia (2012: 120) add, a world as it should be. Indeed, the humorous narration and the cleverly arranged plot indicate that *Boy Meets Boy* "is significant for the ways in which he [David Levithan] disrupts the idea of a heteronormative society and moves beyond a call for tolerance for LGBTQ teens, imagining a world in which acceptance is the norm rather than the exception" (Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 122). Hence, it comes as no surprise that Paul "became the first openly gay class president in the history of Ms. Farquar's third-grade class" (Levithan 2003: 11), formed his "elementary school's first gay-straight alliance" (Levithan 2003: 12) and had "a gay food column in the local paper" called "Dining OUT" (Levithan 2003: 13). In careful detail, the difference of Paul's hometown compared to the real world emerges constantly throughout the novel. At the Homecoming Pride Rally, for example, "the cheerleaders come riding in on their Harleys" (Levithan 2003: 21), while the character of Infinite Darlene, a transgender drag queen who is "both star quarterback and homecoming queen" (ibid.: 16), "strides out in a pink ball gown, covered in part by her quarterback jersey", with the "homecoming king [...] hang[ing] from her arm, a good thirteen inches shorter than her (if you count the heels)" (ibid.: 22). Cart and Jenkins therefore argue that *Boy Meets Boy* "represents a near revolution in social attitudes" (2006: 145) because it has overturned the regime of heteronormativity and offers its readers an imaginative insight into a world that is non-heteronormative. By removing the foil of homophobia that is central to many LGBTQ-themed texts, Crisp argues, Levithan "re-imagines 'normal' by re-imagining 'reality'" (Crisp 2009: 340). Surely, this literary twist invites the reader to reflect on what counts as 'normal' and who counts as Other when the social environment is all of a sudden completely different in a queer-utopian sense.

In applying Cart and Jenkins' heuristic to *Boy Meets Boy*, it emerges that this novel evades easy categorisation. It certainly centralises the notion of queer consciousness/community. Paul is integrated into a school context and a circle of friends in which diverse expressions of gender and sexuality are prevalent: he himself identifies as gay, and so does his new boyfriend Noah. For their romance to function, the novel must be set in

such a utopian queer community, as in other settings, their homosexual relationship would not be “as clearly sanctioned, accommodated, and encouraged” (Pattee 2008: 159). Then there is Kyle, Paul’s ex-boyfriend who tries to get back together with Paul throughout the novel. Kyle is undecided whether he is bisexual or gay, and would rather not apply any limiting identity label to himself. There is also Joni, Paul’s best friend, female and heterosexual, whose new boyfriend Chuck Paul dislikes strongly, which endangers their long-held friendship. Then there is a remarkable group of drag queens at school, of whom Infinite Darlene features centrally throughout the novel. In the utopian microcosm of the novel, drag queens are not bullied at school for being drag queens, but for not taking good enough care of their nails, or for looking too buff in a tank top (cf. Levithan 2003: 16). In particular, it is this vibrantly multisexual and multigendered set-up from which the novel gains much of its drive. Within the novel, these characters in their diverse identities are not the Other, whereas from the perspective of the reader, they might very well be perceived to be the Other, which provides various possibilities for complex changes of perspectives and literally mediated experiences of Otherness. Since the characters in *Boy Meets Boy* are fully loved and respected members of their society (cf. Renzi/Letcher/Miraglia 2012: 119), the novel would also classify as gay assimilation in so far as the diverse sexual and gender identities are taken as a given. This, however, does not mean that the various self-identifications the characters pursue do not matter in this novel – the only thing is that they do not pose severe problems that they struggle with.

In spite of its construction as an almost carefree queer utopia, the novel still contains elements of homophobia and associations of homosexuality with struggle and problems. Hence, it also leans into the category of homosexual visibility. On a textual level, this is achieved by setting the utopian town against a neighbouring town in which the heteronormative order is still intact. As such, Cart and Jenkins point out that “the real world does intrude in subplots” (2006: 145) that involve Paul’s gay best friend Tony, the son of extremely religious and homophobic parents. They discovered his homosexuality by finding a gay news magazine in one of his drawers, and ever since keep him grounded for fear of him turning into the ‘wrong’ direction. Regularly, however, Tony manages to escape this hostile environment with the help of his friends Paul and Joni, who pretend to form a bible group that Tony’s parents approve of so that they allow him to leave with them. With Paul and Joni at his side, Tony dives into the dazzling and desirable queer community of the utopian town. As Paul observes, “[o]ur happiness is the closest we’ll ever come to God, so we figure Tony’s parents would understand, if only they weren’t set on misunderstanding so many things” (Levithan 2003: 1). These two contrasting worlds also cause exciting tensions throughout the novel, resulting in Tony’s finding the courage to stand up to his parents and to liberate himself from their strict rules and skepticism.

From a queer-informed teaching perspective, David Levithan’s *Boy Meets Boy* offers various vantage points that can be harnessed productively in the EFL literature classroom. Generally, the diverse set-up of the novel’s teenage cast allows for a multifarious glimpse into the ways these teenagers define, contest and negotiate their sexual and gender identities. As such, the novel can work towards deconstructing shallow, binary and monolithic perceptions of sexual and gender difference. What is more, some of the characters evade easy categorisation.

Infinite Darlene, for example, represents a unique bricolage of gendered expressions, which she draws on to craft her performance as a transgender dragqueen. And there is also Kyle, who oscillates between being drawn to girls and wishing to get back together with Paul. He rejects the necessity to follow a limiting label and just wants it to be as it is. This mirrors the queer-informed stance towards conceptualising identities as shifting and towards interrogating the culturally available markers for defining one's sexual identity, which can encourage students to reflect on the potentially limiting practice of assigning a label to one's sexuality and gender. Most prominently, perhaps, the queer utopian setting almost automatically engenders the question of what is normal and what is not normal, which provides a valuable source of reflection that can be aligned with queer's norm-critical impetus. In what follows, I will present two teaching suggestions to illustrate how the queer potential of *Boy Meets Boy* can be harnessed in the EFL literature classroom.

As a pre-reading introduction to the novel, I suggest handing out an altered version of the novel's blurb, containing a description of the basic theme and an overview of the character constellations. Based on the information students can take from the blurb, they articulate hypotheses about the novel's possible storyline. The information, however, is slightly changed so as not to reveal the queer utopia or the notion of gay romance. Rather, the idea is to alter the information in such a way that the characters' sexual identities and preferences are neutralised, so that the blurb the students receive might read as follows: *Love is never easy. Especially if you're Paul. He's a sophomore at a high school like no other – and these are his friends: Joni, Paul's best friend who may not be his best friend anymore; and Tony, his other best friend, who can't leave the house unless his parents think he's going on a date; and Noah, who changes everything. Love meets love, confusion meets clarity.* The purpose of this neutralisation is to have students develop as many storylines as possible. Some might follow a heteronormative script, assuming the novel to be a typical teen romance à la 'Boy Meets Girl', whereas others might lean into the direction of a non-heterosexual romance story. Based on their hypotheses, students could then reflect on their reasons for choosing a particular hypothesis for their storyline. On one level, this could lead to a reflection of the powerful influence of heteronormative scripts readily available and perpetuated, for example, through films and books, leading one to assume that a story must naturally involve a heterosexual couple. From a queer point of view, this could lead to identifying and unmasking the pervasive cultural influence of heteronormativity on how relationships and desire are normally structured. On another level, however, students might very well also have developed a more queer-informed storyline, which could also lead to interesting reflections on their motivation to imagine such a storyline. In any case, as soon as students begin to read the first chapter of the novel, they can compare their hypotheses with the actual storyline of the novel and find out if there is considerable overlap.

A further interesting point of entry into the novel relates to its literary construction as a queer utopia. As Pattee highlights, this utopian fiction encourages readers to compare it with the real world outside the literary boundaries of the novel, and to critique and engage with what makes the real world real (2008: 157). Interestingly, by creating a non-heteronormative fictional

laboratory, Levithan makes the reader stop and think what makes this world unique and special, which almost automatically propels the norm of heterosexuality into the consciousness of the reader (cf. Crisp 2009). In the novel, Paul describes his home town as follows:

There isn't really a gay scene or a straight scene in our town. They got all mixed up a while back, which I think is for the best. Back when I was in second grade, the older gay kids who didn't flee to the city for entertainment would have to make their own fun. Now it's all good. Most of the straight guys try to sneak into the Queer Beer bar. Boys who love boys flirt with girls who love girls. And whether your heart is strictly ballroom or bluegrass punk, the dance floors are open to whatever you have to offer. (Levithan 2003: 1-2)

On the one hand, this extract from the novel can encourage learners to compare their own environment with that of Paul's microcosm. This can engender stimulating explorations regarding how the learners' own village, town or city is constructed around sexuality and whether there are striking similarities or glaring dissimilarities with the town in the novel. Since the normativities of the world in the novel are probably strikingly different from the normativities students experience in their own environments, this could lead to a growing awareness of the operative function of heteronormativity. On the other hand, the reader never learns why the novel changed into a non-heteronormative order. The extract above indicates that a while ago, the town was also 'regular', but now it stands out in comparison to other neighbouring, more homophobic towns such as Tony's. Obviously, the text creates a considerable gap, which learners can fill with their own assumptions and hypotheses regarding what turned this town 'queer'. Such assumptions could, for example, be transferred to a creative task in which students write a newspaper article that reports on the watershed changes Paul's town might have gone through. Such a creative writing task could engender a further in-depth engagement with the influence of sexual norms on the everyday life of learners.

To provide a concluding reflection on using *Boy Meets Boy*, it can be argued that this novel provides a treasure cove for 'teaching queer' in the literature EFL classroom, in particular because of its rich and varied negotiations both of heteronormativity and of multiple sexual and gender identities. Given its manifold LGBT-iconic popcultural references (e.g. films, pop bands, or songs), the novel can also be transferred to intertextual readings that make available a wider LGBT-informed context. Yet I do not wish to advertise *Boy Meets Boy* as the best possible example coming from LGBTQ-themed young adult literature, turning it into an almost obligatory reading piece for the queer-informed EFL literature classroom. It will certainly be an exciting research endeavour to access and evaluate a wider range of LGBTQ fictional texts in view of their teaching and learning potential.

8 Queering Teaching Materials: Beyond Heteronormativity and LGBTQ Invisibility in the Coursebook

In 1999, Thornbury published a comment article in the journal *folio* that reads like a fervent watershed criticism against the then current representational practices of coursebooks in view of what he calls sexual preference. Thornbury writes: “Where are the coursebook gays and lesbians? They are nowhere to be found. They are still firmly in the coursebook closet. Coursebook people are never gay” (1999: 15). With this criticism, Thornbury points to the heart of a particular oddity he observes for the world of ELT coursebooks and materials. While coursebooks are regulated to avoid discriminatory or stereotyping language regarding age, class, ethnic origin or disability, and have also made a start to stretch their regimes of visibility to include both genders equally, represent ethnic diversity and cover topics of global concern such as ecology or feminism, he makes it very clear that coursebooks tiptoe around including, alluding to or making explicit reference to gay or lesbian people and topics: “Gayness is about as omitted as anything can be” (ibid.: 16). Indeed, gays and lesbians are “a minority so taboo that publishers dare not speak its name” (ibid.:15); instead, coursebooks are “rigorously heterosexual” (ibid.:16). Now it may not seem surprising that it is Thornbury in particular who uses such a blunt tone to launch massive criticism against publishers and coursebooks. After all, he emerged as one of the most outspoken critics against the value and central position of coursebooks, calling into question their excessive focus on form and the unengaging nature of their topics, instead favouring a Dogme approach to ELT that is materials-light and based on the experiential world of the learners (Thornbury 2001, 2005, 2013; Gray 2016: 97). But while I will argue below that, in spite of Thornbury’s dismissal of ELT materials and coursebook, their being researched still seems highly called for, Thornbury’s critical comment in *folio* contains a case in point that provides a good entry into thinking about coursebooks in the context of representing LGBT people and issues as well as challenging heteronormativity in ELT.

In the first place, one critical aspect relates to coursebooks as such and the offer they make to learners. Thornbury criticises that coursebook topics and texts “exist solely as vehicles for language presentation and practice” (1999: 15), whereas “[t]heir capacity to engage the learner cognitively or affectively is a secondary concern, hence their banality” (ibid.). Although I doubt that *all* of today’s coursebooks used locally or globally still follow an excessive and primary focus on form, while completely ignoring the inclusion of interesting topics with communicative potential, Thornbury’s criticism still provides a powerful impetus to constantly rethink in how far the themes and texts presented in coursebooks are truly engaging, which in turn can be transformed into the normative claim of including LGBT issues in coursebook content. From this aspect one can directly move on to Thornbury’s criticism of publishers and writers who are eventually responsible for the content as it appears on the coursebook page. He finds harsh words that literally pick publishers and writers apart, severely doubting “the sincerity of publishers’ hand-on-heart PC-ness (ibid.: 16) and “the industry’s moral integrity” (ibid.). He continues: “If the publishers were truly concerned, if they were genuinely ‘inclusive’, they would not include one minority while excluding another, whatever risks this might run”

(ibid.). This certainly lays open the double standards and possibly questionable practices of a whole industry, especially if this omission were done deliberately and intentionally, but I would argue that it is also necessary to hear publishers' and writers' voices before accusing them of being generally complicit with reproducing heteronormativity and LGBT invisibility through their writing and publishing practices. On yet another level, Thornbury also takes charge against those who carry out academic research into materials, stating that their focus in investigating coursebooks' inherent sexism (e.g. Porreca 1984) has not reached out to focus on *heterosexism* in coursebooks. For 1999, this charge was probably justified, but this research gap is currently closing, as I will show in chapter 8.2 (cf. Bittner 2011; Gray 2013b; Paiz 2015; Benitt/Kurtz 2016).

In contrast to these aspects of criticism, Thornbury is clearly more sympathetic towards learners and teachers. He strongly believes that they are capable themselves of "unlocking the classroom closet and allowing gay and lesbian issues to emerge into the light of day" (1999: 16). In common with Apple (1992), Thornbury points out that learners and teachers can always reinterpret, transform or reject existing materials and complement them with their own texts and stories, thus undermining existing materials in which the absence of LGBT issues and people seems virulent, and to counter what these materials offer as legitimate knowledge. If this were cast as a viable possibility to consider in the classroom, then I would like to hypothesise cautiously, and explore later in this chapter, that even a heteronormative textbook can be put to some good usage in the classroom.

Even though I understand Thornbury's article more as a provocative comment than a substantial piece of grounded research, it can certainly be read as a wake-up call that makes a critical look at ELT materials a central concern, in particular in view of their (non-)treatment of LGBT issues and their constructedness as heteronormative. This research angle is also called for precisely because textbooks and published ELT materials enjoy a huge popularity in classrooms, both nationally and internationally, and continue to be an integral part of English language education (cf. Gehring 2013; Gray 2016). Even though many other resources that have not been issued by publishing houses can be and also are used in classrooms, e.g. what is often referred to as authentic materials that are produced with no originally pedagogical intent, Kurtz (2010: 150) as well as Haß (2006: 257) state that the textbook and its accompanying set of materials are regularly used as *the* major resources of teaching and learning, constituting the textbook as what Haß calls the "Leitmedium" (ibid.) of the classroom. The popularity as well as the wide-spread and established use of ELT materials and textbooks in classrooms make them a justifiable object of study when it comes to their representation of sexual and gender diversity and heteronormativity. In the chapter that will unfold, I will grapple intensely with the academic field of materials research and its intersection with queer perspectives on coursebooks. I will begin with offering a broad overview of the terminology, the directions and the dimensions of materials research in order to indicate the wealth of issues that are at stake when thinking about coursebooks in queer terms. After that, I will present several studies to shed light on the representational strategies prevalent in coursebooks in view of heteronormativity and the visibility or invisibility of LGBT people, issues and experiences they (re)produce. To conclude

with, I will offer suggestions for challenging the LGBT invisibility and heteronormativity in coursebooks both in contexts of their production and in contexts of their use in the classroom. May I also refer the reader to select examples from coursebooks for the German EFL market that I will discuss at the end of this chapter to illustrate the claims I will make in chapter 8.3.

8.1 Materials Research in ELT: Terminology, Directions and Dimensions

The prolific academic interest in materials for language teaching and learning is mirrored in the overview articles by Kurtz (2010), Tomlinson (2012) and most recently Gray (2016). To frame and introduce my engagement with ELT materials from a queer perspective that I will unfold in this chapter, I consider it necessary to clarify the often confusing and at times conflicting terminology of this branch of ELT research. These notes on terminology relate, on the one hand, to the object(s) of study that are under scrutiny, and on the other hand, to the struggles of finding an umbrella term that encompasses the diverse directions of material-oriented research. In view of the first, the object of study is, for example, referred to as “materials for language learning” (Tomlinson 2012: 143), “ELT materials” or simply “materials” (Gray 2016: 95), or also as the coursebook or the textbook (e.g. Gray 2016). In German, words such as *Lehrwerk* or *Lehrbuch* (e.g. Neuner 2007: 399) are also in frequent use, complicating terminological matters further. When it comes to the area of study itself, one can observe terms such as “materials development” (Tomlinson 2012: 143), “textbook evaluation” (Gehring 2013: 360), “materials research” (Gray 2016), or in German, *Lehrwerkkritik* (Kurtz 2010: 158; Neuner 2007: 401), *Lehrwerkanalyse* (Kurtz 2010: 158) or *Lehrwerksforschung* (Neuner 2007: 401), often suggested with the claim to define the field as an encompassing umbrella label. Achieving terminological specificity is crucial in order to understand the scope and applicability of queer-informed research on materials (e.g. whether existing materials are analysed, or whether suggestions are made for coursebook innovation), and to identify possible ways of where to integrate LGBT phenomena or characters in the wide array of materials that are available.

