



FACULTY OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

## **Cultural studies in multicultural classrooms: Implementing language and culture-reflexive approaches in language acquisition practice**

How can reflective approaches lead to the advancement of cultural studies in language education for immigrants?

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Supervisor: Giulia Messina Dahlberg

Examiner: Elisabet Öhrn

# Abstract

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**Aim:** This research aims to investigate how the concepts of culture-reflexivity, intercultural citizenship and translanguaging are understood and implemented by language teachers' who teach cultural studies in multicultural classroom settings of immigrant language learners. This is done by engaging with two analytical foci: i) an in-depth examination of the establishment of language and culture-reflexive concepts and the development of intercultural citizenship for immigrant language learners and ii) language teachers' perceptions of these concepts and their reflective thoughts about application in practice.

**Theory:** The study tries to shed light on the development of cultural studies as part of the second language learning curriculum. It offers a brief theoretical outline of intercultural communication and explores how Sociolinguistics broadens our understanding of language acquisition by focusing on the social aspects and the reciprocity of language learning and the construction of (intercultural) identity. An emphasis is set on language- and culture-reflexive approaches and intercultural citizenship development for language learners through cultural studies.

**Method:** Within this research the development of cultural studies as part of language acquisition and the dominant narratives within this field are investigated. The data sets include policy documents, semi-structured teacher interviews and teachers' plannings. Qualitative interviews were conducted with a sample of five teachers of German for immigrants in Austria as a starting point. Nexus analysis was utilized to evaluate interview data, teachers' plannings and policy documents in the sociopolitical context of language learning.

**Results:** The nexus analysis of the data sets indicates that the implementation of language- and culture-reflexive approaches is affected by teachers' multicultural backgrounds, discourses around normative conceptions of culture in policy documents, and limitations through challenging working conditions in the language courses offered by the Austrian Integration Fond (ÖIF).

## **List of Abbreviations**

L2 Second language

LT /LTs Language teacher(s )

MIPEX Migrant Integration Policy Index

NA Nexus analysis

SDG Sustainable development goal

TL Translanguaging

ÖIF Austrian Integration Fond

## **List of Appendices**

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

In a progressively globalized and interlinked world, intercultural communication has become increasingly important since transnational mobility is strongly linked to communication between different cultures. It has emerged as an omnipresent part of society's consciousness regarding communicative practices (MacDonald, 2020). Voluntary and involuntary migration flows have shaped the debates around concepts of interculturalism and multilingualism and they have amplified the dichotomy of majority and minority groups in national states. However, there are numerous ways to define, talk about and conceptualize these phenomena (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). Worldwide collaborations in economy, politics, and education as well as migration led to a significant rise in reflections on intercultural issues, especially in the Global North. One of these debates concerns successful communication between interacting agents of intercultural communication practices.

Marginalized groups, like immigrants, are the topic of public, political, and educational debates in many Western states. Migration movements are part of social debates, and they are often politically loaded. Predominant discourses are concerned with symbolic boundaries, how they are defined and how differences and inequalities within these boundaries should be approached (Söhner, 2022). Some examples of symbolic boundaries are limitations regarding social and political participation, access to sufficient education and employment and first language use. Global migration movements have led to discussions around the rights of minority groups, for example about the use of their native languages, and nationalistic views have been promoted in contrast to democratic values of freedom, individual rights, and diversity (Byram & Golubeva, 2020).

Recently, the term *diversity* has gained popularity in different fields, including educational settings and institutions, to address and represent a variety of actors within them. However, inflationary use of this term and the categories attached to it runs the risk of exacerbating boundaries like majorities/minorities, migrant/native, first/second language, just to name a few. This phenomenon might lead to the reproduction of stereotypes and *othering* by defining individuals or groups as outsiders and ascribing different attributions to them through the construction of self (in-group) and other (out-group) (Brons, L., 2015). Thus, it is essential to understand how and why we are accustomed to certain ways of doing and being within specific contexts when examining intricate representations of cultures, languages, and identities.

These representations are closely linked to our language through the way of representing, interpreting, and making meaning concerning ourselves and the social context we are embedded in (Byrd Clark, 2020). Even though notions of *the other* do not merely consist of a repertoire of prejudices and stereotypes, most people apply patterns of interpretation which are common to them, especially in unfamiliar situations. This leads to the necessity of reflexive approaches to develop meta-cognitive thinking skills to successfully navigate the complexities of debates around language, culture, and identity (Groenewold, 2005).

According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2022), the number of people moving across national borders continues to grow; there are an estimated 281 million international migrants in the world, which affects countries and communities worldwide.

For instance, Statistik Austria (2022) states that 2.240.300 people out of 9.106.126 Austrian citizens have an immigrant background. However, Austria has one of the most restrictive policies concerning access to nationality. The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX, n.d.), which measures policies for migrants' integration, states that out of 38 monitored countries, only a few of them offered adequate language courses of the majority language. Scoring 46 points out of 100 on the MIPEX scale (2022) shows that there are many challenges in Austria for immigrants aiming for full participation; major obstacles being access to nationality, family reunion and political participation.

As this study is particularly concerned with how migrants are integrated into society in Austria with a focus on the provision of language courses in the majority language, let us dig deeper into the formalities around the acquisition of a permanent residence permit for immigrants. To acquire the right to permanent residency or Austrian citizenship, immigrants must meet the following preconditions, as stated on the Austrian government's homepage *Mein Österreich – Vorbereitung zur Staatsbürgerschaft* (My Austria - Preparation for citizenship): The first requirement is a proof of German language skills at the B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Furthermore, proof of basic knowledge of the democratic order and the basic principles that can be derived from it, as well as the history of Austria and the respective federal state is necessary. This is tested in an exam about the themes of the value and orientation course in which immigrants participate.

Language skills and communicative competence of immigrants as a condition for granting citizenship through formal assessment comes in the first place. Stating this point as the first out of many demands is indicative of the focus the Austrian government puts on language acquisition and assessment. Heinemann (2017) states that the traditional discourses around migration in Germany and Austria set a focus on language acquisition as the base for successful integration. Furthermore, according to the CEFR, skill level B1 describes a rather advanced independent use of the language that provides the picture of a speaker who can speak fluently, understand the main ideas of abstract and complex texts, and write argumentative texts about a variety of different topics. Austria's only official language is German but there are seven recognized minority languages: Hungarian, Slovenian, Croatian, Czech, Slovak, Romany, and sign language (UN Working paper, 2004, p.2). The increased arrival of immigrants shows the importance of re-evaluating the notion of being a predominantly monolingual country. In the context of formal language courses for immigrants in Austria, educators are faced with a multitude of different languages and cultural backgrounds in their heterogeneous classrooms.

Apart from learning language skills, the national frame curriculum for German as a second language (L2) highlights the importance of considering learners' multilingualism, the development of their intercultural competence as well as cultural studies within classroom practice. In the context of German language acquisition, German as an L2 means teaching German as a majority language within predominantly German-speaking countries, including Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. German as a foreign language means teaching German internationally.

Nonetheless, successfully evaluating learners' language skills and intercultural competence is a difficult matter and linking positive results in language exams to the granting (or not) of permanent residency or citizenship potentially increases the pressure that language students and teachers feel. Several demands for citizenship are connected to notions of political, thus democratic integrity, value systems, questions of moral and good intentions, with a focus on protecting democratic values, peace and what is called "the interest of the Republic". This relates to the requirement of no significant interference with international relations and no damage to the interests of the Republic, an affirmative attitude towards the Republic of Austria and ensuring that there is no danger to public peace, order, and security.



When applying for Austrian citizenship the applicant's previous citizenship will be withdrawn, as far as this is possible and reasonable; thus, it is generally not possible to have dual citizenship when becoming an Austrian citizen. This might indicate a disavowing attitude towards the concept of intercultural citizenship, forcing immigrants to choose between their previous and Austrian citizenship, hence, depriving them of the chance to preserve their rights as citizens of two or more countries.

## 1.1 Thesis aim and research questions

This study aims to give teachers a voice by identifying their perceptions of culture, language and intercultural citizenship education and the challenges they experience in the language acquisition classroom. This is done by investigating how language teachers talk about their needs when integrating curricular requirements and individual theoretical knowledge of intercultural communication into their teaching practice. Furthermore, it aims to critically investigate terminology within the field of language acquisition by analyzing policy guidelines concerning cultural studies to focus on the socio-political conditions which shape discourse in the field of language education for immigrants in the Austrian context. Hence, the study focuses on reflexivity in both a theoretical and methodological way, by reflecting on the development of new approaches towards language and culture and by making teachers reflect upon how they teach culture. The following research questions guide the investigation reported in this thesis:

1. What are the main challenges language teachers experience when teaching cultural studies in multicultural classrooms for immigrants?
2. In what ways do language teachers report that they implement curricular and policy guidelines concerning cultural studies into their teaching practice?
3. In what ways do language teachers reflect upon language- and culture-reflexive approaches in relation to their teaching practice?