In principle, one can define teaching and learning materials for ELT (and in general for other languages, too) with Tomlinson in a very broad sense as “*anything* that can be used to facilitate the learning of a language” (2012: 143; my emphasis). Such a definition is rather fuzzy, as pretty much everything can become a teaching material as long as it fosters language growth, from a grammar exercise book to a graffiti on a wall. More specifically, Littlejohn looks at materials “as a *pedagogic* device, that is, as an aid to teaching and learning a foreign language” (Littlejohn 2011: 182; emphasis in the original). With this limitation on being a ‘pedagogic device’, Littlejohn points to the constructedness of materials in view of methodology, linguistic aspects, or content that a given material entails. In another suggestion to delineate the possible breadth of materials more clearly, Gray offers a helpful distinction into three material types: published materials, authentic materials, and teacher-made materials (2016: 95). Published materials include a wide array of printed, digital or online items such as the textbook, workbooks, audio-visual material (e.g. CDs or DVDs), learner dictionaries, guided readers, and increasingly also other resources such as online exercises, software, interactive whiteboard activities or learning apps developed for smartphones or tablets. These materials

would be similar to Littlejohn's notion of materials as pedagogic devices in that they were prepared and developed for teaching and learning purposes. Within this range of available published and pedagogic items, Gray identifies the textbook as "the most common type of published material" (2016: 95), and Kurtz (2010: 148-149) stresses that a textbook (*Lehrbuch*) is usually in the centre of a plethora of other materials that are published as supplements to the textbook (e.g. the accompanying student workbook). Gray uses the words textbook and coursebook interchangeably, mirroring what in the German materials tradition is called *Lehrbuch*, which Neuner defines as

ein in sich abgeschlossenes Druckwerk mit fest umrissener didaktischer und methodischer Konzeption (Zielsetzung, Lehrstoffprogression, Unterrichtsverfahren), in dem alle zum Lehren und Lernen benötigten Hilfsmittel (Texte, Übungen, Grammatikdarstellung, Vokabular, etc.) zwischen zwei Buchdeckeln enthalten sind. (Neuner 2007: 399)

This indicates that a coursebook, textbook or *Lehrbuch* is in itself a complete package, providing teachers with what is necessary for teaching, and equipping learners with what is facilitative for learning. Restricting textbooks to being printed and page-bound might at some point in the future be superseded by digitally available textbooks, but from today's perspective, 'proper' textbooks are still widely used (e.g. Gehring 2013: 360)³². In contrast to the *Lehrbuch*, what is referred to in German as *Lehrwerk* then describes the whole set of materials, i.e. the textbook in combination with all other items that are offered as its (often optional) supplements (cf. Kurtz 2010: 149; Neuner 2007: 399). The notion of *Lehrwerk*, in turn, is closest to what Gray (2016: 95) describes as the textbook and its ancillary materials. It is also important to note that published materials are usually commercially produced materials (cf. Tomlinson 2012: 143), meaning that material developers and publishing houses work towards marketing and selling their materials as commodities to gain profit. This particular aspect of the textbook or materials as commodity has recently been emphasised and researched by Gray (2013a: 2), who argues that the commercial aspect cannot be ignored in order to understand what contents are (not) included in materials.

The other two material types, according to Gray (2016: 95), encompass authentic and teacher-made materials. The range of so-called authentic materials covers all types of resources that were not developed for pedagogical use, i.e. for the original purpose of teaching or learning a language, but that are still brought into the classroom as 'real-world materials'. When it comes to teacher-made materials, Gray writes (ibid.), teachers themselves become designers of materials and, in doing that, create sources of input or practice and often supplement or even replace existing materials. In this sense, teachers turn authentic materials into pedagogic devices. Even though much of the published literature in the field of materials research focuses on published materials, I would like to highlight the importance of the other two material types. If existing published material is found to be insufficient by teachers and/or learners (e.g. in cases when a textbook lacks any representation of LGBT phenomena, but teachers and/or learners may find it desirable to see these represented in the materials used in the classroom),

³² Gehring refers to the DESI study to point out that almost 100 percent of English teachers in Germany actually work with published teaching materials, most centrally with a textbook (Gehring 2013: 360).

then both authentic and teacher-made materials as carriers of LGBT content might come into play to close the gaps or blind spots that published materials might create. In general, I see a lot of value in Gray's distinction of material types in that it provides orientation to identify what types of materials a specific study focuses on, which in turn can help to assess the explanatory power of a specific study (e.g. if only peripheral materials were studied or the central coursebook). The queer-informed studies I will present later, for example, focus either exclusively on textbooks (Bittner 2011; Benitt/Kurtz 2016) or on both textbooks and a select range of accompanying materials (Gray 2013b; Paiz 2015).

With the terminology of the *objects* that are put under scrutiny in the investigation of materials being circled in now, it is also necessary to achieve terminological clarity when it comes to describing the exact activities carried out by those pursuing research into ELT materials. A close look at overview articles in this field reveals that there is some startling variety in the terminology used for these activities, which I seek to collate here. While terms such as *materials analysis*, *materials evaluation* or *materials development* seem to denote too specific an activity to be useful as an over-arching umbrella term for the critical investigation of materials, I follow Gray (2013a; 2016) who suggests using *materials research*³³ as an encompassing rubric in which to embed the array of research activities often used as otherwise superordinate terms. In particular, I read Gray's suggestion as a strategic extension of possible research foci within a field that has for a long time been dominated by research on the principled development of materials as represented by the work and publications of Tomlinson (2003a; 2011; 2012; 2013), often with a strong emphasis on mainly linguistic aspects. This move indicates that "those involved in researching ELT materials are increasingly reflective about the nature of the field in which they work" (Gray 2016: 98) and that there is a marked interest in "greater interdisciplinarity in the approach to research being carried out" (ibid.), exceeding the linguistic scope of materials research towards other research angles informed by cultural studies, media studies, sociology, questions of representation and ideology, educational philosophy and *Bildung*, or commercial aspects of textbook marketing (e.g. Fenner 2013; Gray 2013; Gray 2016; Harwood 2014a). For the context of German foreign language didactics, it appears that the term *Lehrwerkforschung* is used as an encompassing term under which specific research interests and activities are subsumed (cf. Funk 2010), although Nieweler (2010) cautions that publications do not always follow a unanimously shared and clear distinction between *Lehrwerksanalyse*, *-kritik*, *-evaluation*, or *-forschung*.

For reasons of terminological clarity, I will continue to use materials research as the umbrella term to frame the discussion I will unfold here. Within materials research, at least four ways of investigating materials can then be identified as sub-branches of the field. Their explanation is necessary to add specificity to the general notion of materials research and to

33 Whereas *materials research* in principle allows for exploring the vast set of available published ELT materials, in some publications one can also find a limitation to textbooks only. Researchers such as Harwood (2014b) then use the term *textbook research* to mark this specificity. The queer-informed interest in published materials I am following here is not per se restricted to a specific type of material, therefore I embrace Gray's encompassing term *materials research*, although most of the studies I am referring to have actually looked into textbooks.

demarcate the research focus or foci of existing studies. The sub-branches of the field of materials research can be mapped out as follows:

- **the analysis of materials** refers to the systematic investigation of one or several issues related to materials, often comparative or with an exemplary focus; the analysis is carried out from a descriptive viewpoint (Nieweler 2010: 176-177); also Gray understands materials analysis to be “a descriptive and hermeneutical activity concerned with how materials *are*” (Gray 2016: 98; emphasis in the original), hence the focus is to look at actually existing content and identify the issue(s) one is interested in (Gray 2016: 98); Kurtz points to several available instruments for the analysis, i.e. catalogues of criteria that may guide the analysis; Kurtz also locates the ability to analyse materials on the level of the teacher, who must be able to analyse materials so that they can be used in their best possible way in the classroom (Kurtz 2010: 158-159);
- **the evaluation of materials** takes a normative perspective and usually entails the academic evaluation of the issues identified in the analysis so as to make suggestions for improving existing materials; rather than looking only at how materials are, materials evaluation is concerned with how materials should ideally be (Nieweler 2010: 177; Gray 2016: 98);
- especially in German publications, the term *Lehrwerkkritik* (i.e. the critique of teaching materials) can also be found, which for Nieweler (2010: 177) is closer to the normative evaluation of materials, whereas Kurtz (2010: 158-159) locates it in the proximity of materials analysis that is guided by set criteria; Neuner (2007: 400-401) reserves the term *Lehrwerkkritik* for investigating in how far materials meet and put into practice the requirements set by the curricula, rather than exploring *any* possible issue (although there might be considerable overlap between the issues materials analysis is interested in and the issues that are governed by curricula, such as the coverage of grammar and vocabulary items, development of communicative competences, or task-orientation); *Lehrwerkkritik* can thus also be defined as an authoritative activity performed by Ministries of Education, controlling if certain materials fulfil the curricular requirements before they are actually published and used in schools;
- **materials development** is probably among the most contested terms in the field of research; due to the influential work of Tomlinson, Gray (2016: 98) notes that materials development has become a widespread umbrella term to frame all activities in the area, including the production, evaluation, adaptation, writing, principled designing, implementation, and also research of materials (cf. Tomlinson 2013: 344; Tomlinson 2012: 98); the confusion then derives from an umbrella term usually denoting a distinct activity in itself (development), misleadingly being used to encompass a set of other distinct activities; therefore, Gray (2013a) suggests taking the term materials development at face value and reserve it for the production processes of materials.

This attempt to disentangle the various activities carried out under the rubric of materials research is not supposed to suggest that they are neat and tidy categories that are clearly

separable. While it is presumably possible to pursue a neutral analysis that objectively describes a certain issue in a textbook, e.g. whether corpus information on the frequency of words is reflected in the vocabulary selection of a textbook (cf. Harwood 2014b: 3), the question remains what the purpose of such an analysis would be if it were not used for any normative claims about how the textbook should be, i.e. aiming at the inclusion of frequently used corpus words into vocabulary lists. Ultimately, such normative claims would only be effective if they also had an effect on the actual development of new or the revision of existing textbooks. The close relationship between analysis, evaluation and development, especially if thought of as a linear process, is also relevant for researching if existing materials are inclusive of LGBT identities and phenomena. A close analysis might reveal that these aspects are not present in published materials, which can then be used as a basis to (normatively) demand their inclusion and to call materials developers to follow suit.

So far, the research activities sketched out are mainly interested in looking at materials as they are or how they should be, and also at their development and production, but not at how materials are actually used in teaching practice. Harwood (2014b) has put forward a three-level model of materials research that is sensitive to all of these aspects, which each level representing a specific focal point of materials research rather than denoting a specific research activity. For Harwood (2014b), it is paramount to study textbooks at three different levels, namely content, consumption and production:

At the level of *content*, we can investigate what textbooks include and exclude in terms of topic, linguistic information, pedagogy, and culture. Unlike studies of content, which analyse textbooks outside the classroom context, at the level of *consumption* we can examine how teachers and learners use textbooks. Finally, at the level of *production*, we can investigate the processes by which textbooks are shaped, authored, and distributed, looking at textbook writers' design processes, the affordances and constraints placed upon them by publishers, and the norms and values of the textbook industry as a whole. (Harwood 2014b: 2)

What emerges from this position is that textbook or materials research is not restricted to the analysis and evaluation of content alone, but also reaches out to investigate the contexts of their production and consumption. To paint as complete a picture of a coursebook as possible, all of these three aspects should ideally be investigated or at least paid attention to. In research practice, however, combining the three levels of investigation within one study is rarely done in ELT materials research, as the broad overview of existing studies collated by Harwood (2014b) shows. But even though these levels are hard to combine in one study, I would like to stress that they offer valuable orientation and are a good source of skepticism when it comes to assessing the significance and explanatory power of any given study in the field. To give an example, LGBT invisibility or heteronormativity could be virulent on the level of content, causing a textbook to be dismissed as a teaching resource due to its representational strategies. The very same textbook, however, might be consumed in such ways by learners and teachers that run counter to its inscribed heteronormative worldview, e.g. by critically discussing in how far the visualisation of a heteronormative family tree mirrors today's social reality. Vice versa, a textbook with open representations of LGBT issues or characters might be lauded at the level of content, but could be used in highly homophobic ways in classrooms. On the level of production, an interesting question would be if LGBT invisibility is a deliberate editorial choice

or ‘just’ something nobody has up to now actively considered. This thought experiment is intended to demonstrate that all three levels are intricately interwoven and can be usefully applied to any critical and differentiated reading of existing studies, and in particular it shows that the intersection of ‘queer’ and ‘materials’ can be mapped onto a complicated and complex web of questions going beyond the coursebook as it is on its surface. To shed more light on the complexity of this web of questions, I would like to explain in more detail the individual scope of each level, beginning with the content level.

Content

In view of content, Harwood (2014b: 2) states that the basic question to ask is whether certain subject matter is included or excluded in materials, and whether a study focuses on a very specific content-related aspect or on a larger set of aspects. According to Harwood (2014b), one major area here is to investigate language-oriented aspects such as the coverage of grammar points, a textbook’s vocabulary syllabus, the treatment of frequently occurring discourse markers, pronunciation, or the handling of pragmatics and language use in context. Next to a focus on very specific aspects, researchers such as Tomlinson (2013), Littlejohn (2011) or Haß (2006) suggest working with broader frameworks or criteria lists to analyse and evaluate textbooks or materials. Tomlinson (2013: 346-349) introduces a set of principles of language acquisition, which he then transforms into principles both for evaluating and for developing materials. For example, a pre-requisite for language acquisition is the exposure to rich, meaningful, and comprehensible input of language in use, which then becomes a quality criterion for textbooks and materials in that they should provide an extensive experience of language via authentic and meaningful written and spoken texts as well as contextualised language samples. While Tomlinson’s list is valuable in that it explores in how far materials meet the requirements of language acquisition, it is at the same time limited in that it focuses on language acquisition only. Therefore, Littlejohn’s and Haß’s frameworks are also worth looking at because they cover a wider scope, including questions of methodology and pedagogic-didactic principles. Littlejohn (2011) offers a detailed, but hands-on, schedule for analysing materials in order to “build up a detailed picture of the classroom work that the materials propose” (ibid.: 190), including a description of ‘What is there?’ (e.g. the materials’ physical aspects, the division into sections), an analysis of ‘What is required of users?’ (e.g. the tasks a learner is expected to do with a given content) and a final inference of ‘What is implied?’ by the material in terms of learning aims, pedagogic and methodological principles, or teacher and learner roles. The close analysis serves as a preliminary step, which can then aid the teacher in the evaluation of the material in order to decide on “their pedagogic worth relative to the proposed context of use” (Littlejohn 2011: 201) and ultimately, on using, rejecting or supplementing a given material. With a similar purpose in mind, Haß (2006: 244) suggests another list of several criteria that teachers can employ to select a new *Lehrwerk*. These criteria also go beyond a pure interest in linguistic aspects and entail factors such as suitability for the learning group, flexible methodology, transparent structure, choice and didactic potential of texts and images, various types of practice and tasks, options for differentiation and self-

assessment, or layout. Interestingly, Haß includes into his list the factor of themes and topics which are adequate, interesting, motivating and relevant for the learners. Also Littlejohn includes, albeit not prominently, a focus on the form, source and nature of the input materials learners receive as content. Such considerations immediately point to the next content aspect put forward by Harwood, the dimension of culture. As will become clear in the following discussion, this aspect is of immediate relevance to the queer-informed research interest I am pursuing in this chapter.

Content analyses of culture give cultural concerns a more prominent place in materials research and relate to the sociocultural representations, themes or messages that are implicitly or explicitly conveyed through the coursebook (cf. Harwood 2014b: 4; but also Fenner 2013; Gray 2010; Alter 2015a). This interest ties in with Kramsch's comment that "[c]ulture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on [...] to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one" (1993: 1). What can be deduced from Kramsch's observation is that cultural themes, stereotypes, values and norms are squarely present in the coursebook, even if they 'only' form the backdrop against which language competences are developed. This view is also mirrored in Shardakova and Pavlenko's research, who argue that

textbooks are not a neutral repository of grammatical forms and lexical choices; rather they are an important genre that functions to offer the students a sanctioned view of human knowledge in a particular area, to confer objectivity upon the subject matter, and to socialize the readers into becoming a relatively homogeneous interpretive community. (Shardakova/Pavlenko 2004: 25)

Hence, with learners being at the receiving end of the textbook, which in itself is seen as a "bearer of messages" (Gray 2000: 280) that are either implicitly present or explicitly brought forward, they run the danger of being imbued with only *certain* prevailing cultural aspects of a certain domain (e.g. sexuality and gender) and then coming to the conclusion that this is the 'truth' when in fact the picture they develop is only partial and distorted. Here, as Fenner (2013: 376) argues, textbooks have an important responsibility for promoting intercultural competence in that they should encourage learners to develop subjectively experienced meanings when they encounter the cultural content of a textbook. Based on Fenner's argumentation, it is not difficult to conclude what these subjectively experienced meanings look like if only specific, approved and legitimate cultural aspects are transported to the learner via the textbook. She concludes with a normative implication and writes that "[l]earners wish to and should learn about other aspects of society, and, as both textbook writers and teachers are concerned with learners' personal growth, they need to give them opportunities to learn about other groups and communities" (Fenner 2013: 380). Hence, textbooks should offer room for learners to interpret and access cultural aspects from various angles and viewpoints, especially those different from normative and privileged ones.

Materials research interest in concerns like these is best encapsulated in the shift from looking at materials or textbooks as curriculum artefacts to them being understood as cultural artefacts, a distinction introduced and disseminated by Gray (2000; 2013a: 2; 2016: 99). Whereas a focus on materials as curriculum artefacts perpetuates analyses of how well they

mirror a curriculum's or syllabus' linguistic requirements and preferred methodology or pedagogic strategies, the turn towards materials as cultural artefacts emphasises those analyses that try to tease out the intricacies in which materials "serve to make languages mean in particular ways" (Gray 2013a: 2). From this vantage point, it becomes a critical issue to identify in how far textbooks reproduce officially endorsed versions of culture, while at the same time denying recognition of other alternative ways of being and living, which moves issues of social class, gender, race or sexuality into the centre of attention (ibid.: 6), all of which are deeply enmeshed in complex questions of difference(s), Otherness, normativities and invisibilities: Are both poles of the binary as well as various other (transdifferential) possibilities beyond and within the binary represented, or is there an uneven or even unitary preference for the dominant and culturally privileged pole, thus perpetuating 'othering discourses' on the level of the coursebook page by exclusion, stereotyping or misrepresentation? What norms are visually and textually present and thus tacitly approved – being white, middle-class, heterosexual and either female or male? By way of summary, Gray argues that "at the heart of the language teaching textbook is a regime of representation which constructs the world of the target language for the student" (2013a: 5), and the researcher's interest thus lies in carefully analysing and evaluating existing representational strategies and practices of coursebooks and, by extension and if deemed necessary, suggesting alternatives or improved strategies for representing 'other Others' and 'different differences' that might otherwise be erased or misrepresented.

Consumption

On the level of consumption, the interest lies in how both ELT teachers and learners actually use textbooks or given materials inside and outside the classroom (cf. Harwood 2014b: 11). What is of interest here when it comes to the actual use of materials is the assumption that any given material might be used differently "*in situ*" (ibid.) and that teachers and learners might deviate from the path offered by the material or textbook. Let me point out two distinctions drawn in materials research to illustrate this phenomenon. Littlejohn (2011: 2011) distinguishes between "materials 'as they are'" and "materials-in-action". While the first is concerned "with the content and ways of working that they [materials] propose" (ibid.), the later notion focuses on another question: "Precisely what happens in classrooms and what outcomes occur when materials are brought into use will depend upon numerous further factors, not least of which is the reinterpretation of materials and tasks by both teachers and learners" (ibid.). Another distinction is put forward by Harwood (2014b: 11), who draws on the work by Ball and Cohen (1996) to suggest that there might be a gap between the "*intended curriculum*" (i.e. what a textbook actually contains and aims to achieve) and the "*enacted curriculum*" that is jointly constructed by teachers, learners and the given materials (ibid.). Harwood argues that this perspective is an important supplement to materials analysis or evaluation, as it can enable a deeper understanding of the contexts of textbook usage.

In view of a textbook's consumption, also Decke-Cornill and Küster point to the flexibility of enacting given materials rather than using them as they are:

Nicht das Medium bestimmt die Qualität des Unterrichts, sondern sein Umgang damit. Man muss sich dem vorgefertigten Lehr-/Lernarrangement der Lehrbücher nicht fügen, sondern kann es reanimieren, Lehrbuchtexte und –übungen also einer eigenen, zweiten Didaktisierung unterziehen. (Decke-Cornill/Küster 2014: 99)

With this comment, Decke-Cornill and Küster are in line with those positions that caution against using the coursebook as a script (cf. Hutchinson/Torres 1994; Kurtz 2010; Tomlinson 2013), instead seeing it as a resource that teachers can draw on by carefully adapting what it offers, that is, pursuing a *second didactisation* to change the *primary* pedagogic-didactic intentions of a textbook. Whether this is more likely wishful thinking than actual practice occurring on a daily basis is called into question by Hutchinson and Torres:

The danger with ready-made textbooks is that they can seem to absolve teachers of responsibility. Instead of participating in the day-to-day decisions that have to be made about what to teach and how to teach it, it is easy to just sit back and operate the system, secure in the belief that the wise and virtuous people who produced the textbook knew what was good for us. Unfortunately this is rarely the case. (Hutchinson/Torres 1994: 315)

While this position draws a rather gloomy picture of teachers' alleged passivity, their complicity with the textbook regime and their blind trust in what the coursebook offers must be right, there are still good reasons why textbooks continue to form "the mainstay of ELT provision" (Hutchinson/Torres 1994: 315), e.g. in that they enable teachers and learners to fulfil curricular requirements and achieve prescribed learning outcomes, or in that they are welcome helpers to reduce daily workloads and planning time. Nonetheless, Hutchinson and Torres' statement can cause teachers to rethink their alleged dependency on the textbook, and also Kurtz (2010: 155) argues that the dominance of a fixed coursebook conception with its promising and alluring all-inclusiveness must not make teachers immune to all the other options and teaching alternatives that are not part and parcel of a given textbook. What it all comes down to is, to speak with Littlejohn, that teachers are empowered to "dispel the myth that materials are a closed box" (Littlejohn 2011: 205) and regain more control over the materials they are using (ibid.).

The concerns that revolve around a textbook's consumption and teachers' ways of following or deviating from the suggested textbook path appear to be particularly vital when it comes to the representational practices employed in textbooks. Gray calls for more materials research that explores "the area of materials-in-use and the ways in which inscribed meanings are recontextualised in classroom settings" (Gray 2016: 105). It needs to be noted that this recontextualisation may be initiated by learners and teachers alike, e.g. as a result of being discontent with stereotypical, distorted or non-existent representations, or, as Gray (2010b: 26) points out, as a result of reading against or resisting the meanings transmitted by and encoded in the coursebook, be they allegedly politically correct or downright biased. Hence, there is not necessarily a simple cause-and-effect link between a certain representation or non-representation of, for example, social class, gender, or sexuality, and the immediate and uncritical uptake of that message by the learners. Also Harwood (2014b: 10) cautions against such a link by quoting a view expressed by Sunderland in the context of gender representations in texts:

Even an agreed case of gender bias in a text [...] cannot be said in any deterministic way to *make* people think in a gender-biased way [...]. A text is arguably as good or as bad as the

treatment it receives from the teacher who is using it; in particular, a text riddled with gender bias can be rescued and that bias put to good effect, pedagogic and otherwise. (Sunderland 2000: 153, 155)

Sunderland's view shows that, however biased or stereotypical a certain representation might be, it can still be used productively in the classroom, e.g. by generating a critical discussion that unmasks biased or distorted representations, or that envisions alternative representations that pay greater justice to current sociocultural realities. To close the discussion of the relationship between the representational practices and the consumption and use of materials, it might be advisable to turn to Gray (2016: 105) who points out that more materials research is needed to shed a nuanced light on this exact intersection. Notwithstanding this research gap, I do argue that certain conclusions can still be drawn. At first, one should not underestimate the role of learners as critical agents who can intervene in, and reconstruct, the cultural meanings and representations as they appear on a textbook page. Second, what might be required of teachers is a greater sensitivity to what a coursebook offers so as to identify critical representational issues and, if necessary, subvert or change the textbook. This, as Harwood underlines (2014b: 12), is dependent on teacher beliefs, training and experience, their attitudes towards the coursebook, and also on their content knowledge, i.e. it needs to be clear to them *what* to pay critical attention to within the representational regimes of the textbook. Having identified a certain inappropriacy in a textbook, Littlejohn (2011: 202) offers a list of actions that can be taken, including to reject, adapt, or supplement the materials, or make the materials themselves a critical object, all of which are viable options to guide the decision-making of how to use the textbook. Furthermore, I suggest that a healthy skepticism might be advisable so as not to overestimate the 'wonders' that a good and balanced representation of the world and its people can achieve, because it might not be accepted as such by learners or teachers and turned against its original intention. Yet at the same time, if this argument is reversed, there is also reason for optimism because not all negative or non-existent representations are necessarily taken at face value, nor do they have to become embossed in stone, and can indeed be openly challenged by learners and teachers alike.

Production

Research into the production of textbooks and materials, the last of the three levels of materials research sketched out by Harwood (2014b), provides a look behind the scenes of the production of materials and sheds light on "the complex secret life of the textbooks produced by [...] educational publishing companies" (Gray 2013a: 8). The production side of materials research revolves centrally around the key question asked by Littlejohn: "*Why are ELT materials the way they are?*" (2012: 290; emphasis in the original). Hence, the interest lies not primarily in analysing or evaluating existing content as it is visible on the textbook page ('What can be seen?'), but indeed in looking deeper into the production processes and contexts of materials to find reasons and legitimisations that can explain the development of materials ('Why can we see what can be seen?'). Typical issues that are explored include, for example (cf. Gray 2016; Harwood 2014b):

- the complex and often conflicting feedback and editing processes, usually down a chain of stakeholders, that determine the nature of the final product, e.g. its preferred methodology or coverage of topics (from Ministries of Education and educational authorities, parents, or learners to publishers and material writers, developers and designers);
- the dynamics of both local and global contexts in which materials are produced and published;
- the regulatory guidelines and policies of publishers and how they prescribe the textbook content and influence the work of writers;
- the commercial and profit-oriented side of materials, which has most recently been identified in research as a major factor that impacts heavily on the nature of the products, which eventually have to be sold to institutions and learners.

This breadth of possible focal points illustrates that researching the production of materials is not restricted to, or even synonymous with, the principled development of materials according to sets of consistent methodological principles (e.g. Tomlinson 2003b), but indeed intends to draw a bigger picture of the conditions and contexts of textbook or materials production. The insights gained can add greater nuances to the scope of materials research at large and help to understand the complexities of the textbook world in greater detail. In the following section, I will develop a survey of the research into materials production that primarily reflects my interest in possible factors that might hinder or endorse the representation of LGBT diversity in materials especially on the level of production. Therefore, I will lean mainly into the wider sociocultural contexts that frame the production of materials (e.g. commercial concerns) and also into the representational practices of the publishing industry.

To begin with, I follow Littlejohn's position who sees the production of language teaching materials "as no less a cultural practice than any other human activity, socially and temporarily located" (2012: 284). Since materials are always located in, and never free from, specific contexts, the research impetus that derives from this view is to

investigate the nature of materials by reference back to the wider circumstances of their production. This will position materials as something 'of their time', not only in terms of contemporary views on language teaching, but also in terms of contemporary views manifested across a wide range of social phenomena. (Littlejohn 2012: 284-285)

In taking up Littlejohn's view, one can argue that the surface of each textbook page is indicative of, and mirrors, contemporary social developments by containing traces of the world outside the classroom. To refine the question raised above, one could then also ask, 'What finds its way into the coursebook and what does not, and why is that so?'. From a historical perspective, Littlejohn hypothesises that ELT materials tend to reflect the respective *zeitgeist*, and he argues that ELT professionals sought to implement changes in social attitudes and values also in their materials, e.g. by featuring methodologies such as *Suggestopedia*, or by incorporating humanistic approaches in the 1970s (cf. Littlejohn 2012: 285-290).

More recently, however, researchers such as Gray (2010; 2013a; 2016) or Littlejohn (2012) see the emergence of new imperatives that severely influence the production of materials today, and they locate these imperatives within the logic of capitalist and neo-liberalist agendas that impact on how ELT materials are produced. Littlejohn notes that “the precise nature of materials design now responds in a much more direct way to imperatives from far beyond the confines of language teaching thought” (2012: 285), namely to the imperatives set by “the primacy of ‘the market’” (ibid.: 293). In common with Littlejohn, Gray specifies that “commercially produced materials are core commodities in textbook publishing and that this commercial aspect cannot be ignored in seeking to understand their contents” (2013a: 2). This marks an emerging tendency in materials research in that researchers do not only look at textbooks or materials “as educational tools or cultural objects” (ibid.: 7), but rather as “commodities to be bought and sold” (ibid.). Admittedly, these three aspects are inseparably linked, as marketing decisions and publication practices will impact on how a textbook, in the end, looks like as an educational tool or cultural artefact. But a focus on the textbook as a commodity foregrounds commercial considerations as one of the key factors, if not the *ultima ratio*, of the production of ELT materials, and thus allows for a deeper reflection of why materials are the way they are

To understand the production of ELT materials in greater depth, an explanatory excursion into the publishing industry itself seems called for. On the one hand, international ELT materials publishing has become a global and highly competitive business, often infiltrating local markets around the world, while on the other hand, local publishing houses continue to persist and produce materials for their local markets (cf. Gray 2016: 96). This is particularly true for the German educational context, where a few local publishing houses dominate the market at school level (cf. Gehring 2013: 358). It is their locally produced *Lehrwerke*, and not international publishers’ materials produced for a general global market, that provide the mainstay of EFL provision in German schools. While it can most certainly be assumed that also German publishing houses follow commercial interests and want to derive profit from selling their materials, I formulate the hypothesis that they are not necessarily under the same constraints and pressures as globally operating publishing companies, with potential effects on the content that is to be found in these German TEFL materials (cf. chapter 8.3). In moving away from this sketch of the locally limited German market, I turn to Littlejohn’s explanation of the specificity of the global ELT market:

[A]s the number of publishing houses has fallen (as imprints are bought up by larger, multinational cooperations), the competition has intensified between an even smaller number of very large publishers who are able to pour immense resources into developing their products. The stakes have thus risen considerably, as millions of dollars are now routinely invested in the development of a new multilevel course, with all its ancillary components [...]. With the cost of failure so large, convergence around a ‘safe’, proven publishing formula is therefore the most likely outcome. (Littlejohn 2012: 290)

Littlejohn’s careful portrayal of the global context of the publication and production of ELT materials pointedly gets to the heart of an ostensible paradox. On the one hand, the few central publishing houses that have remained in the business *could* theoretically use their powerful influence more and flood the market with the latest innovations in ELT and experiment with

new ideas. Yet it seems that they shy away from such experiments precisely because they fear that investments might be lost if the innovation is not welcomed by the final users, that is to say, the textbooks' 'customers'. After all, Harwood notes, "applied linguists and publishers approach textbooks from fundamentally different perspectives: an applied linguist's lens is that of *academic* research and a publisher's is of *market* research" (Harwood 2014b: 23). This means that no matter how unsatisfactory a textbook might be or no matter how much certain materials might be in need of change from the viewpoint of theory and research, Harwood's observation stresses that the main publisher's incentive for changing a textbook comes from the market itself, i.e. when customers demand innovation. This produces a somewhat odd situation in which publishing houses, mostly European or North American (cf. Gray 2016: 96), cater for a global market, understandably as it is from a commercial point of view, by selling standardised materials that follow the alleged 'safe formula' mentioned by Littlejohn earlier on.

But what precisely is this safe formula? In what ways do material writers follow their publishers guidelines which, by prescribing what needs to be done, at the same time dictate what should not be done (cf. Littlejohn 2012: 295)? And what do the publishers actually prescribe? Within publication studies, accounts and narratives by publishers and material writers are an important source of information to clarify this question, in particular because they

underline the formidable nature of producing a textbook, reminding us of the inevitable and often unenviable constraints placed upon writers and publishers, and may therefore help explain why content and consumption studies continue to identify weaknesses and shortcomings in textbooks. [...] the narratives also highlight some industry practices which seem highly questionable. (Harwood 2014b: 19)

To get to the heart of these constraints, Harwood (2014b: 19-21) reviews three studies with accounts of textbook writers who worked towards the global market and diverse audiences, namely Bell/Gower (2011), Mares (2003) and McCullagh (2010). They reveal that writers often find it difficult to anticipate what would work well across cultures with a wide range of learners, teachers, and educational settings, and that often compromise is key, leading to rather conventional materials with traditional methodologies and syllabuses (e.g. with a graded grammar syllabus) and to the omission of delicate or controversial topics that were anticipated to clash with cultural sensitivities (e.g. alcohol consumption or sexual health). In another detailed report, Timmis (2014) describes and reflects on his experience of writing materials within a UK-based team for a specific south-east Asian context. His report illustrates well in how far stakeholders such as publishers or educational authorities can intervene in the development process and change the content of the materials with their feedback. One major concern, for example, was with the cultural appropriateness of the topics chosen (e.g. drug use), which were deemed inappropriate and had to be taken out of the materials (ibid.: 253). Timmis states, however, that not all critical feedback suggested to the team was incorporated in the final product, so that they did not simply reproduce an existing status quo but instead could include a few innovative ideas (ibid.: 258). Even though the feedback and change process is described as tense and difficult, Timmis' conclusive remark is that the final product "seemed [...] to be a good compromise between continuity and change, between familiarity and innovation", which reads perhaps like a realistic position mediating between radical change or no change at all that

acknowledges that within a more conservative industry such as the ELT materials publishing business, change is not possible over night. At the same time, Timmis' account also shows that material writers do aim at writing qualitatively good materials, even though the final product can always be criticised for specific reasons from specific research angles (e.g. for its depiction of sociocultural diversity). From this point of view, Harwood's comment is perhaps noteworthy, which says that "while textbook writing is seen in university departments as a low-status activity, criticizing textbooks is easier than producing one of high quality" (Harwood 2014b: 21). Certainly, this does not mean that textbook criticism should stop, or indeed that the publishing industry should become immune to any criticism. It does, however, show that criticism should be articulated in a careful and sensitive dialogue, and not in sweeping dismissals of the practices of the industry.