## 1.2 Outline

The present thesis begins with offering a short introduction about current debates in the field of intercultural communication, previous research which highlights the relevance of the development of cultural studies in language education and the three research questions this thesis wishes to address. Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical framework summarizing key concepts within intercultural communication. The focus lies on the concepts of culture-reflexivity, translanguaging (TL) and intercultural citizenship education. In Chapter 3 the methodology including the method of data collection is discussed by outlining nexus analysis (NA) as a tool for analyzing data generated through interviews, teachers' plannings and policy documents. Chapter 4 includes the analysis of the empirical data regarding cultural studies and the perspectives on policy documents focusing on the discursive power structures of the curricular guidelines for immigrant students of cultural studies. The findings of this nexus analysis are discussed in Chapter 5. The final Chapter 6 focuses on the conclusions and limitations of this study along with recommendations for further research within this field.

## 1.3 Previous research

Language teachers (LTs) are mediating agents who often aim to not only equip their students with a (recent) migration background with language skills of a state majority language(s) but also to enable them to actively participate in present discourse by engaging - as intercultural citizens - in their new countries of residence. Within teaching practice, LTs' assumptions and perceptions concerning communicative behaviors and what the specific needs of their students are, significantly affect classroom practice (Mahon & Cushner, 2020).

Predominant models of regional and cultural studies used to be normative, stable and conceptual (Altmayer, 2002). This shows similarities to former stable notions of language as being distinct; nonetheless, a changed perception has emerged and won popularity in recent years, namely that multilingual people have a linguistic repertoire, rather than separate languages. According to Rontu (2005, p.15), multilingualism research previously focused on much on language dominance and what she calls the "language separation process" instead of considering the various semiotic competencies of multilingual speakers.

However, while studies of languages and in particular language acquisition, hence, processes of language learning, have been focused upon in research and have a long research tradition, teaching and learning about culture have been given less attention in the past. It was not until 2005 and 2006 that the first two departments focusing on cultural studies in German language acquisition were established in Bielefeld and Leipzig (Koreik, 2011). Altmayer (2002) remarks that cultural studies within studies of German as a foreign language lack in-depth academic investigation and theoretical reflection. He critically mentions that the most problematic issue with cultural studies in language acquisition is that it relies on ideas of what he calls *Kulturstandards* (cultural standards).

There is a risk that non-scientific stereotypes are provided with a new pseudo-scientific legitimation under the cloak of the concept of cultural standards. Furthermore, culture-comparative approaches likely reproduce and reinforce cliché patterns. Similarly, Heinemann (2017) critically mentions, how the concept of a distinct German cultural identity which is called *Leitkultur* (leading culture) establishes a subtle hierarchy to foster conservative discourses around migration. While many European states wish to portray a picture of democratic nations with emancipated citizens, nationalistic ideas of nation-states are often reproduced in language acquisition curricula affecting classroom practice.

Hence, Altmayer (2002) highlights the necessity for (inter)cultural language acquisition to be established as an individual scientific discipline. Furthermore, language and culture studies are an interdisciplinary research field and *reflexivity* has become increasingly important in recent years (Kramersch, 1998). In the last decade, a shift from mere knowledge transfer about countries and cultures and comparative approaches to a more reflexive view of culture has taken place and is displayed in novel research about cultural studies in intercultural classrooms. Researchers like Altmayer (2004, 2017), Fornoff (2017) and Koreik (2011) have noted that cultural studies are on the way to developing into an autonomous scientific sub-discipline of second language education.

However, they identify four main factors which negatively influence the development of cultural studies within language education: the small number of actors within the field, the great effort of conducting longitudinal empirical research, poor career prospects related to this specialization and that there is no clear research paradigm for methodological data collection and analysis. This leads to a lack of a critical mass of empirical research and only a small number of studies which have been conducted quite recently.

### 1.3.1 The empirical turn

During the last decade the research topic of cultural studies has gained more attention and as a result has undergone a fundamental repositioning – a so-called *empirical turn* coined by Altmayer (2002) or *cultural turn* (Schweiger, 2022) - shifting the focus from learning goals and thematic questions and skills to reflexive approaches towards the whole teaching and learning process (Fornoff, 2015). This paradigm shift in cultural studies focuses on “the processual, discursive, and symbolic character of culture” and critically investigates questions like who uses the term culture, how is it conceptualized, by whom and why (Schweiger, 2022, p.389).

Current research recommends encouraging students to use their cultural and linguistic repertoires as valuable resources and it urges LTs to critically engage with terminology like culture and language and relating phenomena like stereotypes, othering, marginalization, and foreignness. Canagarajah (2006) suggests equipping language students with pragmatic strategies by building metalinguistic awareness since their advanced understanding of diverse meanings of words is part of the cultural capital of multilingual language learners. In contrast to monolinguals - who expect similarity - bi-/multilinguals are more successful in classifying differences. As Gracia and Lin (2016) state, the use of a speaker’s whole linguistic repertoire as well as linguistic flexibility results in individual linguistic forms that transcend the links to specific nation-states or languages. In line with this approach, Byram and Golubeva (2020) emphasize how *languaculture* illustrates that language is not mandatorily bound to certain values, beliefs, and behaviors. Everyone has their own languaculture, an individual language mix of spoken languages, dialects, and sociolects. An individual’s language generally offers a broad mix of different variations depending on the situation and the people involved (Magnusson, 2015). This idea of a personal language identity be transferred to cultural identities, making migrants intercultural citizens whose identities constantly change based on new experiences.

From the early 2000s onwards, cultural studies have been renamed and new approaches to learning about and teaching culture have been developed. In times of globalization and increased mobility, movements of thought, perceptions and actions are constantly changing (Schweiger, 2022).

When researching questions related to culture, navigating between the two poles of cultural essentialism, which categorizes people as either inside or outside a cultural community, and multiculturalism, which promotes a cosmopolitan notion of cultures, becomes necessary. Within these poles, negotiation of meaning, re-conceptualizations and a re-evaluation of terminology take place. There has been what Koreik (2009) calls – “a fight about the term” - since the development of new approaches concerning cultural studies asks for re-naming the discipline in line with re-conceptualizing them.

What Byram and Golubeva (2020, p.75) call “learning about culture” and German research calls *Landeskunde* (country knowledge), i.e., teaching factual knowledge about the country, neither involves individual identification nor does it evolve reflexive learning skills: it is merely focusing on facts. It conceptualizes culture as something fixed, factual, and stable which can be taught and learned. While there certainly are facts about countries - e.g., the capital city, resident numbers, languages spoken – learning them is only one dimension and misses the complexities of cultural plurality within nation states. *Landeskunde* can be described as regional and cultural studies of German-speaking countries with a focus on German culture. It is a central part of textbooks for German language acquisition. A major problem with this concept that aims to provide an objective factual portrayal of culture is that it creates a picture of a dominant group of citizens and a rigid set of expectations of what to be and what to do. According to Byrd Clark (2011, p.28) these conceptions of “one people, one country” are grounded in 19<sup>th</sup>-century imperialistic ideas of identity which link individuals to their national states and neglect the impacts of various social influences.

The notion of one national culture which can be described and defined leads to dichotomous and narrow perspectives of “us” versus “others” and represents a homogenous picture of a country’s norms, values, and beliefs (Koreik, 2011). Similarly, teaching the standard variety of a language dismisses the linguistic plurality each country displays. Thus, *Landeskunde* can only convey factual knowledge without a deeper understanding due to the simplified representation of complex matters. However, there has been a shift away from using the *Landeskunde* approach for teaching culture. In a longitudinal study from 1992 to 2009 (Pietzuch, 2011) the use of the term *Landeskunde* in textbooks, research publications and anthologies has significantly declined from 2004 to 2009 and has been replaced by *interkulturelles Lernen* (intercultural studies) shifting the focus from learning about a country to debates about cultural interpretative patterns and the relativity of cultural perspectives.

Still, there are some critical voices concerning this new approach. For example, Altmayer (2004) criticized the premise of intercultural theories of fundamental differences between cultures of homogenous national states. Thus, intercultural studies generally involve phenomena which are in conflict with common behaviors and beliefs and moreover, contrast and compare them. This approach uses misunderstandings and differences to investigate cultural identities and enter into a dialogue based on mutual understanding and respect. Nonetheless, intercultural studies may also risk reproducing stereotypes and othering by indifferently ascribing personal beliefs and behaviors to cultural backgrounds (Byram and Golubeva, 2020). This approach resembles Kramsch's (2004, p.36) idea that what she called "motivated signs" can cohere into stereotypes which are based on subjective images and emotions rather than on rational thinking. On the other hand, this comparative approach towards different perceptions and how they shape language learning, and the development of intercultural skills could offer valuable insights and affect teaching and learning (Gronewold, 2005). Hence, a reflective approach towards comparative practices is essential to avoid the reproduction of stereotypes and intercultural misunderstandings. This balancing act includes asking the question: Which benefits does comparing countries have regarding a specific topic?