Another highly insightful study, especially in view of the topics that are deemed appropriate for inclusion in ELT materials, is put forward by Gray in his larger investigation of ELT global coursebooks (2010). Here, Gray (*ibid.*: 112-128) critically examines the guidelines for authors issued by five leading British ELT publishers, which are an invaluable source of information in that they state explicitly the type of content that is recommended for their coursebooks. On the one hand, such guidelines address the area of inclusive language and representation of gender, demanding the use of non-sexist and non-racist language and the avoidance of stereotypical or demeaning representations of women, which is to be welcomed. On the other hand, these guidelines also refer to inappropriate topics, i.e. "those topics which writers are advised to avoid so as not to offend the perceived sensibilities of potential buyers and users" (*ibid.*: 112). Topics that are to be avoided include sex/sexuality, drugs, politics, and religion, or generally those 'taboo topics' that are encapsulated by the acronym PARNSIP, i.e. politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, -isms, and pork (*ibid.*: 119-121). Gray notes that the guidelines on inappropriate topics "shed light on systematic omissions" (*ibid.*: 174), causing absences on the content level of the coursebook that are caused by "the extreme market-sensitivity of ELT publishing" (*ibid.*: 175). Interestingly, Gray also found out that these guidelines create a chasm between the markets in the UK and northern Europe where most topics are considered acceptable, and other more conservative or religious markets, which, according to Gray, "constructs the world beyond the UK and northern Europe in terms of a set of perceived sensitivities and a range of topics which cannot be mentioned explicitly" (Gray 2010: 119). In linking Gray's finding back to the 'safe formula', it emerges that one of its important ingredients is the continuous erasure of certain topics, concerns and identities (e.g. LGBT characters or working-class people, cf. Gray 2016: 103; Gray/Block 2014), which is clearly commercially motivated due to the fear of losing market shares if such 'inappropriate topics' were included. In view of allegedly provocative taboo topics, Tomlinson says that "[m]ost publishers are understandably anxious to avoid giving offence" (2012: 162), but he also criticises too excessive a caution and complains about "the unengaging blandness of commercially published materials" (*ibid.*). It is certainly a challenging task to mediate between publishers' concerns for commerce and markets on the one hand and progressive educational attempts to represent the world and its diverse people in more inclusive ways. Within this

particular force field, Timmis' suggestion for sensitive compromise that I mentioned above might be a good starting point for further dialogue. What this particular branch of materials production research has already achieved, however, is that "issues related to the representation of the world in published materials have been put firmly on the agenda" (Gray 2016: 105). Such research has helped to unmask highly questionable production practices and to shed light on the intricate relationship between the production and the content level of materials, showing that the absence of certain types of Otherness or difference is most likely never a sheer coincidence, but the result of strict regulatory policies pursued by publishers.

By conclusion, critical material research offers a complex web of possible critical angles from which to investigate published ELT materials, including the analysis and the evaluation of materials, which is most often the coursebook, and the incorporation of the levels of a coursebook's content, its consumption in contexts of use, and its conditions of production. When it comes to the representation of cultural Otherness or difference in a coursebook, it is crucial to employ an integrative lens that is sensitive to all of these research angles. While, for example, a coursebook analysis may show the absence of a certain type of difference on the coursebook page, this does not yet say anything about the actual use of that coursebook in classroom practice, where this particular absence might be repaired by teachers and learners alike through adaptation or subversion. Also, the results of a coursebook evaluation are potentially interesting to coursebook producers, so that the careful dialogue between research and production might ultimately lead to improving the representational quality of a coursebook. Given the queer-informed perspective I am following in this chapter, I will now use the previous considerations as a backdrop against which to present existing materials research studies that have grappled with LGBT invisibility and heteronormativity in coursebooks (chapter 8.2), and then present my own ideas of how to challenge LGBT invisibility and heteronormativity in contexts of a coursebook's consumption and production (chapter 8.3).

8.2 Insights into Critical Materials Research: LGBT (In)Visibility and Heteronormativity in ELT and TEFL Coursebooks

I will now present four studies that are available to date which have investigated the representational practices of ELT materials and coursebooks (including TEFL coursebooks produced for the German market) regarding LGBT or queer identities and issues as well as heteronormativity. These studies are:

- "LGBT Invisibility and Heteronormativity in ELT Materials" (Gray 2013b),
- "Over the Monochrome Rainbow: Heteronormativity in ESL Reading Texts and Textbooks" (Paiz 2015),
- *Geschlechterkonstruktionen und die Darstellung von Lesben, Schwulen, Bisexuellen, Trans* und Inter* (LSBTI) in Schulbüchern* (Bittner 2011),
- "Gender Representation in Selected EFL Textbooks – A Diachronic Perspective" (Benitt/Kurtz 2016).

Precisely because of the centrality and popularity of coursebooks and materials as a medium of instruction and the important role they continue to play in ELT, their investigation provides a valuable insight into the representational absences or visibilities of LGBT identities in the material dimension of ELT.

In his empirical materials research study, Gray (2013b) analysed LGBT invisibility and heteronormativity in contemporary ELT materials that are produced in the UK for the global market. He examined a set of ten contemporary textbooks from five popular courses aimed at lower proficiency levels, as it is at these levels that the thematic content of family and relationships, possibly indicative of normative or non-normative sexualities, is usually introduced. Gray also included three supplementary textbooks into his research (cf. 2013b: 46)³⁴. He approached the ELT materials with the following questions:

- Are there any representations of clearly identified LGBT characters in these textbooks? If so, what forms do they take?
- Is there any treatment of a topic related to sexual diversity (e.g. gay marriage) or the teaching of lexis related to sexual diversity (e.g. lesbian, gay, straight, civil partnership, homophobia, etc.)? If so, what form does it take? (Gray 2013b: 47-48)

The results suggest that not much has changed 14 years after Thornbury's (1999) criticism of LGBT (non-) representation in coursebooks introduced at the outset of this chapter:

[T]he analysis revealed that there is no reference to same-sex sexual orientation in any of the titles [...]. In the treatment of the family and in content on ideal partners, internet dating and relationships, socialising, travelling, and meeting new people, there is a blanket avoidance of any representation of clearly identified LGBT characters. [...] There are no reading or listening activities that suggest the existence of sexual diversity and in no activities that students are asked to do is their being LGBT or knowing anyone who is LGBT in any way implied. [...] being in a relationship, having relationship problems or finding a partner are exclusively heterosexual matters. (Gray 2013b: 49)

Gray then draws on Nelson (2006) to conclude that coursebooks construct a completely "monosexual community of interlocutors" (Nelson 2006: 1). He pointedly criticises that "[t]he message of erasure may well be taken by students as meaning that what is erased is off limits, literally unmentionable in class" (Gray 2013b: 50). In a more recent article, Gray adds that

[s]uch practices [...] have potentially negative consequences not only for those [...] LGBT students who are denied recognition [...] but for all students who are thereby represented with a skewed view of the world and who are simultaneously denied a vocabulary for talking about a reality in which [...] sexual minorities exist. (Gray 2016: 103)

Surprisingly, however, Gray also found out that LGBT invisibility is not completely total and that limited reference to LGBT experience can be found in supplementary ELT materials. Such materials are typically used as an add-on if teachers wish to include further material to expand on the central textbook. This becomes particularly noteworthy as LGBT experience is pushed to supplementary, i.e. peripheral, materials if it is represented at all, rather than being included in the central textbooks with a view to achieving representational equality.

³⁴ A complete overview of the textbooks analysed is available in Gray (2013b: 47-48).

Gray's explanation for the large-scale LGBT invisibility in coursebooks gives cause for concern (cf. Gray 2013a: 14; Gray 2013b: 52). Coursebook publishers adhere to their heteronormative practices, or in fact strategically privilege a heteronormative worldview, in fear of losing market shares with more conservative or homophobic audiences where books in which LGBT identities are visible might not sell. It emerges that "LGBT invisibility in ELT textbooks may seem to be a price worth paying. In this way, [...] commercial ELT actively privileges heteronormativity and derives profit from it" (Gray 2013b: 52). Gray continues to shed light on the level of the production of coursebooks by referring to interviews he conducted with informants working in the publishing industry. It becomes apparent that publishers are fully aware of the absences they create, but they seem to shift away the responsibility to the alleged conservative nature of the ELT market, rather than acknowledging their own powerful role as regulators of the content of materials (cf. Gray 2013b: 51). Another example mentioned in Gray's study describes how the story of a gay couple that met at a New Year's Eve Party was deliberately erased off the page when the second edition of the coursebook was prepared with the intention for marketing it at more conservative markets (ibid.: 52). Gray then draws the conclusion that it would be naïve to assume that LGBT visibility can easily and quickly be incorporated into global coursebooks, especially if markets are not segmented and coursebooks are also sold in countries where homophobia is prevalent (ibid.: 61). Nonetheless, he emphasises that

it surely now behoves the industry to move with the times, to rethink their representational practices with regard to LGBT invisibility and heteronormativity in materials, and begin to segment markets along lines which are no longer determined by the entrenched prejudices of their most conservative customers. (Gray 2013b: 61-62)

While the call for changing the representational practices of coursebooks at the level of coursebook production is clearly articulated here, it remains elusive, however, how the incorporation of LGBT visibility and the turn away from heteronormativity in coursebooks can actually be realised. To respond to this gap, I will suggest a few ideas in chapter 8.3.

In another study, Paiz (2015) engaged more centrally with the representation of heteronormativity in textbooks and reading texts (i.e. texts that were created or abridged for a learning audience) used in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts for adult learners. Paiz drew together 31 textbooks and 14 reading texts from mainstream publishing houses and investigated the degree of heteronormativity reflected in these samples. He identified the specific contexts within these texts and textbooks where issues of sexual identity appear readily (e.g. in units on family or dating), and then applied a heteronormativity rating to these contexts:

- heteronormative: heterosexuality is presented as the only normal and acceptable identity (rating = 3);
- low-heteronormative: there is tension between non-heteronormative language (e.g. partner) and accompanying heteronormative examples and visuals (rating = 2);
- non-heteronormative: non-heteronormative examples of sexuality are openly presented (rating = 1) (Paiz 2015: 87).

Paiz's study shows that the textbooks and texts of his sample are rated high in heteronormativity, which makes heterosexuality the default way to represent sexuality (cf. Paiz 2015: 89). The overall heteronormativity rating of the whole sample is 2.82, when 3 would have been fully heteronormative. The slight deviation from a full 3.00 can be explained with some publishers using less heteronormative language coupled with heteronormative visuals or examples, and not with the actual representation of non-heteronormative sexualities (cf. *ibid.*). Open engagements with and depictions of diverse sexualities were found to be extremely rare, and Paiz only found one example in which voices from the queer community commented on the AIDS epidemic (cf. *ibid.*: 86). Paiz draws two conclusions from his study. First, he charges that "materials publishers tend to be slow to reflect major societal changes in their published texts" (*ibid.*: 96) for fear of losing conservative markets, which mirrors Gray's finding (2013b). Second, he criticises "that students of all proficiency levels will encounter teaching materials that reify normative worldviews unless the instructor takes on the challenge of queering the classroom" (*ibid.*: 97). This criticism can be read as a call for changing the way a textbook is handled in concrete contexts of use, meaning that it is up to the teacher (and possibly also the learners) to expand on or adapt the coursebook, or actively challenge its heteronormative make-up in the classroom in critical inquiries. Similar to Gray (2013b), also Paiz's study leaves the reader behind with the insight that coursebooks could be better if they were produced in more inclusive and less heteronormative ways, and that coursebooks could be used in better, that is, queerer ways if attempts were made in that direction in contexts of consumption. Yet it again remains elusive how these changes can productively be achieved.

For the specific German TEFL market, two studies exist that allow insights into the representational practices of coursebooks used in German schools regarding LGBT visibility and heteronormativity (Bittner 2011; Benitt/Kurtz 2016). In her study from 2011, Bittner explored constructions of gender and representations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* or inter* persons in a range of school books for various subjects, including English as a Foreign Language (cf. also 4.2). In particular, she investigated the following 10 EFL textbooks for year 5 learners, published between 2005 and 2007:

- *Camden Market I* (Börner et al. 2005, Diesterweg),
- *Portobello Road I* (Börner et al. 2005, Diesterweg),
- *Camden Town I*, Realschule (Edelhoff 2006, Diesterweg),
- *Camden Town I*, Gymnasium (Hanus et al. 2005, Diesterweg),
- *Notting Hill Gate I* (Edelhoff 2007, Diesterweg),
- *Red Line I* (Haß 2005a, Klett),
- *Orange Line I* (Haß 2005b, Klett),
- *Let's Go I* (Kieweg 2005, Klett),
- *English G21 D1* (Schwarz 2006, Cornelsen),
- *English G21 A1* (Schwarz 2007a, Cornelsen),

- *English G21 B1* (Schwarz 2007b, Cornelsen).

Bittner (2011: 48) observes that question of sexual identity, sexuality or non-heteronormative relationships are hardly explicitly thematised in EFL coursebooks for year 5. Instead, Bittner explored how adult couples (mostly parents) are depicted in these coursebooks. In all brevity, Bittner summarises that lesbian, gay or bisexual people feature in none of the sampled books, and that all couples who are recognisable as such are exclusively heterosexual. The norm of sexual identity in the EFL coursebooks investigated is posited as heterosexual (ibid.: 48-49). The only diversity in view of families that can be observed is the occurrence of male or female single-sex parenting or divorced families. Furthermore, Bittner observes that gender is depicted in binary ways. The whole coursebook set-up of gendered norms, including various aspects of 'doing gender' (dress, body posture, haircut, etc.), suggests a clearly dichotomous gender order. Any gender ambiguities are therefore streamlined into a coursebook world where the protagonists are either male or female. Trans* or inter* people are absent from the coursebook page. All in all, Bittner criticises the coursebook publishing industry for eclipsing the diversity of sexual and gender identities that can be observed in today's societies and calls for changes in representational practices, e.g. by depicting same-sex families (ibid.: 49). It must be said, however, that Bittner's study is restricted to coursebooks from year 5. Therefore, her study cannot be used to constitute a general absence of LGBT identities from the whole set of German EFL coursebooks used across age ranges. Furthermore, it would be interesting to investigate in how far the new generation of textbooks after the regular update cycles might have changed their representational practices in view of LGBT visibility and heteronormativity. That possible change might be on the way is indicated in Benitt and Kurtz's study (2016). Primarily, they investigated representations of gender in German EFL coursebooks from a diachronic perspective, with 9 books coming from 1957 to 2000, and one book from 2015. While the nine older coursebooks are marked by an absence of LGBT people, for the 2015 coursebook (*Notting Hill Gate 1*, Edelhoff/Schmidt 2015), they observe that a lesbian relationship can be implied between a teenage protagonist's single-parent mother and her female partner, although this (possible) same-sex relationship is never made explicit in any concrete way (cf. Benitt/Kurtz 2016: 177-178). I will return to this particular example, coupled with other findings I gathered from current German EFL coursebooks, in chapter 8.3 to show that the representational practices in view of LGBT diversity are gradually beginning to change.

8.3 Challenging LGBT Invisibility and Heteronormativity: Perspectives on Coursebook Content, Production and Consumption

The materials research studies I have surveyed in the previous subchapter indicate that coursebooks and materials used in global ELT and in German TEFL contexts are by and large marked by an almost total LGBT invisibility as regards content, meaning that LGBT people, experiences or issues are usually not part of the microcosm the coursebook creates as a context for learning English. These aspects are hardly ever explicitly or implicitly thematised. Furthermore, the studies also show that coursebooks are structured and influenced by heteronormativity. As such, the absence of LGBT phenomena is the result of heteronormative

publication practices. At the same time, the depiction of love, family life, relationships, or dating revolves around heteronormative assumptions, sending out the message that these central life contexts are organised around heterosexuality. While these studies bemoan the LGBT invisibility and heteronormativity of coursebooks, they fail to address ways to challenge and overcome these inherent features of published materials. In responding to this failure, I will use this subchapter to show how LGBT invisibility and heteronormativity can be (and also is) challenged at the level of a coursebook's content, its production, and its consumption. I will begin with showing examples of German TEFL coursebooks that have begun to incorporate LGBT people and issues into their content and discuss the representational practices that become apparent here. Then I will continue with suggestions how coursebooks could be published in less heteronormative ways and by paying more attention to LGBT visibility. Finally, I will also reflect on how existing heteronormative coursebooks can be 'queered' in contexts of their consumption.

In what follows, I will collate five examples of LGBT visibility in current German TEFL coursebooks. I identified these examples while teaching materials courses at the University of Münster, where I engaged thoroughly with published coursebooks. Furthermore, students and EFL teachers who were informed about my dissertational research also alerted me to some of the examples I will present here. The first example from the coursebook *Camden Town Advanced* (Claussen et al. 2014), to be used in upper secondary EFL classrooms, contains by far the most explicit negotiation of LGBT experience. In unit six of this coursebook, learners engage with questions of gender and sexual identity as the theme of this unit. In one example (cf. Claussen et al. 2014: 88-89), one finds a photo with teenagers holding up paper signs reading 'Gay', 'Bi', 'Straight', and next to it another photo with the same teenagers holding up paper signs reading 'But', 'Still', 'Human'. Learners are supposed to inform their partner about their immediate reaction to these photos, discuss the significance of the words they find on the paper signs, reflect on the teenagers' facial expressions and posture, and then speak the paper signs aloud with different emotions. Then the students are introduced to a scene from the play 'Citizenship' by Mark Ravenhill, in which two people, Amy and Tom, negotiate who they are sexually and call into question identity labels such as gay or bisexual. In a follow-up task, learners change perspectives into Amy and Tom to understand in greater depth what they are thinking. Ultimately, learners plan to stage the scene between Amy and Tom as a play, investing careful thought in aspects such as settings, props, scenery, or costumes. This example shows how the careful combination of visual input, emotional expressions, an extract from a literary text, and accompanying tasks can encourage learners to engage with the sexual identity negotiations of the teenage protagonists in the play, and to further think about how these negotiations can be visualised and dramatised in staging this scene. Moreover, this example is also noteworthy in that it challenges fixed assumptions about identities and posits identities as potentially shifting or undeterminable, which mirrors the critical impulse of queer to understand sexual and gender identities as fluid constructions.

The second example from the same unit in *Camden Town Advanced* integrates the intimate portrayal of a lesbian woman, Rachel Gleason, and her experience with a homophobic

church environment into a listening task with a pre-, while- and post-listening phase (cf. Claussen et al. 2014: 98-99). In the pre-listening phase, learners tell each other what they know about the church's attitude towards homosexuality and exchange their opinions on that issue. In a second step, learners discuss whether schools should have an anti-discrimination policy regarding sexual identity. Both tasks introduce homosexuality and sexual identity as explicit themes in an upfront yet unintrusive manner and call on learners to share and discuss their knowledge and opinions on these themes. Rather than urging learners to talk about their own sexual identities, these tasks introduce sexual identity as a theme that is discursively linked to socioculturally relevant aspects such as faith or anti-discrimination practices, which illustrates that sexual identities are not only private matters, but indeed enmeshed in public debates and institutions. In the last step of the pre-listening phase, learners read an extract from the storytelling series 'The Living Room' about identity and acceptance in an LGBT community in West Michigan. This reading extract raises awareness of the existence of LGBT communities and can be used to introduce the various identities and meanings residing in the acronym LGBT. Furthermore, it serves to introduce Rachel Gleason's experience of coming to understand her own self while being deeply involved in a church context, which is then portrayed in detail through a podcast. The listening task that follows is noteworthy in that it combines a comprehension-check activity with the meaningful content of Rachel Gleason's intense struggles she was facing when confronting her homophobic family and church community with her lesbian identity. Even though this portrayal connects 'being lesbian' with 'being a problem' in the specific context of belonging to a church, it does not reinforce the link between 'lesbian' and 'problem' in that Rachel Gleason's story is a story of emancipation, pride and self-affirmation, and in that students are encouraged later on to reflect on Rachel Gleason's experience and on discriminatory practices against homosexual people prevalent in institutions they know. Ultimately, against the backdrop of what the learners have learned about LGBT issues, Rachel Gleason's experience and institutionalised homophobia, they transfer this knowledge and awareness to their own immediate school context. Here, learners are asked to write a speech for their school board in order to argue in favour of the implementation of an anti-discriminatory sexual identity policy for their school. I argue that this task is to be welcomed in that it invites learners to reflect on whether their own school climate might be homophobic, and what can be done to transform a potentially homophobic school climate into a more open and respectful environment. Together, the two examples discussed here achieve to bring in a diverse range of LGBT issues and experiences (although not all aspects of L, G, B, or T are equally balanced) and involve the learner in deep reflections and engagements with these issues, which I read as an attempt to establish a multivoiced consciousness about sexual identity. As such, this representational strategy can be understood as a move away from tokenistic representations, which Gray (2013a: 7) cautions against as they install a singular and therefore monolithic portrayal of a non-heterosexual identity.

The third example comes from *Notting Hill Gate 1* (Edelhoff/Schmidt 2015) for learners of year 5 and has already been referred to above when I introduced Benitt and Kurtz's (2016) coursebook investigation. Benitt and Kurtz show that in *Notting Hill Gate 1*, the teenage

protagonist Gillian Collins lives together with her mother Gwen Collins and her mother's partner Anna Coleman. They also show, however, that this particular relationship and family constellation is only explained explicitly in the accompanying teacher's manual, but never in the coursebook as such. Furthermore, Anna Coleman is never shown to be involved in Gwen's or Gillian's daily routines, which makes her – as the lesbian partner of Gillian's mother – invisible (cf. Benitt/Kurtz 2016: 177-178). The only instance in the coursebook where the nature of the relationship is implied can be found in an overview page that introduces the main characters of the coursebook (cf. Edelhoff/Schmidt 2015: 18). Benitt and Kurtz emphasise that it requires “[a] very close look” to see “that Anne Coleman puts her arm around Gwen Collins – we can see her hand resting on Gwen's left shoulder” (2016: 177). From my point of view, I would even go as far as to argue that this gesture is almost non-visible, so I doubt whether students would actually read the two women as being in a relationship. The only clue to arrive at this interpretation stems from the very fact that they are standing close to each other, which in the representational logic of this character page usually implies a relationship. In a way, the almost invisible and only implicitly implied existence of an ‘unusual’ family constellation with a lesbian relationship between Anna and Gwen and Gwen's daughter Gillian is a lost opportunity. Had the relationship been depicted more explicitly, e.g. by involving Anna in daily routines and leisure time activities, then learners would have received the chance to recognise this family constellation more directly and to perceive of it as a regular part of the coursebook world, mirroring the diverse ways of being a family in today's society. At the same time, the insight that the relationship between Anna and Gwen remains almost invisible points to the intricate difficulties and challenges of depicting sexual identities on the coursebook page. Other diversity markers are more easily recognisable. The character overview page (cf. Edelhoff/Schmidt 2015: 18) can indeed be read as the epitome of a diverse coursebook microcosm, featuring ethnic diversity and disability as more visible categories of difference. It also illustrates well that coursebook publishers are generally attuned to depicting sociocultural diversity in manifold facets. When it comes to depicting a lesbian relationship or diverse sexual identities in more easily recognisable ways, this would require performative indicators, e.g. the two women holding hands or exchanging a kiss, or textual clues, e.g. ‘Gillian is going out for dinner with her mother and her mother's partner Anne’. If the coursebook microcosm's inclusivity is meant to stretch out to LGBT diversity, too, then such slightly more upfront representational strategies would be necessary to at least achieve visibility or recognisability.

In *Green Line 5* (Horner et al. 2009) for learners of year 9, the topic of same-sex relationships is depicted and negotiated in the thematic context of human rights (Horner et al. 2009: 68-69). On this double introductory page to the unit on human rights, one can find a gay couple depicted in a photo, accompanied by the text “It isn't possible to be so open about same-sex relationships in every country. In some places just being gay or lesbian is illegal” (Horner et al. 2009: 69). The reading of the couple as gay is enabled by this textual information in combination with the couple being shown in a snuggling and affectionate posture while sitting on a sofa. The task set-up of this double page invites learners to discuss and reflect on the different facets of human rights, and the explicit inclusion of same-sex relationships as a

possible human rights issue makes the discussion and reflection of this particular nexus an available option. Furthermore, the fourth task asks learners to research the status of human rights issues around the world and in their own country, i.e. whether they think enough or not enough is being done in view of particular rights. If this task is taken at face value and followed up thoroughly, learners could research in detail how LGBT issues are construed differently in diverse political and cultural settings. This approach to including and making visible a gay couple and same-sex relationships as a human rights issue can be understood as a more factual representational strategy. In contrast to the idea of depicting a same-sex family throughout a whole coursebook (see above), the rationale that can be identified here is to link the exploration of gay and lesbian issues with a thematic anchor that makes this inclusion seem legitimate rather than arbitrarily attached. I argue strongly in favour of making greater use of these thematic anchors in the development and publication of coursebooks. Connecting LGBT issues or sexual and gender diversity to such thematic anchors can show learners that these topics are an integral part of many facets of today's political, social and cultural reality (cf. Merse 2015a: 18).

A similar example to that of *Green Line 5* can be found in the coursebook *Green Line Oberstufe, Ausgabe für Bayern* (Brand et al. 2015) published for EFL classrooms in upper secondary education. Under the thematic rubric of 'The individual and society', learners are asked to describe in how far the various images spread across this double page are indicative of changes that society has undergone, and to discuss whether these changes have been positive or not (cf. Brand et al. 2015: 12-13). This is later transferred to an exploration of human rights and what societies can do to make human rights prosper. By far the largest image of that page depicts a scene from an LGBT pride march. Whereas there is no textual reference that explains this image and what it depicts in further detail, the image as such is replete with LGBT iconography, including the imagery of the rainbow flag as a symbol for LGBT pride, and people wearing T-shirts that read 'Out at Tesco', indicating that a portion of the LGBT workforce of one of the UK's largest supermarket chains are protesting for LGBT rights. To contextualise and decode this image in view of LGBT issues requires learners to be visually literate, or to research the meanings of the visual symbolism that is at work in this image. In common with my evaluation of the example of LGBT visibility in *Green Line 5*, this example also follows the strategy of introducing LGBT issues in suitable thematic contexts.

The five examples I discussed and evaluated above indicate that coursebook publishers who work for the German EFL school market are gradually beginning to change their representational practices and integrate foci on LGBT issues, experience and identities into the coursebook content. In contrast to the representational conundrums Gray (2013b) observes for the global ELT market, it seems that local markets are indeed a more fertile ground for beginning to adapt coursebooks more readily. Furthermore, the examples of LGBT visibility found in German EFL coursebooks may also be understood as a response to new curricular and educational guidelines which, by their virtue of being normative educational documents, require publishers to establish queer perspectives in their coursebooks (cf. chapter 5.1.4). Here, I suggest that further research into the production of coursebooks could yield valuable insights regarding the motivation of publishers to include queer perspectives and the representational

strategies they chose to follow. In the following, I wish to articulate a few distinct proposals that might be found useful by publishers for further increasing LGBT visibility in their coursebooks, and also for being more reflective towards heteronormativity that is frequently reproduced in coursebooks.

To begin with, I would like to highlight the need to move away from tokenising or highly implicit ways of integrating LGBT people and issues. If an LGBT representation is too implicit to be actually recognised by the learner, this would strangely perpetuate the silencing and invisibility of LGBT people and issues even though attempts have been made to strive for their inclusion. Therefore, at least a certain degree of explicitness is necessary to achieve a recognisable visibility. Furthermore, tokenising and singular representations run the danger of establishing monolithic assumptions about LGBT people so that the one example that has made it into the coursebook is taken by learners to be representative of all LGBT people. Hence, what is called for are more balanced and varied representations with a stress on multiperspectivity and multivoicedness so as to avoid shallow and one-sided portrayals. This can be achieved by integrating an LGBT focus into coursebooks where suitable across the range of coursebooks learners pass through during their time at school. The point here is not to flood the coursebook with representations just for the sake of the representation as such. Rather, I suggest carving out a space for LGBT representations where they make sense to the learner (e.g. through suitable thematic anchors) and do not come across as artificial or intrusive. A further concern for the production of coursebooks would be to find ways of engaging students in explicitly negotiating, discussing and reflecting on various matters, norms and identities relating to sexual and gender identities. To achieve both concerns – finding strategies of representation and finding ways of explicit negotiations – I consider it helpful to apply Nelson's (2009, 2006; cf. chapter 5.3) notions of queer inclusion and queer inquiry to the production of coursebooks:

- **queer inclusion** would seek out possibilities of representing LGBT people, issues and experiences in the coursebook so that they become explicitly visible on a textual and a visual level; this could include, for example, to integrate a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender character into the range of coursebook characters, or to develop a storyline in which an LGBT issues comes to the fore (e.g. the coming out of a coursebook character, or the establishment of a gay-straight alliance in the coursebook school); furthermore, a good starting point would also be to identify further thematic anchors to which LGBT issues can be justifiably linked (e.g. the inclusion of an LGBT celebrity when the focus is on famous people, or the consideration of a film with LGBT content when the coursebook moves popcultural products into view); another idea would be to include reading pieces with one or several LGBT protagonists, e.g. by selecting a short story from Marion Dane Bauer's collection *Am I Blue?* (1994); such representations, I argue, do not always have to be explicitly thematised; sometimes, their 'en passant' occurrence on the coursebook page might be as effective to achieve visibility and a sense of the normalcy of the Other;
- **queer inquiry** in a coursebook would work towards making issues relating to sexual and gender identity an explicit topic for discussion, reflection and critique; this explicit

thematization would rely on highlighting such issues in order to achieve a learner's deep engagement for example with the discursive production of a person's sexual identity, with the effects and functions of heteronormativity, or with the shifting indeterminacy of LGBT identity labels; the examples from *Camden Town Advanced* that I introduced above illustrate well how queer inquiry can be achieved and put into practice, i.e. by providing a textual and visual incentive that is elaborated and expanded on in the ensuing arrangement of tasks.

Queer inclusion and queer inquiry are not to be posited as mutually exclusive. Indeed, queer inquiry requires a certain basis on which to mount reflection and discussion, which could be provided by a carefully manufactured queer inclusion. Therefore, both approaches are ideally combined in the production process to achieve a continuum ranging from an en passant-representation that guarantees LGBT visibility to a deliberate and explicit negotiation of LGBT issues or matters and norms relating to sexual and gender identities.

On yet another level, I also propose that publishers reconsider the ways in which they activate and reproduce heteronormativity in the coursebook content. To give an example, an exercise in *Green Line 5* (Horner et al. 2009: 36) asks learners to practice the future tense. At the example of Marco's plans for the future, learners can practice sentences such as "When I leave school I'm going to study IT at uni. Then I'm going to start..." (ibid.). The incentives offered in the thought bubble on the left hand side suggest "wife and kids" (ibid.) as one of Marco's future dreams, which posits Marco as heterosexual and as following a typically heteronormative path. This in itself is not entirely problematic, as it might be Marco's deepest wish to marry a woman and have kids. What is problematic, however, is that the following exercise asks learners to make similar predictions about their own future. With the heteronormative frame installed in this exercise, the question emerges in how far non-heterosexual learners can insert their voice and their wishes into this exercise, or whether they might feel urged to follow a heteronormative script. In light of this specific example, I call on publishers to be more cautious of the heteronormative worldviews and assumptions that such exercises sometimes imprudently reproduce, and to opt for employing a language that is non-heteronormative and potentially open to all learners (e.g. by providing 'finding a relationship' as a speech incentive rather than 'having wife and kids'). It must be stressed that making a coursebook less heteronormative does not mean to erase the depiction of heterosexual love or relationships entirely from the page. The point is to lessen the impact of heteronormativity by broadening the options that are made available to all learners equally.

Now it is one thing to hint at a coursebook's deeply embedded LGBT invisibility or heteronormativity and demand changes to its representational strategies and repertoires. If such changes are not readily implemented, however, or the coursebook one is required to use still lacks any form of LGBT visibility, it is necessary to think about how a coursebook can be changed in situ when it is employed in concrete contexts of consumption. The central concern here is how a coursebook can be 'queered' even though its surface might be blatantly heteronormative. The strategy for 'queering' the coursebook I propose begins with the teacher identifying a context in the coursebook in which heteronormative patterns are prevalent, e.g. in

portrayals of families, relationships, or dating. In a second step, the teacher can identify ways of expanding on the heteronormative script by adding LGBT perspectives (mirroring the queer inclusion approach), or of making the heteronormative assumptions themselves an object of critique (mirroring the queer inquiry approach). Let me illustrate this strategy at the example of the typical family tree that is usually to be found in beginner level coursebooks, e.g. the family tree in *Green Line 1* (cf. Horner et al. 2006: 28). Sam's family tree is thoroughly heteronormative in that women are always married to (or divorced from) men, including the generation of his grandparents and his parents. While I do not argue that the depiction of heteronormative family relations is wrong, this family is a good example of how families in coursebooks do not tend to have LGBT family members. To 'queer' this family tree in terms of queer inclusion, the teacher could develop their own material depicting an alternative family in which LGBT relatives are represented, e.g. by adding a lesbian aunt or a gay uncle who are in a relationship with a same-sex partner. Another possibility would be to interpolate so-called rainbow families, i.e. families with same-sex parents who have children, into the heteronormative family depictions found in coursebooks, e.g. by bringing in picture books that represent more diverse types of families and family relations, e.g. Richardson and Parnell's *And Tango Makes Three* (2005), Argent's *Josh and Jaz Have Three Mums* (2007) or Merchant's *Dad David, Baba Chris and Me* (2010). This shows that it is possible to deliberately draw on different types of materials and texts other than the coursebook to represent LGBT family relations in the EFL classroom. From a queer inquiry perspective, the teacher would make the family tree as it is an object of scrutiny and engage learners in unmasking its limitations and assumptions, e.g. by asking in how far this family tree represents today's realities of how to be a family, or how the family tree defines what a family consists of. This example of 'queering' a given heteronormative coursebook indicates that the contexts of a coursebook's concrete usage are perhaps as important as the contexts of its production and questions relating to the content on the page as it is. If all three perspectives are intertwined, both teachers and publishers could develop a greater sensitivity to the representational limitations *and* possibilities of a coursebook, and to find ways of updating and transforming coursebooks from a queer vista, e.g. by making changes in producing coursebooks, or by making changes in using coursebooks. Such 'queering' on various levels seems very much called for, in particular because coursebooks are a central medium in EFL instructional settings that have a great power – especially if viewed as cultural artefacts (cf. Gray 2013a) in defining what appears to be legitimate knowledge, or a legitimate way of being. To conclude with, coursebooks and other ELT or TEFL materials play a crucial role in renegotiating foreign or English language education towards mirroring greater cultural diversity, and towards making this cultural diversity a deliberate thematic focus for discussions and reflections. If change occurs on all levels – content, consumption and production – coursebooks might ultimately have their share in embracing the call for including 'other Others' and 'different differences' in Teaching English as a Foreign Language – a call that has been centrally articulated and pursued throughout this dissertation.