Educational research about interculturality is not primarily concerned with comparative practices but with possibilities of reconstruction and reflection of innovative social practices and changing pluralistic societies. This development led to the genesis of a more open and inclusive approach to cultural studies, by implementing culture-reflective learning (Byram & Golubeva, 2020). More recent research has critically questioned to what extent cultures, cultural identities and languages can and should be seen as distinct terms, which has led to the concepts of *Kulturreflexivität* (culture-reflexivity), intercultural citizenship and TL, which will be investigated in this study.

### 1.3.2 Culture-reflexive approaches

The German term *Kulturreflexivität* (culture-reflexivity) has been established to address the difficulties when it comes to homogenized perspective when teaching culture in language acquisition classes. Researchers like Altmayer (2002, 2004, 2010), Fornoff (2015), Koreik (2011), Schweiger, Hägi and Döll (2015; 2021) have studied culture-reflexive approaches in the context of German as a second/foreign language, highlighting the necessity of continuous and in-depth processes of reflection.

These approaches aim to acknowledge a multicultural and multilingual reality by being aware of the complexity of cultural and linguistic concepts and identities and by enabling language students to be active intercultural citizens. Several German-speaking scholars highlight the shift from normative ideas about cultures to more flexible notions of what they call *kulturelle Deutungsmuster* (cultural patterns of interpretation). These cultural patterns of interpretations are implicitly applied in communicative situations (Altmayer, 2010; Koreik 2011; Fornoff et al. 2017). Similarly, Kramersch (2018, p.19) points out that culture can be described as “portable schemas of interpretations of actions” which evolve and develop in time and space, especially when migrating to other countries. When constructing cultural and institutional norms, people aim to explain, promote, and legitimate their own behavioral and interpretational patterns (Söhner, 20022). According to Koreik it is vital to reconstruct these cultural patterns of interpretation and therefore to be “raising the implicit to an explicit level and hence, making it visible” (2011, p.586). This notion of cultural studies is in line with the reflexive approaches towards culture and language outlined above.

Still, recent research has found a discrepancy between academic debates about culture and language and the implementation of more reflexive approaches into textbooks, teacher education and curricula. Concerning the representation of culture in textbooks, Brunsing (2016) conducted a qualitative analysis of textbooks for German as a foreign/second language which focused on illustrations relating to cultural studies and how these images have changed from 2000 to 2010. The number of pictures has not changed significantly; however, they offer a larger variety of functions from 2006 onwards; these functions include creating a vivid image, memory support, transfer of information and offering potential for discussion. A striking feature of most illustrations within tasks to support language learning was the comparative approach towards it, hence, talking about visual images of “German culture” followed by a counter-question about the culture of language learners. Pictures showing what is considered traditional German/Austrian clothing, traditions, or food were provided as a representation of a normative notion and commonly followed by the question “What do you traditionally wear/celebrate/eat in your home country?”. These questions, even though being legitimate and of interest to language students, counteract reflexive practices and should not be the only encounter with cultural studies as they encourage dichotomous views of majority vs. minority or us vs. them and incorrectly imply that cultures are fixed, stable and simple to describe.

When considering that culture-reflexive approaches towards cultural studies have only developed from the late 2000s onwards, it makes sense that these approaches are not yet reflected in most textbooks. Additionally, common notions and ideas about how to teach about countries and their cultures are reflected in textbooks and other written media; the empirical turn in cultural studies is not yet successfully displayed (Goenewold, 2005).

Also, teacher education programs, which strive to educate critical and reflexive professionals, have not yet focused on the problems of the focus on comparative intercultural practices since “unconscious beliefs and attitudes regarding the legitimacy of the dominant social order and the resulting unequal power relations among cultural groups at the school and classroom level has, by and large, historically not been acknowledged in mainstream teacher education programs” (Bartolome, 2004, p.9). Schweiger (2022) has investigated materials and tasks developed by prospective teachers in Austria relating to the term *home* which were published on the homepage of the National Center of Competence focused on Education in the context of migration and multilingualism (BIMM Bildung im Kontext von Migration und Mehrsprachigkeit, 2021). In preparation for this task, it has been important for the teachers to be encouraged to critically reflect on textbooks and learning materials and work with social mechanisms related to cultural studies.

### 1.3.3 Limitations and possibilities for LTs

Cultural studies as a part of the frame curriculum of language courses specifically offer the potential to critically engage with misconceptions, stereotypes and attributions to multilinguals and their cultural backgrounds. Another difficult factor concerning the investigation of German and Austrian cultural studies is the lasting impression of the Second World War. Especially in countries that have suffered under the German occupation, negative associations, and patterns of interpretations might be activated and affect learning processes (Groenewold, 2005).

Hence, it is important to reflect upon the fact that teaching is not a neutral, apolitical process but embedded in ideological social settings. Addressing bilingual and multilingual language speakers, the term *translanguaging* (TL) was coined by Baker (2011) and further developed by Garcia (2014; 2016). The TL approach aims to surpass the traditional divide of languages and explains how “multilingual language users mediate complex social and cognitive activities through strategic employment of multiple semiotic resources” (Hua & Wei, 2020, p.234).



From a monolingual stance, language is conceptualized as pure, stable, and definite and can be seen as a linguistically exclusive category. Teachers who are aware of new approaches like culture-reflexive teaching and TL when working in a multilingual and multicultural classroom could approach learning goals differently and aim for teaching practice which relies on current research and potentially improved teaching practice and learning conditions for immigrant language learners.

A limiting factor may be that cultural stereotypes and bias can implicitly steer peoples' image of intercultural interaction and LTs, even though they are educated professionals, can be equally prone to prejudice relating to cultural backgrounds and languages. Language- and culture-reflexive concepts challenge common terms like *culture* and *language* by taking a critical stance on the simplification of these multi-layered terms. Liddicoat and Scarino call "limited perspectives that lead to a narrow view of cultures with limited usefulness of ongoing learning" (2013, p.21) the main threat to cultural studies. The capability to act and mediate between languages and cultures is considered intercultural competence. It furthermore includes the ability to put observable behaviors into context by tacitly understanding what lies beyond them (Byram & Golubeva, 2020). However, this approach may reinforce boundaries rather than help teachers to successfully navigate the complexities of intercultural communication. Therefore, it is important to integrate cultural as well as numerous other factors into the teaching practice in multicultural groups; the aim is to successfully navigate "culturally different contexts and to manage interactions in multicultural settings that represent such sociocultural factors as race, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, socioeconomics and language" (Mahon & Cushner, 2020, p.428). Hence, there is a multitude of factors which influence learners' behavior and communication patterns. Nationality, for example, is only one dimension of cultural identity, while cultural identity is only one dimension of social identity. Fornoff (2015) highlights that students are not representatives of their cultures, but individuals, who are affected by numerous influences, cultural ones as well as economic, social, and political. As Zou mentions, the principle of negotiation is essential for intercultural communication since:

*The principle (of negotiation) enables us to focus on individuals taking part in interactions along with their agency rather than cultural groups: on the here-and-now nature of interactions rather than assumed or predicted course of actions; on the resources individuals bring with them rather than problems; and on the process rather than the outcome. (2015, p.1)*

Another important issue is the latent hierarchy of languages as certain languages are considered more valuable for educational performance and work opportunities. This phenomenon even goes as far as *Linguicism*, the stigmatization and discrimination of people based on the language(s) they speak. This includes giving people limited access to power and resources and can refer to languages and dialects as well as the complexity, modality, and syntax of speech. (Mahon & Cushner, 2020; Skutnabb Kangas, 2015). LTs should ideally be aware of linguistic discrimination like the one described above. They should also be able to value languages from diverse groups equally and have a positive attitude towards linguistic diversity. Furthermore, educators should strive to facilitate intercultural citizenship and prepare their students for practical matters and current debates (Byram & Golubeva, 2020). Nonetheless, LTs are not solely responsible for critically debating power structures, it is a collective responsibility of society which requires the commencement of appropriate structures (Schweiger, 2022).

As a teaching strategy, Mahon and Cushner (2020) mention the relevance of establishing good relationships and the practice of collective meaning-making. Moreover, they recommend demanding thematic content to encourage higher-level thinking and enable valuable communicative exchanges. This can create an atmosphere of respect, a sense of belonging and meaningful social relations. Another goal of teaching cultural studies is to create a safe sphere for intercultural communication practices. According to the Council of Europe (2008), successful intercultural dialogue can prevent ethnic, cultural, and linguistic divides by dealing with diverse identities in a democratic and constrictive way based on common universal values.

All LTs are impacted by political and sociocultural systems but should ideally work professionally as “sophisticated and critical thinkers, interculturally skilled mediators, who enable learning to occur for everyone” (Mahon & Cushner, 2020, p.427). However, Rellstab (2021) has conducted a study among German language teachers and university educators who participated in a workshop relating to interculturality research which showed that even though most actors within higher education have realized the intricacy of defining culture, they return to simplistic and stereotyping notions of it in daily talk. In his analysis of talk-in-action he discovered that when trying to define culture the educators were talking in a careful, thorough, and attentive manner, yet, when telling personal stories, they reproduced stereotypes based on simplistic perspectives. This practice undermines the strive for a suitable definition of culture and a non-essentialist, reflexive approach towards cultural studies.

However, as Kramersch (2004) points out, post-structuralist perspectives of culture and language do not aim to perceive them as purely discursive and relative terms without any boundaries. It rather wishes to acknowledge the importance of reflecting upon historically determined, stable notions of the terms as a shared understanding of a common group or stable language to be able to open up for more complex and reflexive understandings. This study wishes to engage with LTs' understandings of culture-reflexivity and TL and to invite them to reflect on how they implement these theoretical approaches, as well as what they perceive as challenging and limiting.

This literature review is primarily based on German and Austrian literature, especially when outlining the development of culture-reflexive approaches. While this may result in limitations regarding the provision of a holistic and comprehensive picture of previous research about cultural studies in language acquisition classes there are some reasons for this focus, which will be further explained: The Austrian context of the study, the practical aspect of language accessibility, and gaps in existing English literature.

The study focuses on the experiences and reflections of LT in an Austrian context, therefore the focus on German research adds to the understanding of this specific setting, as the critical discussion of the predominant term *Landeskunde* (cultural studies), which is still used and anchored in German debates about how to teach culture, has been investigated on an academic level. Due establishment of the more nuanced culture-reflexive approaches many German articles have been published about the necessity of re-defining language and culture by adding a more reflexive approach which aims at looking at the intricacy of these terms and discourses around them. From the early 2000s onwards this discussion of culture-reflexivity has become more important in research about how to teach the cultural aspects within German language acquisition classes. In the search for the terms *Kulturreflexivität* and *kulturreflexives Lernen* significantly more peer-reviewed articles were provided than in the search for the English equivalent *culture-reflexivity* and *culture-reflexive learning*. However, to discuss my specific research question and the previous research, a focus on the development of language-and culture reflexivity and being precise with distinguishing for example *Landeskunde* and *Kulturreflexivität* made it necessary to discuss articles which specifically mention and discuss these concepts as they do justice to the linguistic nuances that may not be captured in English literature using other related concepts.

## 1.4 Background

As mentioned in a previous section, an important requirement for residency and/or citizenship and thus formal integration in the Austrian society is the acquisition of language skills (B1 level in CEFR). This requires formal educational programmes, run by LTs.

In Austria, L2 education is organized by two different political actors depending on the age of learners. Language learning goals and curricular standards for immigrant children fall under the responsibility of the *Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung* (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research). It offers a curriculum for the school's so-called *Deutschförderklassen* (German language support classrooms) which were established in 2018/2019 by the reigning conservative party ÖVP (Austrian Peoples' Party) as separate classrooms for children with insufficient knowledge of German. A standardized test determines whether children will be taught in these separate classes for up to four school terms. For adult immigrants, who are exempt from compulsory schooling, the *Österreichischer Integrationsfond* (ÖIF, Austrian Integration Fonds) oversees a frame curriculum and guidance for teachers of German as an L2. Cultural studies are a part of the Austrian L2 learning frame curriculum by the ÖIF and are called "value and orientation course". These courses could potentially foster language students' ability for self-reflection regarding their (inter)cultural identities. Yet, one main challenge is currently the mode of learning about cultures and countries which is applied in language acquisition classrooms.

Language acquisition for immigrants takes place in settings where participants with multicultural and various linguistic backgrounds focus on the common goal of learning or improving the majority language of their new country of residence. Such a pedagogical setting requires LTs to have knowledge not only about the taught language and pedagogical methods but also about intercultural communication. Since theoretical knowledge is insufficient, LTs must imply a critical and analytical perspective of sociolinguistic debates such as language and power, cultural norms, and the generalization of educational standards (Mahon & Cushner, 2020). They need to obtain a critical consciousness of economic and sociopolitical factors on a macro-level which influence academic performance in classrooms on a micro-level (Bartolome, 2004).

From their side, language learners face numerous challenges on their path towards communicative competence. The identity work put to relocate and navigate in unfamiliar settings and situations can intensify insecurities (La Barbera, 2015). Furthermore, the feeling of speechlessness can be a daunting experience and negatively impact adult migrants' identities; thus, an awareness of the challenges their adult learners are facing is important for their understanding and progress as professional educators. Language skills enable immigrant adult learners to fight feelings of speechlessness and provide them with the relevant communicative skills to actively participate in ongoing debates. The teachers who participated in this study are newly educated teachers of German as a second/foreign language and are based in Austria. They have participated in a part-time continuous education course (30 ECTS) offered by the Postgraduate Center of the University of Vienna. Most participants who entered the program have already taught German and wanted to further enhance their theoretical knowledge. One module out of six was the topic of Culture, Identity and Migration with two independent seminars focusing on migration processes, culture-reflexive learning, and intercultural identity. During the seminar, recent theoretical concepts like culture-reflective learning, TL and intercultural citizenship were focused upon and discussed to implement language- and culture-reflexive concepts into teaching practice.

As these approaches have developed recently there is a research gap in the investigation of the implementation into teaching practice. To contribute to the development of the new approaches I would like to examine the challenges, limitations, and possibilities that LTs of German as an L2 report and furthermore set a focus on the integration of policy guidelines stated in the frame curriculum of the ÖIF.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

Language, culture, and identity are closely intertwined concepts. These concepts are presented and examined through a post-structuralist, sociolinguistic lens to offer a theoretical background for recent approaches like culture-reflexivity, intercultural citizenship, and TL. A post-structuralist view critically questions what is considered truth or factual knowledge and is the base for language-and culture-reflective approaches. This perspective views language as a social semiotic tool which both constructs and articulates human thoughts. It sets a focus on reflexivity and underlying power structures by considering “who speaks to whom about what under which circumstances” (Kramersch, 2018, p.18).

Sociolinguistics is an interdisciplinary area of linguistics which focuses on the social, cultural, and political significance of linguistic systems and, the connection between ways of speaking and the determination of ascribed social identities (Blommaert, 2006, Duff, 2012; Liu, 2023). It sheds light on the culturally and socially embedded character of language (Byrd Clark, 2020). In this chapter, I aim to outline what is meant by culture-reflexivity, intercultural citizenship, and TL. Therefore, in this thesis, a sociolinguistics perspective can help to understand the intertwining of language, culture and new theoretical debates around these terms as will be discussed in the coming sections of this chapter.

### 2.1 A sociolinguistic perspective

In an increasingly globalized world, language phenomena must be put into context – historically, culturally, politically, and socially. More diverse post-industrial societies have led to a growing number of bi- and multilingual speakers with various cultural backgrounds through the dismantling of national and linguistic borders, while at the same time, there has been a rise in monolingual nationalistic worldviews (Kramersch, 2018). Sociolinguistics is concerned with how language functions in social situations, linguistic variations and how language becomes part of our social identity (Labov, 1966). Language acquisition recently experienced what Liu calls “a social turn” (2023, p.19) challenging the dominant perception of language learning being a cognitive, context-neutral task for individual learners. According to Magnusson (2015, p.126) the act of “speaking, and, by implication, thinking” are “fundamentally social” practices. The way people think represents and mediates the way they talk and vice versa.

Languages, in sociolinguistics, are thus perceived as hybrid and emergent. However, mainstream approaches to language teaching and learning are based on postcolonial modernist notions of homogeneity and languages as mutually excluding systems based on specific codes and rules (Blommaert, 2010). Canagaraja takes this idea even further by raising awareness for the wisdom of precolonial countries of the Global South regarding multilingual societies:

*The wisdom of language practices in precolonial communities shouldn't be ignored. We have to learn how communication worked in contexts of rampant multilingualism and inveterate hybridity in traditional communities before European modernity suppressed this knowledge in order to develop systems of commonality based on categorization, classification, and codification.*

(2006, p.238)

Taking the knowledge and wisdom of precolonial societies into account, seemingly new and modern approaches like culture-reflexivity and TL, established by scholars of the Global North show a lot of similarities to pre-colonial traditional communities of the Global South. Thus, including this pre-existing knowledge in academic research, supporting, and encouraging researchers from the Global South to participate in this ongoing debate could add a new perspective and valuable insights when discussing multilingual matters.

## 2.2 Terminological issues

This study focuses on German teachers' self-reported reflections on teaching immigrants in Austria and how the subtopic of cultural studies in language acquisition classes is framed in policy documents. One important step in this process consists of the critical analysis of terminology within the field of second language acquisition. The establishment of terminology and the naming of phenomena is an act of power and should be open for discussion. But how can we investigate themes connected to language and culture while being critical of these very terms? From a sociolinguistic perspective, wherein language is interconnected with society and Byrd Clark's (2009, p.5) notion of language ideally being conceptualized as "discourses of language rather than language", this thesis highlights the importance of a reflective stance when talking about both language and culture to avoid strictly set and authoritative representations of these terms.