Conclusion

*In this space, in this moment, we are who we want to be.
I am lucky, because for me that doesn't take much courage.
But for others, it takes a world of bravery to make it to the clearing.*
(Levithan 2003: 184)

This dissertation began with a childhood reflection from *Boy Meets Boy* protagonist Paul to open up a conceptual horizon within TEFL to think about 'other Others' and 'different differences', and this dissertation similarly concludes with a reflection of Paul's, this time to stress the necessity for TEFL research and practice to continue its on-going and sensitive engagement with cultural difference and Otherness. In this quote taken from the last scene of *Boy Meets Boy*, Paul reflects on the diverse make-up of people constituting the kaleidoscopic microcosm of his world. All of his friends – straight boys and girls, lesbian girls, gay boys, questioning teenagers, drag queens, his ex-boyfriend Kyle and his new boyfriend Noah – have gathered in a forest clearing to dance, to be happy, and to celebrate life. In this particular space, in this particular moment, Paul observes an equilibrium in which all of his friends, with all their individual differences, can be at ease with who they are. At the same time, Paul is aware that he enjoys a special privilege – that his sexual Otherness, his being gay, does not marginalize or 'other' him. Indeed, he is "in the middle of somewhere" (Levithan 2003: 184) rather than being on the outside of nowhere in a position of invisibility or silence. At the same time, he is also painfully aware of the courage that others – indeed Others – have to muster up to achieve recognition, acceptance and visibility in order to make it to the clearing – that symbolic space in the novel where 'other Others' and 'different differences' can come together in their individual differences without succumbing to oppressive cultural norms or assimilating into a melange that makes individual styles, expressions, and identities disappear.

The metaphor of the clearing, and the idea of who can make it to that clearing, mirrors the central research concern I have engaged with in this dissertation. In understanding the clearing to be the specific context of German TEFL, I sought to show what axes of difference and Otherness have already found their way into 'the clearing' and gained a perhaps central and prominent position in both TEFL research and practice, and whether there are 'other Others' and 'different differences' that have not yet received wider attention, but justifiably could do so, in the scope of TEFL. These questions gain a particularly legitimate currency because, as I have shown, TEFL is centrally concerned with negotiations of the cultural Other and posits cultural Otherness and difference as constitutive elements of its discursive domain. In light of this centrality, I engaged with the question of how TEFL has negotiated and is currently renegotiating its stance towards difference and Otherness, and mounted the exploration of this question on the figure of thought of 'other Others' and 'different differences'. This figure of thought is meant to indicate that there might be more to embrace on the horizon of Otherness and difference than currently meets the eye in TEFL. In particular, I investigated the domains of

cultural learning, literary learning and gender-informed approaches in TEFL, as issues and negotiations of difference and Otherness are centrally embedded in these domains. Generally speaking, I have shown that TEFL discourses oscillate between at times contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, TEFL proves to be an evolving field in that it continuously engages and embraces broader perspectives on cultural difference and Otherness, which is perhaps best embodied in the access to the so-called ‘new’ English cultures and literatures that are currently gaining increasing momentum. Sometimes even, it appears that a progressive rhetoric is employed in published research that stylises the discipline as hyper-sensitive towards endorsing plurality, cultural diversity, and respect for the Other. Such a rhetoric, however, can all too quickly become unmasked as mere lip-service in view of the dimensions of cultural diversity that are *actually* accessed. On the other hand, as it turns out, it needs to be seen that the diversity TEFL is embracing mainly unfolds along the lines of only *certain* types of Otherness and difference, namely nationality and ethnicity. While there is nothing inherently ‘wrong’ in embracing national and ethnic diversity, what has to be problematised and criticised is the notion that this tendency can become grossly oversimplifying and reductive in that it is prone to producing certain lines of difference and Otherness as the primary lens through which to view cultural and literary learning. What one could call a traditionalising fossilisation of *certain* types of Otherness and difference (albeit in itself conceived of in diverse terms) might then all too easily block ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ from view that might as well have a legitimate position in the orchestration of cultural diversity within TEFL. Yet at the same time, current scholarship is beginning to pose a critical challenge to such fossilisations by explicitly suggesting to activate ‘new’ and hitherto unaccessed lines of cultural difference and Otherness in order to mirror the cultural complexities and the multi-layeredness of globalised societies in the 21st century in EFL classrooms. From this, I derive one of the main results of my dissertation, namely that current research in TEFL has produced a discursive opening that creates an epistemic space for accommodating ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’. With this discursive opening, it becomes possible to activate new lines of Otherness and difference, yet at the same time, it is almost impossible to delimit or consolidate in advance what types of cultural difference and Otherness must move into view *now*. This, in turn, is indicative of a rather radical and fundamental openness the field of TEFL is now facing as a, I would say, positive challenge that prepares a fertile ground for thinking through, theorising and problematising any new axis of difference and Otherness that is engaged and embraced.

The argumentation towards this discursive opening has been established in part A of my dissertation. I began with illuminating the theoretical complexity that an engagement with the critical concepts of difference and Otherness engenders (chapter 1). This served the purpose to point out what is theoretically at stake when centralising difference and Otherness in researching TEFL and to built up a solid and substantial cornerstone for the ensuing investigations. In leaning into structuralist and poststructuralist thought, and in spanning a range of feminist, postcolonial, discourse-oriented, philosophical and pedagogical theories, I have shown that engaging with Otherness and difference involves or requires

- an understanding of the notion of the binary opposition into which cultural difference is all too easily articulated, thereby locating difference into opposable and unequally weighed poles, while simultaneously exorcising alternative possibilities that defy simple binary logic; yet at the same time, the binary opposition must initially be acknowledged in its power to structure human thought and existence, which, however, must not make it immune to critical analysis; as my investigation has shown, TEFL discourses currently grapple intensely with their deeply inscribed binary oppositions;
- a focus on Otherness as the most extreme form of cultural difference that is defined against, and hence marginalised in view of, culturally regulatory and policing norms; Otherness and its respective norm mirror the relational character of the binary opposition, as the existence of one is unthinkable without the existence of the other; both Otherness and norms are to be addressed in the EFL classroom to avoid a one-sided focus on Otherness only that never interrogates the related norm;
- a sensitivity to the discourses and their power dynamics that produce the Other as a knowable, homogeneous, stereotyped and inferior entity in the forcefield of cultural difference; unmasking the discursive mechanisms that produce some differences as Otherness in processes of 'othering' alongside debunking the norms that regulate the discursive field are seen as vital to rework the discourses against which the Other must speak towards discourses into which the voices of the Other can be embedded;
- the at times painstaking theoretical intricacies regarding the possibility of representing or speaking about difference and Otherness as they become evident, for example, in the thought of Spivak, Derrida and Levinas; diversity pedagogy cautions that the dilemma of reiterating assumptions about the Other looms large as soon as they move into pedagogic sight, e.g. as a topic in the classroom; I argue that these careful considerations are important, but must not be seen as numbing when it comes to integrating a focus on 'other Others' and 'different differences' into the EFL classroom, as their non-representation would cause falling back behind the criticism that has unmasked their invisibility in the first place; rather, the call is for a balanced, non-tokenising and diversified representation of Otherness and difference alongside challenging and interrogating regulating normativities; consequently, a diversity approach is needed that is both affirmative and critical, and that is not limited to an 'Education for the Other' or an 'Education about the Other', but also extends to an 'Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering' (Kumashiro 2000).

These theoretical explorations of Otherness and difference were then collated into a heuristic that is intended to provide an orientating framework for accessing and inscribing new axes of difference and Otherness into TEFL scholarship and classroom practice.

In the remaining three chapters of part A, I put my investigation of the (re)negotiations of Otherness and difference in TEFL discourse on three pillars: cultural learning (chapter 2), learning with literature (chapter 3), and gender-informed approaches to TEFL (chapter 4). Cultural learning, as I have shown, is generally concerned with establishing open-minded and respectful encounters with who or what is culturally different, either in real-world scenarios or

mediated via texts. This general openness towards cultural difference and Otherness is epitomised in large-scale and influential concepts such as *Fremdverstehen* or intercultural communicative competence (ICC). In spite of the open agendas these concepts seem to suggest, they are marked by inherent limitations in view of the axes of difference they are centrally concerned with. It seems that ‘culture’ is more often than not equated with ‘national culture’, and increasingly also ‘ethnic culture’. I argue that the signifier ‘culture’ or ‘cultural’ must also stretch out to other categories that are similarly cultural in nature, for example sexuality, gender, or social class. Current renegotiations of cultural learning, especially those that work from a transcultural vantage point, seek to move beyond clear-cut binary oppositions between the learner’s home culture and the target culture, which have often been conceived of in monolithic and static terms. Gradually, the privileged position of the so-called core target cultures (i.e. the UK and the USA) has been deconstructed towards including a greater diversity of Anglophone (national) cultures, and towards acknowledging the (ethnic) diversity within these cultural spheres. In sum, I made a strong case for expanding on the nationally or ethnically defined lens in cultural learning – without, however, suggesting to abandon these central cornerstones – by embracing new lines of difference and Otherness to complexify the representations of and the engagement with culture in the EFL classroom and to overcome shallow and flat perceptions of the cultural Other.

When it comes to the EFL literature classroom (chapter 2), the line of argumentation is in productive parallel with the discussion of cultural learning. Generally, the value of literature for the EFL classroom lies in introducing the learner to new and unknown worlds and perspectives that are negotiated and modelled in literary texts, which are conceptualised for TEFL as fictional laboratories (cf. Volkmann 2016) that can push the learners’ imaginations beyond their established knowledges and their usual comfort zones. In principle, such negotiations or imaginations of what is ‘new’ or ‘different’ can be applied to a broad text selection in which diverse ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ find representation, voice and visibility. In order to show what types of difference and Otherness are primarily active in the EFL literature classroom, I investigated TEFL-specific canon studies. Even though the long-established ‘hidden canon’ of dead, white, male and Anglo-American authors is increasingly being challenged by the advent of post-colonial literatures and literature by female authors – which is framed by ongoing renegotiations in literature-oriented TEFL scholarship to suggest innovative new reading pieces – it appears that the literature selection is still not yet ultimately open towards a greater diversity of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’. The call is for inviting hidden and largely forgotten voices to the guestlist, to use Decke-Cornill’s (2004) metaphor, that lie on the margins of normative discourse formations. While such renegotiations indicate the demand for a more varied text choice, I have also argued that the text choice in itself is not the only aspect to consider. What is also needed is an inventory of approaches to teaching literature that unearthes the difference or Otherness inscribed in a literary text, and that challenges learners to engage critically, aesthetically, creatively and productively with the texts they are reading. To avoid what Chimamanda Adichie calls the ‘danger’ of the single story that might create a tokenising perception of the Other, more balanced representations can be

achieved by considering additional literary and non-literary texts for integration into a larger didactic text ensemble that is employed in the EFL literature classroom.

The discourse on gender within TEFL proves a highly interesting and insightful case in point (chapter 4). As I have shown, the category of gender is in itself a particular example of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ that has gradually achieved a more mainstream recognition within TEFL scholarship and classroom practice. Often against severe odds and theoretical non-recognitions, certain scholars have worked towards spelling out the category of gender into a prolific set of research directions (e.g. the history of TEFL, gender as a learning variable) which have shown that gender is, and has always been, an integral element of TEFL. Most recently, gender has also been discussed in its potential as an explicit topic for the EFL classroom. This has caused a productive legitimisation discourse which has achieved to highlight the importance of “negotiating gender” (König/Surkamp/Decke-Cornill 2015b: 2) together with learners in classroom settings. From today’s perspective, it can be argued that gender has become a crucial component of the EFL classroom and a particularly viable source for reflecting on the ramifications of gender in language, culture, and literature. To systematise and structure the engagement with gender as an exemplar of newly emergent ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ in EFL teaching, gender-informed scholarship has put forward highly valuable frameworks and anchoring points to integrate gender into the classroom in ways that make it possible to follow up multifarious perspectives (e.g. socio-critical, constructivist, or deconstructivist; cf. König 2015a). Most interestingly, the discourse formation around gender in TEFL scholarship is increasingly sensitive to understanding gender in non-binary terms, and to opening up to sexual identities that lie outside of heteronormativity. As such, what has in itself been a newly arriving ‘other Other’ or ‘different difference’ in TEFL is now providing a fertile ground for inscribing yet another range of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ into TEFL discourse, namely the diversity of non-normative genders and sexualities.

In my research, I then suggest that the whole line of reflection and thought developed in part A can be condensed into the articulation of a conceptual ‘docking station’ for ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ in TEFL. Since I have shown that the general horizon of TEFL turns out to be opening up towards greater cultural diversity, I would like to articulate the encouraging call for further research that probes deeply into those axes of difference and Otherness that have not yet found their way into the scope of TEFL, and to carve out their unique potential for putting the engagement with cultural diversity in TEFL scholarship and classroom practice on a broader basis. Ultimately, accessing new lines of cultural difference and Otherness, and turning them into productive components and learning experiences within TEFL, can respond to the vision of the enriching experience of Otherness that the Common European Framework of References maps as a central objective onto foreign language education. On a critical note, however, it needs to be added that there cannot be an a priori restriction of the types of cultural difference and Otherness that can possibly now be integrated into TEFL. Such a restriction would run counter to the general openness towards cultural diversity that TEFL scholarship seems to endorse and might produce the assumption that some differences or Othernesses are ‘better’ or ‘more valuable’ – which is an assumption that I have deconstructed

throughout part A. Yet at the same time, TEFL research needs to confront the question how this, at least potentially, ever-growing diversification can be captured and systematically integrated into its own theory building and its development of classroom conceptualisations. Such a confrontation might oscillate between sounding out the possible limitations of such an ever-growing diversification, or reconfiguring TEFL into a discipline that is radically sensitive to and integrative of the vast horizon of cultural difference and Otherness. Yet while these questions certainly need to be embraced in more depth, I also suggest that it is worthwhile beginning to turn to new ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ and exemplarily research their potential and their implications for TEFL. I did this at the example of sexual and gender diversity.

My suggestion of the conceptual docking station, and the preceding renegotiations of the stance towards cultural Otherness and difference in cultural, literary, and gender-informed TEFL discourses, ultimately also provide a powerful legitimisation concerning *why* a focus on sexual and gender diversity can and should become an integral part of TEFL scholarship and classroom practice. International ELT scholarship has already engaged issues of sexual and gender diversity with a much greater rigour than is the case for German TEFL contexts, and has thus begun working towards legitimising the position and value of this particular vantage point for ELT. Yet my thorough legitimisation, locating the integration of sexual and gender diversity in TEFL within the broader and more general renegotiations of Otherness and difference within cultural, literary, and gender-informed learning, is so far unprecedented also in international ELT research. Therefore, I hope that this particular vantage point emanating from the German TEFL context can feed constructively into the emerging queer-informed research agendas that are currently on the way internationally.

In part B of this dissertation, I centred on sexual and gender diversity as an exemplary focal point of integrating ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ into TEFL and drew on queer-informed thought as a template to investigate the implications and potentials of ‘queering TEFL’. Even though the diversity of gender and sexual identities is culturally deeply significant, it is marked by a precarious absence in German TEFL contexts. Yet what are further reasons to renegotiate research and classroom practice by employing a queer lens? I began chapter 5 with a thorough exploration of current educational and curricular guidelines that provide the imperative for education at school at large and for teaching and learning English as a foreign language in particular. The main aim was to find out what such documents actually say about the status of sexual and gender diversity, and whether any reference points could be identified that would point to endorsing this particular thematic dimension in the German federal educational system. I contextualised this investigation within the German educational standards for foreign language learning, and was expecting to find a dearth of references to sexual and gender diversity, precisely because these standards have been criticised for lacking educational relevance (*Bildung*) and being devoid of meaningful and relevant content. Not surprisingly maybe, the educational standards as such offer no mentioning whatsoever of anything related to sexuality or gender. What I found surprising, however, was that a few newly passed German federal TEFL curricula obviously have begun to redress the lop-sided absence of relevant and meaningful content virulent in the German national educational standards by reintroducing

content specifications that also require or suggest a focus on sexual and gender diversity. Clearly, this newly emerging curricular change requires the EFL classroom to engage a new line of cultural difference that has so far been left unconsidered. Furthermore, also other educational documents such as school laws or sex education guidelines, if carefully read, posit sex education, which in almost all federal states is defined to include a sensitive approach to sexual and gender diversity, as a cross-curricular educational mandate that calls on all school subjects to think about possible ways to live up to this demand. Coupled with the progressive educational plans of federal states such as Baden-Württemberg or Hamburg, which put forward cross-curricular lead perspectives of a modern 21st century education that also require the inclusion of sexual and gender diversity into schools, all guidelines and curricula taken together pose the immediate challenge that TEFL must begin to develop concepts which combine the engagement with sexual and gender identities with established, yet renegotiable, TEFL-specific concepts (e.g. cultural or literary learning). These curricular developments are in parallel with recent developments and research in pedagogy that explore the thorough establishment of a cross-curricular focus on sexual and gender diversity in the specific context of schools. While the central German publication in this field (cf. Huch/Lücke 2015a) has begun to address a wide range of individual school subjects, foreign language or EFL education is so far strangely absent from these discussions and not included in this publication. This absence provides yet another reason to introduce TEFL-specific vistas into this transformative educational development and show that also the EFL classroom can offer its specific contribution to this development. A further reason to open up this particular research horizon for the German TEFL context can be derived from international ELT research. Here, researching the merger of sexual and gender identities with ELT, often from a queer perspective, has turned into a nascent and prolific – yet still comparatively small – ELT domain in its own right. I consider it vital to bring German TEFL research (where a queer focus is rather new) and international ELT research (where this focus is more established) into a fruitful and productive dialogue so that the insights put forward in each context can be harnessed for mutual benefit.