Following this line of thought, reflective approaches like TL and culture-reflexivity aim to reconstitute the notion of language and culture by re-conceptualizing them. In language acquisition research the term *mother tongue* has been widely replaced by *first language* to describe the language of highest proficiency. Yet, naming languages by ranking them as first, second, third, and so on does not acknowledge language proficiency as a fluid and dynamic process (Rydenvald, 2018). Furthermore, Byrd Clark (2009) critically mentions how disputable terms like mother tongue, L1/L2/L3, foreign language, additional language and connected notions of linguistic competency are hierarchical and deficit oriented.

The established term second language (L2) learning for immigrants should be critically reviewed, not only in relation to Rydenvald's criticism but also because many immigrant students are not monolingual. Therefore, calling it German for multilingual students seems a more accurate and authentic description. As Duff (2012) points out, immigrant language learners have often been described with terms focusing on supposed deficits like interlanguage speakers, non-native speakers, or heritage-language learners. In contrast, terms like multilinguals, multicompetent speakers or lingua franca users portray their linguistic competence quite differently. Hence, the term L2 will be used only when referring to contexts in which it is established such as policy documents like the German as a L2 curriculum or when teachers refer to themselves as L2 teachers.

## 2.3 Culture-reflexivity

Culture has been conceptualized as norms of societies and national attributes in the past (Hofstede, 1984). It is a historically transferred system defined by concepts which people utilize to preserve, evolve, and share knowledge, beliefs, moralities, customs, and habits as a member of a social group (Delpechitre & Baker, 2017; Jurásek & Wawrosz, 2023). Hansen (2000) is critical of conceptualizations that define culture as collective standardized habits and expands this definition by stating that there is a multitude of intertwined collectives. He distinguishes simple monocollectives, more complex multicollectives, national-state and globally organized collectives; all these intersecting dimensions offer potential for identity construction. Similarly, Kramersch (2014) argues for overcoming modernist concepts which define culture based on belonging to discourse communities that share a collective history and social space. Negotiations of meanings in social interaction are a vital part of cultural studies and combine the theories that make the theoretical grounding of this thesis.



According to Kramersch (2014, p.31), a sociolinguistic approach towards culture is based on the following question: “How is culture co-constructed by participants in interaction, i.e., how do they read one another and how do they play the social game?”

Kramersch furthermore highlights how people with the same cultural background may still interpret historical events differently which can lead to debates and conflicts within national boundaries (Kramersch, 2018). According to Rojek (2007), a modern understanding of the term culture includes dual social meanings: evaluative and narrative. The evaluative meaning relates to culture as a culmination of artistic, intellectual, and scientific achievements, making it hierarchical by nature since these achievements are linked to elite or ruling class occupation. The narrative meaning of culture refers to a cluster of beliefs, values, traditions, customs, practices, and ways of life which are considered typical for a certain group of people. However, new perspectives on the myth of a homogenous sovereign cultural group should be adopted, since cultural communities are not merely steered by solid structures and rigid boundaries (Canagarajah, 2006). Scholars like Liddicoat and Scarino (2013, p.17) suggest a more nuanced view on culture in language education stating that “culture has always played a major role in language education, nonetheless, how culture has been handled, has often happened in constrained ways.” When approaching culture in language learning, numerous different understandings could be incorporated, and a critical stance should be taken towards the perspective of a definable national culture.

This study investigates teachers’ intercultural awareness and their capability to act as reflecting professionals. It wishes to focus on *reflexivity* theoretically by investigating the genesis of modern culture – and language-reflective approaches, as well as methodologically by looking at reflexivity as an important part of teaching, researching, and analyzing. There are multiple interpretations of the term *reflexivity*. Most commonly it entails the notion of being aware, analytical and to some extent open to transformation and the process of becoming. Reflexivity questions dichotomous modes of thinking by trying to consistently move between established concepts and notions of Self and Other. It moves away from positivistic views of rational, objective, scientific perceptions, and hegemonic discourse (Byrd Clark, 2020). This has important implications when looking at the conceptualization of culture as well as the formation of an individual’s languages and social identity.

As Groenewold (2005) states, cultural studies are concerned with investigating previous encounters and concentrate on historically grown images of self and the other and promote *reflexive participation* as the overarching learning goal of cultural studies. Achieving a reflexive awareness for matters of political participation in ongoing discourse will be achieved not only through the development of sufficient language skills but also by peoples' position in society and underlying power structures (Schweiger, 2022).

Hence, it is important to further emphasize reflexivity when it comes to working with interpretative patterns and cultural attributions as well as developing a critical stance on structural limitations. Newly emerged approaches and concepts like culture-reflexivity question whether what is perceived as natural behavior is inevitably linked to cultural background, and how definitions of culture which transfer into approaching intercultural communication, can be reflected upon.

To distinguish the term *reflexivity* from *criticality* Byrd Clark states that while

*criticality focuses on the “how” and “why” in understanding knowledge(s) and realities, reflexivity extends further by centering on the “who”, as in who is the one speaking/ representing from where (which context, social and historical background), and with what kind of capacity/ies, intentions and overall aims.*

(Byrd Clark, 2020, p.87)

Cultural studies critically examine the predominant balance of power and access to participation in society; moreover, “the practice of cultural studies made every received cultural tradition, set of assumptions and official explanation of social and cultural reality up for grabs” (Rojek, 2007, p.7).

LTs and their position within debates related to language learning and cultural studies, as well as their ability to identify and reflect upon these positions, play a major role when examining and developing culture-and language reflective approaches. In addition, the researcher's constant reflection of choices taken during the research endeavor is central; it includes the choice of literature, the theoretical and analytical approach, the data generation process, data analysis and how conclusions are drawn, this will be discussed more detailed in the ethical considerations.

In practice, the schooling and education systems of language learners may vary quite substantially. For example, students may not actively participate in class not because of a lack of motivation or knowledge but due to other behavioral norms such as silence as a matter of respect (Mohr & Mohr, 2007). These moments of irritation and misunderstanding through misinterpretation are the basis for the culture-reflexive teaching approach in that they open up for critical reflection on the influence of cultural background but also problematic issues like simplification and the reconstruction of stereotypes.

Culture-reflexivity is in contrast to former understandings of interculturality as being comparative in terms of different cultural standards to explain and understand behaviors. The concept of intercultural studies in language acquisition classrooms can be limited by the overestimation of value-related interpretation of norms through cultural factors. Furthermore, the emphasis on differences can lead to disruptive feelings and disorientation concerning identities for learners (Hua & Wei, 2020). Culture-reflexivity aims to reflect and redefine intercultural concepts. It wishes to broaden this view by what Nazarkiewicz (2016, p.27) calls “systemic-constructivist diversity of perspectives” that takes into consideration national cultures, organizational cultures, as well as individual social settings and environments.

## 2.4 Intercultural Citizenship Education

An important goal of cultural studies within language learning classes is the formation of intercultural citizenship to enable immigrant learners to engage and actively participate in new settings. Political participation and participation in social life are both a right and duty of citizens of a country. However, Kramersch (2018, p.17) critically asks whether there is “still a place for culture in the teaching of foreign languages to learners who themselves speak a variety of languages and have grown up in a variety of cultures”. Culture-reflexive language teaching aims to understand and investigate definitions of language and culture, and how they relate to each other (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). This concept is in contrast to the previous conceptualizations like *Landeskunde* (factual knowledge) and comparative intercultural studies.

Koreik (2011) underlines the political dimension of cultural studies – both domestically with the German and Austrian government’s value and orientation courses for immigrants and internationally, in dialogue with other countries. The MIPEX (2022) classifies political participation for immigrants in Austria as *unfavorable* stating that they “continue to experience unfavorable policies towards their political participation as they still have no voting rights, few local consultative bodies and weak support for immigrant organizations.”

The concept of Transnationalism is closely linked to the idea of intercultural citizenship which challenges the established theories regarding migrant integration: assimilation and pluralism. The modernist assimilationist theory implies that migrants will progressively get accustomed to their new home country’s culture, language, and values. Since migrants hardly ever follow a linear model of continuous assimilation – and as hypothesized previously, terms like culture and language might not be distinctly definable – theories of ethnic pluralism began to evolve. MacDonald (2020, p.560) states that “these notions of the multiplicity of cultural practices, beliefs, and values within one territorial space then became conterminous with the adoption of postmodern conceptualizations of the fluidity and indeterminateness of identity within intercultural studies.” Byrd Clark (2009) uses the term fluidity too, when investigating the discourses around languages and identities. Similarly, Antony (2016) mentions the importance of highlighting the fluidity of social identities, challenging the previous notions of latent cultural signifiers as being the major defining aspect of cultural identity.

Some immigrant majority language learners are in a sensitive state of navigating between cultures and languages in what Canagarajah (2006, p. 238) calls “shuttling between communities” while possibly dealing with a sense of double belonging, which cannot simply be described as a balanced process of blending multiple identities (Hua and Wei, 2020).