In chapter 6, I engaged with the queer-informed potential for integrating sexual and gender diversity as a newly emergent line of cultural difference and Otherness into TEFL. In contrast to other link disciplines from Cultural Studies, e.g. Postcolonial Studies (Lütge/Stein 2017) or Gender Studies (Decke-Cornill 2010b; König 2015a) that are gradually being interrogated in view of their potential for cultural and literary learning, Queer Theory and its coterminous domains of pedagogy and politics have so far remained largely unexplored. My tapping into the potential of queer-informed thought and my reflections on its implications for TEFL provide an important cornerstone for closing this research gap. Queer Theory and its aligned politics and pedagogy are marked by the at times contradictory tendencies to powerfully affirm and move into visibility the wide spectrum of sexualities and genders that defy the logic of Butler's (2006 [1990]) heterosexual matrix. In this sense, queer is best understood as an umbrella adjective to encompass a coalition of marginalised and non-heterosexual identities that are frequently marked by the acronym LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender/transsexual), to which other 'labels' are at times attached (e.g. Q for

queer/questioning, or I for intersex). The more critical impulse emerging from Queer Theory, however, is highly skeptical of such identity markers in the first place. In its most radical stance, Queer Theory is anti-identitarian in that it debunks such identity markers as limiting. They are considered to be the result of an oppressive sexual and gender order that regulates certain identities into 'allowable' and other identities into 'deviant' identities, hence the call for overcoming such identity labels altogether. I argue, however, that such a complete deconstruction might be theoretically appealing, but not necessarily transferrable into the practice of the EFL classroom. On the one hand, adolescent learners are in the midst of finding and constructing their own identities, therefore identities first of all need to be affirmed before they can be carefully interrogated or even deconstructed. On the other hand, denying or even forbidding to employ culturally available identity 'labels' would rob the EFL classroom from a discursive ground into which the engagement with gender and sexual diversity can be embedded. Therefore, the anti-identitarian position of Queer Theory can rather be understood as a curious and interrogative attitude that allows for a critical exploration of how identities are produced in discourse, and what purposes identities fulfil for the individual.

The critical challenge is therefore not to reproduce sexual and gender identities in any fixed or essentialising ways, but rather to understand the EFL classroom as an open space for interrogating the myriad possibilities of expressing, defining and constituting one's gender and sexual identity, and to engage with the vagueness and indeterminacy that acts of identification or non-identification might bring about. Most importantly, Queer Theory's central concept of heteronormativity provides the rationale for TEFL to identify and critically engage with the deep cultural norms that regulate and constitute the force field of sexuality and gender. From this vantage point, the critical challenge for the queer-informed EFL classroom is to make visible and explicit a cultural norm that often goes unrecognised or uninterrogated due to its perceived 'naturalness'. But rather than putting heteronormativity completely on its head or calling for its abolition, as a radically queer viewpoint would have it, I suggest opting for more careful and sensitive approaches that encourage learners to first of all identify heteronormativity as a powerful mindset, understand how it functions, and then de-centre from this norm to open up towards alternative and non-normative identities of gender and sexuality. All in all, I used my investigation of Queer Theory, politics and pedagogy to model a queer-informed framework onto the scope of TEFL that contains both 'queer inclusion' and 'queer inquiry' – concepts that have been introduced into the discussion by Nelson (2006; 2009). This framework covers the following aspects:

- including a coalition of marginalised sexual and gender identities outside of the heterosexual matrix and outside of heterosexual normalisation into the classroom, either as a reference point for further reflection and engagement (thematising approach), or more in an en passant way (de-thematising approach) to achieve visibility, but without the necessity to *always* make this an explicit focus in the classroom;
- using a queer lens to arrive at a critical understanding of how sexual and gender identities are produced and regulated in discourse, including a focus on how non-normative identities are possibly constituted through mechanisms of 'othering';

- taking up the norm-critical impulse of queer to recognise, interrogate and challenge heteronormativity;
- employing queer as a positively disturbing impetus to make the understanding of sexual and gender identity more fluid, i.e. to show that identities can be shifting, hard to pin down, and sometimes non-determinable.

The systematic approaches of this framework offer teachers several options for ‘queering’ the EFL classroom and enable them to determine an identifiable focal point for having learners engage with sexual and gender diversity from a queer point of view. These options are, however, not mutually exclusive, so that for example the exploration of ‘othering’ can go alongside a critical analysis of heteronormativity.

On a meta-level, my research on establishing a queer dimension in TEFL is to be understood as a response to the call for moving greater cultural diversity – a more complex understanding of and engagement with ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ – into the horizon of possibility both in research and in the classroom. Hence, sexual and gender Otherness served as an example to illustrate how conceptualisations of Otherness and difference can be complexified and expanded on. My theoretical line of argumentation and reflection has created an epistemic exemplarity for TEFL research that can be harnessed further to access other silent or tabooed cultural domains. Hence, the modelling of a specific line (sexual and gender diversity) of cultural difference into TEFL that I have developed here might prove to be a valuable matrix for modelling other specific lines of difference into TEFL. While each new line of difference will most likely contain its thematic specificities, the epistemic stakes I have carved out might generally be transferrable to researching other lines of difference for TEFL, e.g. the need to affirm what has been silent or excluded while simultaneously interrogating the norms that produce such silences in the first place. Yet it also needs to be emphasised that my research singled out a particular line of cultural difference and Otherness. While this was done for purposes of analytical clarity and exemplarity, this approach largely neglects how various lines of difference are actually enmeshed with each other, and interfere and intersect with one another. Indeed, sexual and gender identity never occur in complete isolation from other identity categories that make up the multi-layered identity of the individual. For further research, it will become a highly interesting endeavour to supplement this ‘singling out’ of particular lines of difference by embracing more intersectional vantage points that explore the mutual inflections of various aspects of cultural difference and Otherness. On one level, this call for intersectionality is also discussed within Queer Theory, as Hall and Jagose point out:

[W]hile prominently organized around sexuality, it is potentially attentive to any socially consequential difference that contributes to regimes of sexual normalization. Rather than separating sexuality from other axes of social difference—race, ethnicity, class, gender, nationality and so on—queer studies has increasingly attended to the ways in which various categories of difference inflect and transform each other. (Hall/Jagose 2013: xvi)

On another level, the call for intersectionality is also articulated more frequently in TEFL research. Here, for example, the suggestion is to conceptualise the engagement with cultural Otherness as increasingly attentive to the multi-voicedness of individual cultural subjects (e.g. Lütge 2012). When it comes to furthering the research that revolves around ‘other Others’ and

‘different differences’ in TEFL, such an intersectional lens will certainly yield innovative and productive insights that consider the mutual inflections and interdependencies of various lines of cultural difference.

In part C of my dissertation, I turned to the practical implications of ‘queering TEFL’. At the example of two specific fields of concern, i.e. the use of LGBTQ-themed young adult literature (chapter 7) and the employment of published teaching materials (chapter 8), I depicted how a queer focus can find concrete ramifications in the EFL classroom. The need for such practice-oriented specifications derives from my assumption that the advent of a new impulse such as sexual and gender diversity poses a challenge to teachers regarding how the integration of this impulse can be achieved in concrete teaching practice. These specifications, however, are not to be understood as recipes that always work and that can simply be transferred to any EFL classroom. Rather, they are to be seen as incentives and food for thought to show how ‘teaching queer’ *could* be implemented practically. When it comes to teaching young adult literature in the EFL classroom, I showed that LGBTQ-themed texts constitute a body of literature worthwhile considering for bringing sexual and gender diversity into classroom visibility and for enabling students to engage critically with how a literary text represents and negotiates sexual and gender identities as well as heteronormativity. Text choice is crucial for the EFL literature classroom. Yet I argued that rather than striving to find the ideal LGBTQ-themed text or to rule out certain texts in advance, teachers should approach the body of LGBTQ young adult literature with a critical lens and align their text choice with their teaching purpose. This means, for example, that a literary text in which sexual identity is negotiated as a problem that a protagonist struggles with in a homophobic environment can still be used productively in the classroom, e.g. to unmask homophobia or to challenge pervasive stereotypes. Hence, it is not so much the text in itself, but rather the mindset with which a text is approached and the teaching methodology with which a text is brought to live, that become more crucial for choosing a suitable text. At the example of David Levithan’s novel *Boy Meets Boy*, I provided an exemplary insight into how the queer potential of an LGBTQ-themed text can be unearthed in the EFL classroom by describing several queer-informed focal points emerging from the novel.

In chapter 8, I elaborated on the key role published TEFL materials, in particular the coursebook, play in ‘queering’ the EFL classroom. In many teaching contexts, such materials provide the central medium for instruction. Therefore, a close scrutiny of their cultural microcosms and the explicit or implicit messages they transport into the classroom becomes crucial. This impetus is taken up by critical materials research that looks at teaching materials as cultural artefacts that represent certain themes or ideologies on the content level of the coursebook page, but that are also enmeshed in complex processes of consumption and production. In view of sexual and gender diversity, several studies have shown that coursebooks seem to purport LGBT invisibility and heteronormativity in that they rely on heterosexuality as a central script for designing the coursebook world, whereas LGBT people or issues are rarely, if ever, depicted or touched upon. Interestingly, grounds are gradually beginning to shift at least in the German TEFL coursebook market. As I have shown, some materials have now begun to include a focus on diverse sexual and gender identities. Furthermore, I argued that only looking

at the coursebook in view of its immediate content is too one-sided. When a coursebook is actually consumed in the classroom by teachers and learners, it becomes possible to challenge and subvert the heteronormativity and LGBT invisibility of a coursebook by critically interrogating or expanding on the material *as it is*. From a queer-informed perspective, this means that even an allegedly ‘bad’ coursebook can be put to highly productive uses (e.g. when learners and teachers unmask the heteronormativity of the family relations depicted), and that teachers do not necessarily have to wait for ‘better’ coursebooks before they can begin to teach about sexual and gender diversity. Yet, the responsibility for publishers remains to continue their attempts to update and transform teaching materials to overcome LGBT invisibility, to avoid tokenistic representations of LGBT people and themes, and to become more critical of in how far a coursebook transports an exclusively heteronormative worldview. The suggestions I offered might invite a productive dialogue for changing publication practices.

Implications for further research and developing concepts for teaching practice can be mapped out as follows. One important desideratum can be located in the field of teacher training and teacher education. It can be assumed that the advent of sexual and gender diversity as an integral part of the EFL classroom is perceived to be a novelty for pre-service and in-service teachers. Hence, this new dimension of TEFL can cause insecurities or questions regarding how a focus on sexual and gender diversity can be productively and fruitfully integrated into the classroom, and perhaps equally so why such a focus might have a place in TEFL in the first place. Also Gutenberg (2013: 116) addresses the crucial role teachers play in ‘queering’ TEFL. She stresses that sexual and gender diversity might be perceived as a particularly delicate or controversial topic that teachers do not simply take on with ease, which requires a careful and sensitive approach that prepares teachers for this educationally challenging task. Additionally, the critical engagement with heteronormativity in the classroom calls on teachers to grapple with sexual and gender norms that might be deeply engrained in their own sociocultural mindsets and personal identities – irrespective of where teachers might locate themselves on the spectrum of possible genders and sexualities. Hence, teachers must be willing and ready to reflect on highly personal assumptions that are nonetheless inextricable from the larger cultural fabric where such norms have a regulative and policing power, and confront how their own imprint is bound to influence the way they teach about sexual and gender diversity (e.g. in a more upfront manner or in a more sober and matter-of-fact style). I propose that a queer-sensitive teacher education become established as an integral aspect across all phases of teacher training and education. At university level, this can be achieved by integrating a queer focus into existing didactic seminars (e.g. with a literary or cultural focus), by offering thematic courses that explore the nexus of sexual and gender diversity in depth, and by discussing Queer Theory in Cultural or Literary Studies seminars. As such, novice teachers might already enter their professional career with a queer-informed mind set. As regards in-service teachers, what is certainly needed are workshops or training sessions that bring this new dimension of TEFL closer to teachers and that explain how a focus on sexual and gender diversity can be integrated into EFL classrooms. A further possibility would be to circulate this new impulse via practice-oriented publications, teaching guides or journals. What such a queer-sensitive teacher

education may look like requires careful conceptualisations, which can be developed in further future research. To achieve this, I consider it vital to access existing reflections and concepts for teacher education that have been suggested in the context of gender and TEFL (cf. König 2015a), transcultural learning in TEFL (cf. Doff/Schulze-Engler 2011b) and queer pedagogy in education (cf. Meyer 2007). What these concepts entail is a dimension of reflection and awareness, a dimension of professional teacher skills, and a dimension of knowledge. These dimensions could then be thought of as a basis for a queer-sensitive teacher education, e.g. in that teachers become aware of heteronormativity and reflect on their own attitudes towards sexual and gender diversity, in that they develop skills for teaching with a queer focus (e.g. in selecting appropriate materials or designing task scenarios), and in that they acquire the knowledge that frames ‘queering’ TEFL (e.g. knowledge about curricular specifications, the field of LGBTQ-themed literature, or of Queer Theory).

The reflection on new directions in teacher education immediately points to another desideratum within the context of ‘queering’ TEFL. A major concern revolves around how the increasing complexity that results from integrating sexual and gender diversity, but generally also new ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’, can actually be captured – or to put it differently – become manageable in concrete teaching situations. This ever increasing diversity needs to be broken down into palatable units, without at the same time over-simplifying the perspectives on diversity and queer issues that become the content and focus of EFL lessons. To meet this challenge, I consider it crucial to develop substantial and sound task typologies as a framework of orientation that can support teachers in planning, implementing and evaluating lessons with a focus on queer diversity. In parallel with developing such task typologies, I also consider it necessary to develop fine-tuned inventories of learning objectives that can serve to define the rationale behind ‘teaching queer’ in greater detail and to specify in more palatable and concrete terms what learners are supposed to learn when they engage with sexual and gender diversity in the EFL classroom. While my own research has elaborated on in great detail *why* sexual and gender diversity have a place in TEFL, and hence could only discuss a few practical implications, the turn towards developing queer-informed task typologies and inventories of learning objectives can further serve to put the establishment of a queer perspective in TEFL on a more solid and practice-oriented basis. In order to develop and categorise tasks and learning outcomes from a queer point of view, I recommend drawing on existing task typologies and fine-tuned objective inventories as they have been proposed by Burwitz-Melzer (2000), Caspari and Schinske (2009) and Freitag-Hild (2010b) for the context of inter- and transcultural learning and cultural learning with literary texts. Furthermore, I suggest embracing the concept of the complex competence-oriented task as it has been suggested, for example, by Hallet (2012). Given the rationale of this task concept with its focus on educationally relevant content, *Diskursfähigkeit*, competence development and varied input materials, it provides a fertile rubric for creating task environments that enable learners to participate in foreign language discourses on sexual and gender diversity.

To conclude with, this dissertation has both illuminated and contributed to the shifting theoretical grounds that are currently on the way in the scholarship and teaching practice for

cultural learning, learning with literature and gender-informed approaches in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. I have made a strong case for TEFL to overcome its inherent limitations in representing and engaging with cultural Otherness and difference and to live up truly to its endorsement of cultural diversity and respectful encounters with culturally different ‘Others’. A major epistemic outcome of this dissertation is the conceptual ‘docking station’ that legitimises why a greater diversity of ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ is ideally to be integrated into the horizon of TEFL. One example of such greater cultural diversity is the case of sexual and gender diversity, often articulated under the umbrella of LGBT identities. By employing a queer-informed lens, I have shown the potential and implications of ‘queering TEFL’ for establishing a focus on sexual and gender diversity both in TEFL research and in classroom practice. On one level, this particular focus responds to newly emerging curricular guidelines that also call on the EFL classroom to represent cultural diversity in all its facets, including diverse expressions of sexuality and gender. On another level, this particular line of cultural Otherness and difference provides a nuanced extension to the perspectives on Otherness and difference that already have become central to the field of TEFL. Integrating sexual and gender diversity into the scope of TEFL provides a significant cornerstone to move beyond national, ethnic and bipolar gender facets of identity only and to perceive of what or who is culturally different in more multifarious and balanced ways. While the integration of sexual and gender diversity into TEFL hails the promise of overcoming one-sided, shallow or reductive representations of the cultural Other in cultural or literary learning contexts, it needs to be highlighted that sexual and gender identities in themselves must not be depicted in shallow, monolithic or essentialising ways either. The challenge of embracing new ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ in TEFL lies in actually using these new lines to diversify the learning about culture, literature and gender *and* to recognise the internal diversity that lies behind all ‘new’ lines of difference or Otherness that have up to now been the blind spots of TEFL. All in all, I argue that a queer perspective is best conceptualised and understood as inextricable from the cultural, literary and gender-informed horizon of TEFL, rather than as a troubling add-on that *also* needs to be covered now on top of all the demands and tasks the EFL classroom has to fulfil. With queer embodying a rather progressive touch, I also want to caution against understanding “queer [as] hip, queer [as] fashionable” (Kooijman 2005: 107) and employing a queer focus in order to ‘spice up’ traditional representations of culture by allowing students to glimpse into an ‘exotic’ Otherness. Rather, a more sober and matter-of-fact approach to this newly emerging axis of difference can serve to enhance and underline that sexual and gender diversity is a – yes, ‘normal’ – aspect of the sociocultural diversity students experience on a regular basis in their 21st century life worlds. It appears that the time has come for diverse sexual and gender identities – and indeed ‘other Others’ and ‘different differences’ – to become an established part of a modern EFL and foreign language education that engages with and mirrors exactly this sociocultural diversity.

Bibliography

German TEFL Curricula and Educational Documents

The following list provides an overview of all documents I investigated in chapter 5.1. This overview is intended to make the range of educational guidelines and ELT curricula I investigated transparent. This list is sorted alphabetically according to the names of the federal states. The documents by the German Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK) are mentioned first. If necessary, I added short explanatory notes to the choice of documents. The school laws are marked with two different years (e.g. 1996/2016), the first of which indicating the year in which the law was initially passed, the second of which indicating the last change that was included in the document. Each educational document has been assigned an index, consisting of an abbreviation of the federal state and an ongoing number. These indexes are used in chapter 5.1 to indicate the source document for the respective findings.

Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK)

- Kultusministerkonferenz – Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (2005). *Bildungsstandards für die erste Fremdsprache (Englisch/Französisch) für den Hauptschulabschluss (Jahrgangsstufe 9). Beschluss vom 15.10.2004*. Wolters Kluwer Deutschland: München.
- Kultusministerkonferenz – Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (2004a). *Bildungsstandards für die erste Fremdsprache (Englisch/Französisch) für den Mittleren Schulabschluss. Beschluss vom 4.12.2003*. Wolters Kluwer Deutschland: München.
- Kultusministerkonferenz – Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (2014). *Bildungsstandards für die fortgeführte Fremdsprache (Englisch/Französisch) für die Allgemeine Hochschulreife. Beschluss der Kultusministerkonferenz vom 18.10.2012*. Köln: Wolters Kluwer.

Baden-Württemberg (BW)

Since the school year of 2016/2017, Baden-Württemberg has introduced the *Bildungsplan 2016*, encompassing cross-curricular perspectives on education (*Leitperspektiven*) and individual subject-specific curricula. The ELT curriculum for the Gymnasium includes both levels, *Sekundarstufe I* and *Sekundarstufe II*.

- (BW 1) Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport (1983/2016). *Schulgesetz für Baden-Württemberg (SchG)*. Stuttgart.

- (BW 2) Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport (2016). *Bildungsplan 2016: Leitperspektive Bildung für Toleranz und Akzeptanz von Vielfalt (BTV)*. Stuttgart.
- (BW 3) Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport (2016). *Bildungsplan des Gymnasiums: Englisch als erste Fremdsprache*. Stuttgart.

Bavaria (BY)

Bavaria has recently passed new TEFL curricula (the so-called LehrplanPLUS), which will be implemented from the school year 2017/2018 onwards.

- (BY 1) Bayerische Staatskanzlei (2000/2016). *Bayerisches Gesetz über das Erziehungs- und Unterrichtswesen (BayEUG)*. München.
- (BY 2) Staatsinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung (2016). *Lehrplan Plus Gymnasium: Englisch als 1. Fremdsprache, 5-12*. München.
- (BY 3) Staatsinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung (2016). *Schulart- und fächerübergreifende Bildungs- und Erziehungsziele sowie Alltagskompetenz und Lebensökonomie*. München

Berlin and Brandenburg (BB)

Berlin and Brandenburg have recently begun to cooperate in the field of school education, which is the reason why they are grouped together here. As regards the school laws and the ELT curricula for *Sekundarstufe II*, both federal states still keep their own documents in place. For all other educational matters at primary level or *Sekundarstufe I*, Berlin and Brandenburg have passed joint guidelines, with all school types and levels combined into one document. These guidelines are grouped into three parts (A, B, C). Part A (a general overview of the scope of education) and Part B (called cross-curricular competence development) define cross-curricular tasks to be fulfilled in all subject areas, similar to the general *Bildungspläne* of a few other general states. References to sex education are included in these documents. In Part C, one can find all subject-specific curricula, including the curriculum for modern foreign languages. In this case, Berlin and Brandenburg have issued one curriculum for *all* modern foreign languages that are taught from Year 1 to Year 10, with general specifications and description levels applicable to all languages taught. The modern foreign languages curriculum has already been passed, but will only be implemented in the school year of 2017/2018.

- (BB1) Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft (2004/2016). *Schulgesetz für das Land Berlin (Schulgesetz - SchulG)*. Berlin.

- (BB2) Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport des Landes Brandenburg (2002/2016). *Brandenburgisches Schulgesetz (BbgSchulG)*. Potsdam.
- (BB3) Berliner Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft/Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport des Landes Brandenburg (2015). *Teil A: Bildung und Erziehung in den Jahrgangsstufen 1-10*.
- (BB4) Berliner Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft/Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport des Landes Brandenburg (2015). *Teil B: Fachübergreifende Kompetenzentwicklung*.
- (BB 5) Berliner Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft/Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport des Landes Brandenburg (2015). *Teil C: Moderne Fremdsprachen: Jahrgangsstufen 1-10*.
- (BB 6) Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft Berlin (2014). *Rahmenlehrplan für den Unterricht in der gymnasialen Oberstufe: Englisch*. Berlin.
- (BB 7) Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport des Landes Brandenburg (2014). *Rahmenlehrplan für den Unterricht in der gymnasialen Oberstufe im Land Brandenburg: Englisch*. Potsdam.

Bremen (BR)

Bremen does not have sex education guidelines in their own right, but in 2013, the Minister for Education passed a special decree (*Verfügung*) to provide a brief framework for sex education.

- (BR 1) Freie Hansestadt Bremen: Die Senatorin für Bildung und Wissenschaft (2005/2014). *Bremisches Schulgesetz (BremSchulG)*. Bremen.
- (BR 2) Freie Hansestadt Bremen: Die Senatorin für Bildung und Wissenschaft (2013). *Verfügung Nr. 59/2013. Schulische Sexualerziehung*. Bremen.
- (BR 3) Freie Hansestadt Bremen: Der Senator für Bildung und Wissenschaft (2006). *Bildungsplan für das Gymnasium Jahrgangsstufe 5-10: Englisch*. Bremen.
- (BR 4) Freie Hansestadt Bremen: Die Senatorin für Bildung und Wissenschaft (2008). *Bildungsplan für die gymnasiale Oberstufe Qualifikationsphase: Englisch*. Bremen.

Hamburg (HH)

In 2011, Hamburg has issued a *Bildungsplan* that defines particular cross-curricular tasks as *Aufgabengebiete* which are supposed to be implemented across the various school subjects.

- (HH1) Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg: Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung (1997/2016). *Hamburgisches Schulgesetz (HmbSG)*. Hamburg.

- (HH2) Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg: Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung (2011). *Bildungsplan Gymnasium Sekundarstufe I: Englisch*. Hamburg.
- (HH3) Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg: Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung (2009). *Bildungsplan gymnasiale Oberstufe: Neuere Fremdsprachen*. Hamburg.
- (HH4) Behörde für Schule, Jugend und Berufsbildung Hamburg (1996). *Richtlinien für die Sexualerziehung*. Hamburg.
- (HH5) Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg: Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung (2011a). *Bildungsplan Gymnasium Sekundarstufe I: Aufgabengebiete*. Hamburg.

Hesse (HE)

For Sekundarstufe I at the Gymnasium, there is a joint curriculum for all modern foreign languages. As regards sex education, the general guidelines (*Lehrplan Sexualerziehung*) are coupled with a practical teaching guide (*Handreichungen zur Sexualerziehung an Schulen in Hessen*),

- (HE1) Hessisches Kultusministerium (2005/2015). *Hessisches Schulgesetz*. Wiesbaden.
- (HE2) Hessisches Kultusministerium (2007). *Lehrplan Sexualerziehung*. Wiesbaden.
- (HE3) Hessisches Kultusministerium (2010). *Handreichungen zur Sexualerziehung an Schulen in Hessen*. Wiesbaden.
- (HE 4) Hessisches Kultusministerium (2011). *Bildungsstandards und Inhaltsfelder. Das neue Kerncurriculum für Hessen, Sekundarstufe I - Gymnasium: Moderne Fremdsprachen*. Wiesbaden.
- (HE 5) Hessisches Kultusministerium (2011). *Kerncurriculum gymnasiale Oberstufe: Englisch*. Wiesbaden.

Lower Saxony (LS)

For Lower Saxony, there are no specific guidelines for sex education.

- (LS 1) Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium (1998/2015). *Niedersächsisches Schulgesetz (NSchG)*. Hannover.
- (LS 2) Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium (2015). *Kerncurriculum für das Gymnasium Schuljahrgänge 5-10: Englisch*. Hannover.
- (LS 3) Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium (2015). *Kerncurriculum für das Gymnasium – gymnasiale Oberstufe, die Gesamtschule – gymnasiale Oberstufe, das Fachgymnasium, das Abendgymnasium, das Kolleg: Englisch*. Hannover.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (MV)

The guidelines for sex education are embedded in the more general guidelines for health education (*Gesundheitserziehung*).

- (MV 1) Land Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (2010/2016). *Schulgesetz für das Land Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Schulgesetz - SchulG M-V)*. Schwerin.
- (MV 2) Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (2011). *Rahmenplan Englisch für die Jahrgangsstufen 7 bis 10 am Gymnasium und an der Integrierten Gesamtschule*. Schwerin.
- (MV 3) Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (2015). *Rahmenplan für die Qualifikationsphase der gymnasialen Oberstufe*. Schwerin.
- (MV 4) Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (2015). *Rahmenplan Gesundheitserziehung*. Schwerin.

North Rhine-Westphalia (NR)

- (NR 1) Ministerium für Schule und Weiterbildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (2005/2016). *Schulgesetz für das Land Nordrhein-Westfalen (Schulgesetz NRW - SchulG)*. Frechen: Ritterbach.
- (NR 2) Ministerium für Schule und Weiterbildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (1999). *Richtlinien für die Sexualerziehung in Nordrhein-Westfalen*. Frechen: Ritterbach.
- (NR 3) Ministerium für Schule und Weiterbildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (2007). *Kernlehrplan für den verkürzten Bildungsgang des Gymnasiums – Sekundarstufe I (G8) in Nordrhein-Westfalen: Englisch*. Frechen: Ritterbach.
- (NR 4) Ministerium für Schule und Weiterbildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (2014). *Kernlehrplan für die Sekundarstufe II Gymnasium/Gesamtschule in Nordrhein-Westfalen: Englisch*. Düsseldorf.

Rhineland-Palatinate (RP)

The ELT curriculum for *Sekundarstufe I* combines all different school types in one document.

- (RP 1) Ministerium der Justiz Rheinland-Pfalz (2004/2016). *Schulgesetz (SchulG)*. Mainz.
- (RP 2) Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Jugend und Kultur Rheinland-Pfalz (2009). *Richtlinien zur Sexualerziehung für Schulen in Rheinland-Pfalz*. Mainz.

- (RP 3) Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Weiterbildung Rheinland-Pfalz (2000). *Lehrplan Englisch als erste Fremdsprache (Klassen 5-9/10): Hauptschule, Realschule, Gymnasium, Regionale Schule, Gesamtschule*. Mainz.
- (RP 4) Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Weiterbildung Rheinland-Pfalz (1998). *Lehrplan Englisch: Grund- und Leistungsfach Jahrgangsstufen 11 bis 13 der gymnasialen Oberstufe*. Mainz.

Saarland (SA)

The ELT curricula for the *Gymnasien* in Saarland are issued individually for Year 5 and 6, Year 7 and 8, and Year 9 in the *Sekundarstufe I*, with an additional document framing these individual curricula (*jahrgangsübergreifender Teil*). Similarly, for *Sekundarstufe II*, there is one ELT curriculum for the introductory phase of the *Gymnasiale Oberstufe*, one curriculum for the basic course of the main phase, and one curriculum for the advanced course of the main phase.

- (SA 1) Ministerium der Justiz Saarland (1965/2016). *Gesetz Nr. 812 zur Ordnung des Schulwesens im Saarland*. Saarbrücken.
- (SA 2) Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland (2013). *Richtlinien zur Sexualerziehung an den Schulen des Saarlandes*. Saarbrücken.
- (SA 3) Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland (2014). *Lehrplan Englisch Gymnasium Erste Fremdsprache*. Saarbrücken. [Jahrgangsübergreifender Teil]
- (SA 4) Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland (2014). *Lehrplan Englisch Gymnasium Erste Fremdsprache: Klassenstufen 5 und 6*. Saarbrücken.
- (SA 5) Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland (2014). *Lehrplan Englisch Gymnasium Erste Fremdsprache: Klassenstufen 7 und 8*. Saarbrücken.
- (SA 6) Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland (2014). *Lehrplan Englisch Gymnasium Erste Fremdsprache: Klassenstufe 9*. Saarbrücken.
- (SA 7) Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland (2014). *Lehrplan Englisch 1. und 2. Fremdsprache: Gymnasiale Oberstufe Einführungsphase*. Saarbrücken.
- (SA 8) Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland (2015). *Lehrplan Englisch: Gymnasiale Oberstufe Hauptphase G-Kurs*. Saarbrücken.
- (SA 9) Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur Saarland (2015). *Lehrplan Englisch: Gymnasiale Oberstufe Hauptphase E-Kurs*. Saarbrücken.

Saxony (SX)

For Saxony, there are no separate guidelines for sex education. The ELT curricula for *Sekundarstufe I* and *Sekundarstufe II* of the *Gymnasium* are combined into one document.

- (SX 1) Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus und Sport (2004/2010). *Schulgesetz für den Freistaat Sachsen*. Dresden.

- (SX 2) Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus und Sport (2011). *Lehrplan Gymnasium: Englisch*. Dresden.

Saxony-Anhalt (SA)

In Saxony-Anhalt, the ELT curriculum for the Gymnasium combines both *Sekundarstufe I* and *Sekundarstufe II* in one document. The regulations for sex education are based on a special decree (*Runderlass*) issued by the Ministry of Education in 1996. Additionally, Saxony-Anhalt has issued a general document on competence development and teaching quality at the *Gymnasium* in 2015. This mirrors the cross-curricular *Bildungspläne* passed in other federal states.

- (SA 1) Kultusministerium Sachsen-Anhalt (2013/2016). *Schulgesetz des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt (SchulG LSA)*. Magdeburg.
- (SA 2) Kultusministerium Sachsen-Anhalt (2015). *Lehrplan Gymnasium/Fachgymnasium: Kompetenzentwicklung und Unterrichtsqualität*. Magdeburg.
- (SA 3) Kultusministerium Sachsen-Anhalt (1996). *Sexualerziehung an den allgemeinbildenden und berufsbildenden Schulen des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt: RdErl. des MK vom 2.7.1996*. Magdeburg.
- (SA 4) Kultusministerium Sachsen-Anhalt (2015). *Fachlehrplan Gymnasium/Fachgymnasium: Englisch*. Magdeburg.

Schleswig-Holstein (SH)

For Schleswig-Holstein, there are no separate guidelines for sex education. The ELT curricula for the various school types are combined into one document each (*Sekundarstufe I* and *Sekundarstufe II*).

- (SH 1) Landesregierung Schleswig Holstein (2007/2016). *Schleswig-Holsteinisches Schulgesetz (Schulgesetz - SchulG)*. Kiel.
- (SH 2) Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur des Landes Schleswig-Holstein (1998). *Lehrplan für die Sekundarstufe I der weiterführenden allgemeinbildenden Schulen: Hauptschule, Realschule, Gymnasium, Gesamtschule: Englisch*. Kiel.

- (SH 3) Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur des Landes Schleswig-Holstein (2002). *Lehrplan für die Sekundarstufe II: Gymnasium, Gesamtschule, Fachgymnasium: Englisch*. Kiel.

Thuringia (TH)

Thuringia does not have separate sex education guidelines. The ELT curriculum for the Gymnasium encompasses both levels, *Sekundarstufe I* and *Sekundarstufe II*.

- (TH 1) Thüringer Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur (2003/2016). *Thüringer Schulgesetz (ThürSchulG)*. Erfurt.
- (TH 2) Thüringer Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur (2011). *Lehrplan für den Erwerb der allgemeinen Hochschulreife: Englisch*. Erfurt.

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- Börner, Otfried et al. (Eds.) (2005). *Portobello Road 1*. Braunschweig: Diesterweg.
- Brand, Steffen et al. (Eds.) (2015). *Green Line Oberstufe. Ausgabe für Bayern*. Stuttgart: Klett.
- Claussen, Stephanie et al. (Eds.) (2014). *Camden Town Advanced. Young People: Going Global in the Digital Age. Introduction to Advanced English Skills*. Braunschweig: Diesterweg.
- Edelhoff, Christoph (Ed.) (2007). *Notting Hill Gate 1. Für Klasse 5 an Gesamtschulen und anderen integrierenden Schulformen*. Braunschweig: Diesterweg.
- Edelhoff, Christoph (Ed.) (2006). *Camden Town 1. Englisch für die Realschule und verwandte Schulformen*. Braunschweig: Diesterweg.
- Edelhoff, Christoph (Ed.) (2005). *Portobello Road 1*. Braunschweig: Diesterweg.
- Edelhoff, Christoph/Schmidt, Torben (Eds.) (2015). *Notting Hill Gate 1*. Braunschweig: Diesterweg.
- Hanus, Pamela et al. (Eds.) (2005). *Camden Town 1. Gymnasium*. Braunschweig: Diesterweg.
- Haß, Frank (Ed.) (2005a). *Red Line 1*. Stuttgart: Klett.
- Haß, Frank (Ed.) (2005b). *Orange Line 1*. Stuttgart: Klett.
- Horner, Marion et al. (Eds.) (2009). *Green Line 5*. Stuttgart: Klett.
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- Schwarz, Hellmut (Ed.) (2007a). *English G21. Band A1*. Berlin: Cornelsen.
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