When addressing cultural backgrounds and aiming for (intercultural) citizenship it is essential to define cultural identity as the base for the degree of identification with certain cultures. Cultural identity is one part of social identity. It refers to a collective identity dependent on a sense of belonging to a specific social group (Antony, 2016; Jurásek & Wawrosz, 2023). It can be explained as a “situated sense of self that is shaped by cultural experiences and social locations” (Sorrells, 2013, p.11). This definition highlights how culture and social settings are one part of human’s social identities, considering the process of construction and the importance of positioning in social contexts. Just as sociolinguistics places languages in relation to social contexts, cultural identity needs to be set in the context of social contexts too.

This social grounding relates to cultural identities being neither given nor constant but changing through interactions. Identities and concepts of Self are in permanent processes of reconstruction and change and are affected by exceptional circumstances like migration (Söhner, 2022). In addition, identity construction is closely linked to social categorization.

Holliday (2010) is highly critical of fixed cultural identities since the complexity of cultural realities leads to the conclusion that culture is in dialogue with, instead of being constituted by social structure. It is furthermore important to note the differentiation of avowed identities which enable social identification and ascribed identities which are attributed by others to designate individuals to a particular (cultural) group (Simmons & Chen, 2014). Ascribed identities can be linked to cases of *othering as* described earlier and limit peoples' awareness of how individual cultural identities are negotiated by personal narratives and everyday life experiences. Likewise, Holliday (2010) underlines how individual life trajectories conflict with approaches that link cultural identity primarily to belonging to the same nation-state. In line with this critical approach, Heinemann (2017, p.185) investigated how state-subsidized language courses in Germany and Austria, which focus on what she calls the making of “‘good’ German and Austrian citizens with very restricted political agency”, foster cultural hegemony where a dominant group oversees the norms, values, and beliefs of society.

Rydenvald (2018, p.73) has researched the language use of multilingual school students attending a European school in Belgium, calling them “third culture kids”, who are developing their linguistic and cultural identities between two or more nation-states, cultural backgrounds, and languages. This state of being in between cultures may be particularly challenging for teenage students but likely it does influence adults as well both in potentially beneficial and limiting ways. In contrast to school students at European schools who are widely perceived as what Rydenvald (2018, p.73) calls “elite bilinguals” adult immigrant students who learn the majority language of their new country of residence may be more driven or pressurized by factors like residency permits, employability and political participation. Hence, both Batholome (2004) and MacDonald (2020) point out the value of offering advocacy for people on the move. Thus, the main goal of cultural studies is to allow immigrants to actively participate in discourse and open doors to education possibilities and the labor market.

## 2.5 Translanguaging

Language is not simply a means of communication, since languages are constructed and acquired, they act as communicative systems and social practices. As I have discussed previously, a focus on sociolinguistics means to conceptualise languages as socially constructed; this perspective is essential to go beyond linguistic criteria for the constitution of language and rather determine the semiotic and social mechanisms which cause language construction (Makoni & Pennycook, 2006). Using language is not merely focused on information transfer but includes representation of self, negotiation, and co-construction of meaning. As Liddicoat and Scarino (2013, p.15) reflect upon language, “it resides with us, and we reside with it. It mediates our relationship with reality.”

This phenomenon has been conceptualized as the practice of *linguaging*. Linguaging relates to a sociocultural theory of mind that emphasizes the crucial role languages play in the mediation of cognitive processes (Swain & Watanabe, 2017). It furthermore stresses the fluidity and complexity of language (Bagga-Gupta & Messina Dahlberg, 2018) and the fact that languages are mobile in space and time (Blommaert, 2010). Ishikawa and Suzuki (2023) point out that linguaging helps people to carry out their thoughts to then develop them into artifacts to further reflect upon. Hence, it mediates thought and enables learners to solve linguistic issues independently by utilizing their meta-analytical capacity and grammatical awareness. However, transnational vulnerable groups often lack possibilities due to their limited capability for effective linguaging (MacDonald, 2020).

Severo, Abdelhay and Makoni (2020, p.106) state that “hegemonic discourses of languages embedded in institutional centers of power, such as education systems, universalized this image of language in a pluriverse world of communicative processes and practices.” In recent years the notion of people having a linguistic repertoire rather than separate languages has arisen and gained popularity. TL considers different languages as integrated and influencing each other rather than isolated systems; it moves away from the notion of multilingualism as multiple monolingualism; hence, separate linguistic codes (Byrd Clark, 2020). Garcia and Wei (2015) call this “dynamic bilingualism” as opposed to additive bilingualism. Hence, bi- and multilinguals use their plurilingual repertoire when communicating with others.

TL is a dynamic process in which multilingual speakers negotiate meaning beyond traditional divides between designated languages; thus, the focus is set on an individual's agency instead of distinct languages (Hua & Wei, 2020).

Still, neologisms like TL should be critically assessed in terms of their common perception as being beneficial and less limited than previous concepts within communication. Bagga-Gupta and Messina Dahlberg (2018, p.387) argue that TL stems from a Global-North perspective of monolingualism and risks turning into a hollow concept used for academic strategic efforts by what they call a process of "looping terminology" where the establishment of a term adds to the genesis of the described phenomenon. They mention that TL as a pedagogical practice could have value but "it is in need of academic scrutiny if it is to avoid falling into the trap that reinforces boundaries that it purports to erase" (Bagga-Gupta & Messina Dahlberg, 2018, p.399).

LTs who are working in a multilingual classroom setting are constantly exposed to TL practices and acknowledging the importance but also criticism relating to fluid languaging practices can add to a more nuanced view of language teaching and learning processes.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

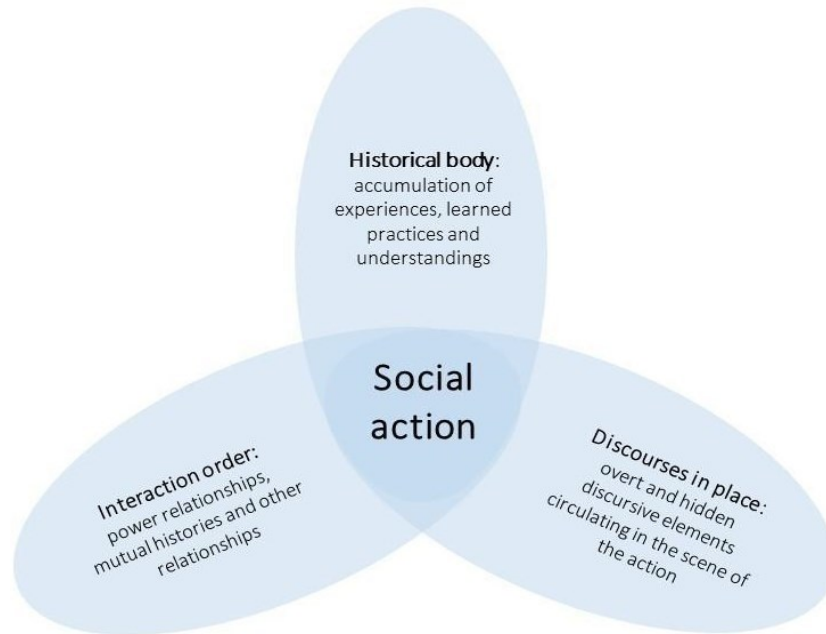
For this study, a discursive qualitative research method is used to gain and analyze in-depth data about LTs' perceptions of modern theoretical approaches concerning culture, language, and identity as well as policy documents, constituting the frame curriculum for cultural studies for German as an L2 in Austria. In the theoretical chapter of this thesis, relevant discourses and the theoretical concepts culture-reflexivity, intercultural citizenship and TL have been outlined to provide a theoretical background where LTs engage in specific sets of actions. A qualitative method is suitable for working with complex matters such as reflexive approaches and how they influence processes of teaching and learning within cultural studies (Fornoff, 2015). In the following chapter, I explain the choice of nexus analysis (NA) as a methodological approach for data collection and analysis.

### 3.1 Nexus analysis

NA is an action-oriented approach to discourse analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). It is a multidisciplinary analytical framework which can be used to analyze complex data sets on different spatial and temporal scales (Scollon & Scollon, 2004; Hult, 2010; Almén, 2021). Scollon and Scollon (2004) have identified *social action* as a point of departure for both theoretical and analytical investigations. Places, people, and discourses constitute the main elements of social actions and NA is interested in “unpacking a moment of social action through analysis of the interaction order, social actors, mediational means, and the discourses in places as well as their historical trajectories” (Dordah & Horsbol, 2021). Relating these three key elements creates a *cycle of discourse*.

The researcher aims to identify relevant discourses, trace them within time and space and investigate how they appear as social actions. Social actions can be analyzed in the intersection between individual, social (historical body) and universal, societal (interaction order, discourses in place) scales in place and time. NA utilizes discourse analysis and the investigation of social action to engage, navigate and change the nexus of practice. It is interested in relations between discourses in place (scale of place), the historical body (scale of time) and the interaction order (social setting). For example, it wishes to investigate how previous and present discourses materialize in the historical body on an individual scale.





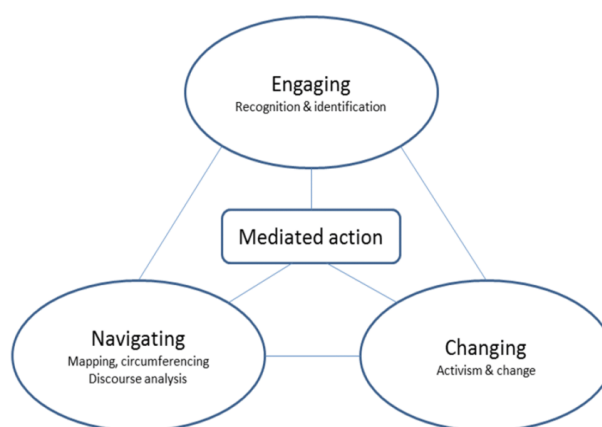
**Figure 1. Key elements of social action adapted from Scollon & Scollon, 2004 (Multas & Hirvonen, 2018, p.4)**

In this study, the data was analysed through a sociolinguistic lens relating language use to social factors. Language teaching behaviors on individual (micro) levels are interconnected with debates around language policy and planning on universal (macro) levels. Hult (2010) highlights that debates within the sociolinguistics of language on an individual stage should be combined with the sociolinguistics of society, hence the relation between social actions and current public discourse. As NA tries to examine the interdependence of discourse and action, it is particularly suitable to address the issues focused upon in this thesis, which is concerned with theoretical concepts and their implementation in teaching practice. Furthermore, NA aims to present a more holistic picture of language policies about individual's social actions (Hult, 2010) which corresponds well with analyzing the implementation of curricular standards into individual lesson planning.

### 3.1.1 The nexus of practice

#### *Engaging – Navigating – Changing*

Scollon and Scollon (2004, p.12) refer to the nexus of practice as “a site of engagement”. It sets each social action into a context involving discourses in place, the historical body and interaction order rather than being an isolated occurrence. However, Scollon (2001, p.4) is critical of the term *context* for trying to create a neutral space for contextualization of social structures and practices instead of keeping “them alive in our interpretations of mediated actions”. Hult (2010, p.10) defines a nexus of practice as “a constellation of inter-related social actions that serve as nexus points for a multitude of discourses which, in turn, mediate those actions”. Scollon and Scollon’s (2004) approach of *mediated discourse analysis* focuses on the intersecting dimensions of social actions and discourse. Mediated action is concerned with engaging relevant sites of engagement and social actors, navigating within them by mapping relevant discourses and finally changing the nexus of practice by finding new emerging discourses. The discourses in place in the investigated practice are related to globalization, multilingualism, and foreign language acquisition but also more specifically to intercultural citizenship education and the implementation of theoretical nuanced conceptualizations of language and culture.



**Figure 2. A three-phase model of nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004)**

According to Dordah and Horsbol (2021, p.5) determining a “zone of identification” which makes the researcher an accepted participant in the nexus of practice, is an essential prerequisite to successfully engage, navigate and change the nexus of practice. The analytical interests of this study lie in the dialectical linkage of social practices, language, and discourses in the nexus of teaching culture to immigrant students as part of language acquisition.

An essential part of NA is the matter of hierarchies and gatekeeping. As Aarnikoivu (2020, p.48) states this is a matter of “*who* (interaction order) gets to decide *what* (discourses in place) and *why*?” to shed light on the question about *who* and *why* get to decide, policy documents and teachers’ decisions about *what* to include or not to include in teaching cultural studies are investigated.

Engaging in the nexus of practice is concerned with determining social actors and investigating moments of social interaction they participate in. In this study, LTs are the actors of interest and semi-structured interviews are utilized not merely as a method of data collection but as a social practice in its own right (Dordah & Horsbol, 2021) to zoom into the topic of interest of this thesis. The task of navigating relates to grasping the cycles of discourse, places and concepts which impact social actions. To change the nexus of practice the researcher should participate in and act within it from an engaged position. This study aims to start engaging in the nexus of practice by identifying and discussing crucial discourses and actors within them. The discourses circulating among LTs working in language education – more specifically with intercultural communication in multicultural groups – and current language- and culture-reflexive approaches are the focus of the analysis. Semi-structured interviews, teachers’ lesson plannings and curricular documents help to determine discourses in place, which will be the central element for engaging and navigating the nexus of practice.

Since changing the nexus of practice is in focus, it can be described as an activist research approach. However, this stage must not necessarily aim for results but rather for a re-examination of entrenched topics by opening new mediated discourses, asking novel questions, and establishing new nexuses that have not yet emerged (Aarnikoivu, 2020). The change in terminology which has been outlined in the theoretical part as the *empirical turn* is the starting point for this study which wishes to use the concept of reflexivity not only theoretically but also as a means of talking reflexively about experiences when implementing rather new reconceptualizations of culture (culture-reflexivity) and language (TL). The three intersecting dimensions of NA work well with the concept of reflexivity that focuses on the *how*, the *why* and the *who*, as it is concerned with social actions and relevant discourses in place as well as the social actors and their historical bodies. In the next session, the different dimensions of NA are presented in relation to the interests of this thesis.

### 3.1.2 Discourses in place

The actors who are involved in the social action are influenced by their habitus, thus “we can only understand an action as we see it within the history of practice within the habitus of the participants in this action” (Scollon, 2001, p.160). These discourses are in line with Gee’s (2015) understanding of Discourses with capital D as opposing to discourses (with a little “d”) that focus on a specific scene of language in use among people. Discourse with a capital D describes historically and socially formed conversations among significant social actors. Establishing theoretical background knowledge regarding relevant present discourses within the field of language acquisition for immigrants is an important starting point. The ability to successfully perform what Hult calls “zooming in and out of the different discursive contexts” or “scale-jumping” while “at the same time being systematically selective about the focus of inquiry” (2010, p.9) is a challenge when working with NA. However, this shift of dimensions and the chance to move flexibly between them is one of its benefits since it creates a nuanced picture of complex matters without losing sight of the analytical foci at stake in the study.

### 3.1.3 The interaction order

The *interaction order* stems from what sociologist Goffman (1983) calls *norms of interactions*. Goffman studied face-to-face interactions in detail and focused on determining which norms seemed to dictate these specific communicative patterns and behaviors. He viewed individuals as actors playing certain roles depending on the social settings, they engage in. However, Goffman uses the dramaturgical analogy of “role” not as a representation of reality but as a means of analysis of certain norms of interaction. According to Wertsch (1998), each social action is mediated by different cultural tools such as identities, institutions, communities, objects, practices, and language. These cultural tools are severely influenced by constraints and affordances which are implemented into an individual’s habitus. They are not deterministic for playing social roles but instead, deliberately utilized in social actions (Norris & Jones, 2005). Yet, Kemper (2011) criticizes Goffman’s notion of social interactions being severely influenced by norms, orders and rituals as comprising only parts of complex social scenes. Scollon and Scollon (2004) adapted the idea of people behaving differently depending on who they are engaging with and in which social setting this takes place.

They distinguish between primary and secondary interactions: Primary interactions take place when people meet face-to-face in a shared physical space (real-time), for example when students meet during a teaching session. Secondary interactions are mediated ones, for example when students study a text presented on a medium, written by someone who is currently not present. The interview setting is a primary real-time interaction mediated by the digital meeting platform Zoom. In Chapter 4.2 Engaging the nexus: Policy and actions the interaction order of self-reported experiences of LTs in interviews and the influence of policy documents on the interaction order were investigated.

### 3.1.4 Historical body

Another element of NA is a phenomenon Bourdieu (1977) called *habitus* and the philosopher Nishida (1958) referred to as the *historical body*. It represents a person's lifepath, the collection of experiences, which have shaped and established a personal set of habits that seem natural to the individual as embodied knowledge (Scollon & Scollon, 2004; Multas & Hirvonen, 2018). Söhner (2022) defines the individual and his (learning) experiences, coping strategies, and socio-cultural background as the center of biographical history research.

The biographical background and sharing personal experiences of participation and limiting factors in the tense field of processes of social change can offer valuable insights as one dimension of the nexus of practice. The individual's historical body represents their own life history, quite literally the embodiment of a personal history (Almén, 2021). This element is meaningful when investigating the concept of reflexivity since it is not only examined in relation to terms like language and culture but also about individuals who are engaged in the nexus of practice, in this case mainly LTs of German and to some extent immigrant language students who will likely incorporate processes of intercultural identity formation in their historical body. The approach of the historical body is in line with Gee's (2015, p.189) description of the learning process as "a process that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching (though not necessarily from someone officially designated a teacher) or through certain life experiences that trigger conscious reflection."

Söhner (2022) emphasizes the importance of biographical history research similar to Goffman's (1973) focus on individual biographies and Scollon and Scollon's (2014) concept of intertwining the historical bodies of individual actors within a nexus of practice. Researching biographies and life paths is not aiming for a reproduction of truth or normative appropriateness. Rather it focuses on subjective narratives and individual patterns of interpretations. These individual biographies are part of a collective memory by reflecting experiences of recent social, political, and cultural phenomena (Söhner, 2002). Engaging with their historical body is a starting point for engaging with others and is directly linked to the concept of reflexivity. The way languages, language acquisition and teaching practices are perceived, have developed over teachers' lifespans and they have consequences on how they will likely use their experience and reflexive thinking skills to reflect upon their historical body. The idea is that this, in turn, mediates their teaching practice as well as their reflective stance concerning cultural studies. Here, the perceived challenges and teachers' strategies for coping with them are one central source of data within the nexus of practice that is entangled with the interaction order and discourses in place.

As culture- and language-reflexive approaches are concerned with the limitations of normative and stable conceptualizations of these terms they challenge to what extent linguistic and cultural backgrounds are suitable to explain certain behavior, opinions, values, and beliefs. Discussing LTs' linguistic and cultural backgrounds might seem contradictory to the approach of culture-reflexivity, interculturality and TL as it stresses the importance of language/culture for the individual. Yet, scholars who advocate for culture-reflexivity acknowledge that people are affected by various influences, including their cultural backgrounds. In my understanding, the theoretical concept of culture-reflexivity does not wish to erase categorizations, rather, it is critical to the extent to which normative, stable, and simplistic understandings of languages and cultures acknowledge the complexities of such processes and concepts.

Therefore, including the historical body of social actors as *one dimension* that influences social actions at the intersection of other dimensions (interaction order, discourses in place) shows the suitability of NA for investigating these theoretical approaches relating to the specific social actions within the examined nexus of practice, as one object of research.

Furthermore, engaging in the nexus of practice requires a critical assessment of the researcher's reflexive skills about his/her position in the social actions focused upon in research. As Scollon and Scollon (2004) state, the researcher is a participant of and engaging in the discourses they wish to investigate. Hence, aiming to analyze data while engaging, navigating, and changing the nexus of practice, is not an objective, context-free undertaking. Statements are indicative and give information while questions are interrogative, having an informing as well as a control function perpetuating power relations and organizational structures. Interrogations, re-evaluation, and reflexivity of the questions asked when examining a nexus of practice are fundamental since the result of an NA is “not a clear statement which further action may be taken” but “the process of questioning which is carried out throughout the project” (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p.144).

### 3.2 Data collection process

Discursive research includes data generation processes like data sampling, connecting the data to relevant discourses, providing background information and transcription processes (Dordah & Horsbol, 2021). I will present a small-scale NA consisting of three datasets: semi-structured interviews, teachers' lesson plannings and the frame curriculum of the Austrian Integration Fond (ÖIF). The data generation process began with interviews as a social action. The interviews were conducted via Zoom with five teachers of German, who teach immigrant adult students on different language levels (A1-B2 of the CEFR).

Furthermore, the teachers were invited to share a written planning of a learning sequence concerning cultural studies and to talk about the challenges they experience when “teaching culture”, and when implementing curricular standards and including knowledge of culture – and language reflexive approaches into teaching practice. The interview guide used for the interview includes 13 questions (see Appendix). All teachers agreed to be recorded on Zoom and acronyms (LT1 – LT5) were used in the presentation and analysis of the data to protect their identity. Policy documents constituting the curriculum for German as an L2 were retrieved from the ÖIF homepage; these documents are named *Framework Curriculum for German courses with values and orientation knowledge* (2018), are publicly available online, and consist of 11 – 13 pages for each language level.

**Table 1. The data generated within the nexus of practice**

Type of data	Data size	Information
Dataset 1: 5 semi-structured interviews	Total length: 5 hours	Interviews with five German language teachers about their perceived challenges, curricular guidelines, and implementation strategies
Dataset 2: teachers' lesson plannings	5 A4 pages	Written lesson planning for a sequence of "teaching culture" to immigrants.
Dataset 3: frame-curriculum for German as an L2 (based on the document "My life in Austria")	48 A4 pages 68 A4 pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Curricular guidelines for teaching German as an L2 (2018) by the Austrian Integration Fond</li> <li>- "My life in Austria" and was developed by the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs</li> </ul>

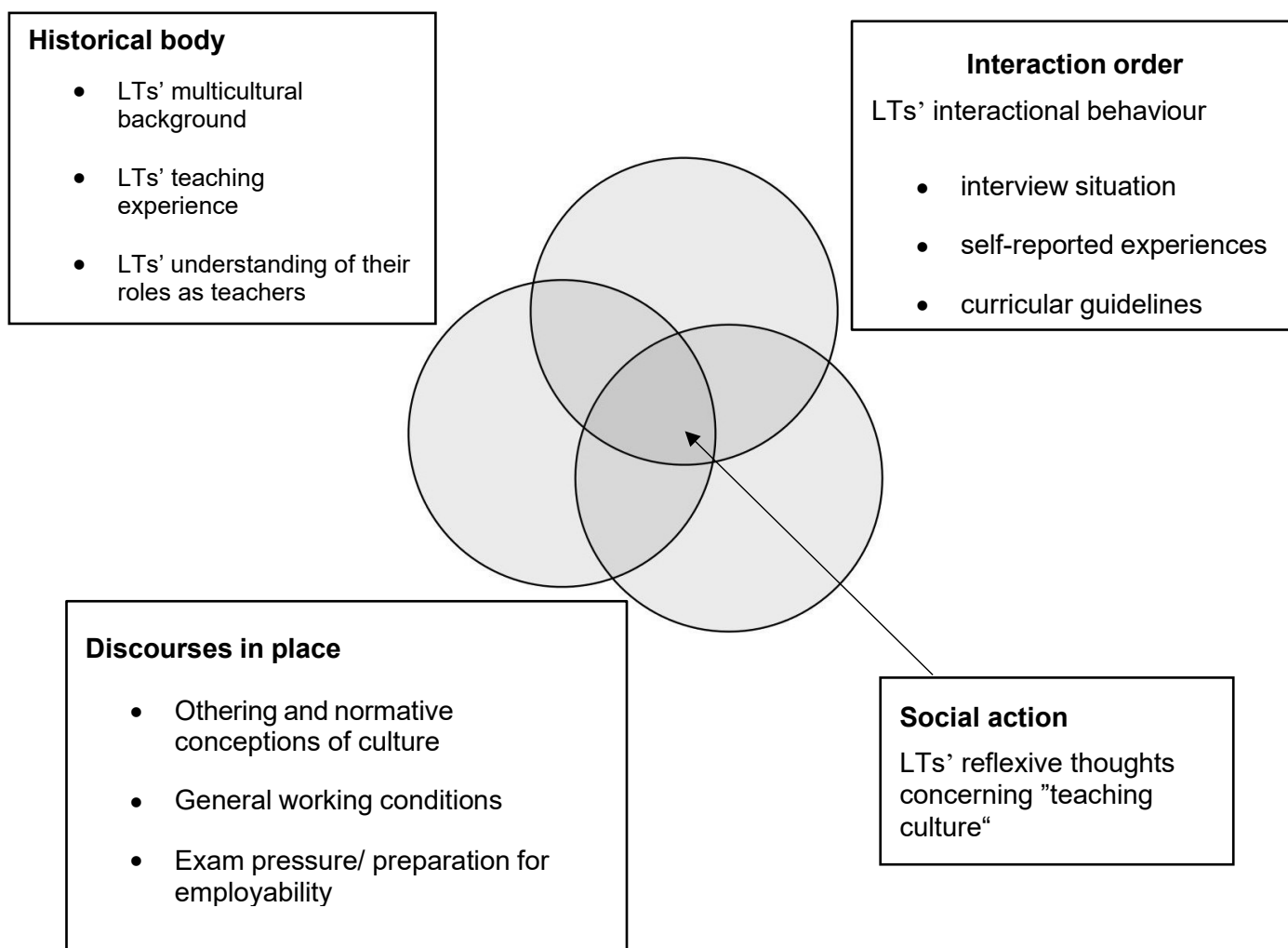
### 3.2.1 Dataset 1: Interviews as social practice

Qualitative interviews containing open-ended questions were conducted with five Austrian teachers, who work with adult immigrant learners of German under the frame curriculum of the ÖIF. The research questions are concerned with the experiences and perceived challenges of LTs when teaching cultural studies and how LTs talk about implementing curricular requirements (see Appendix). The semi-structured interviews aimed to enable teachers to express the difficulties and limitations they experienced as well as the possibilities they see within the nexus of teaching culture in multicultural learning groups. Dordah and Horsbol (2021) argue for perceiving interviews as a social practice which corresponds to Scollon and Scollon's (2004) term social action as a point of departure for engaging, navigating, and changing the nexus of practice.



They furthermore highlight the importance of transparent representation and reflexive analysis of interview data, as well as the interrelations to wide-ranging discursive practices. Additionally, Scollon and Scollon (2004) critically mention the limitation of traditional qualitative interviews, which mainly aim for data collection in neutral decontextualized settings while neglecting the interviewer's role and perceiving interview data as objective knowledge. Similarly, MacDonald (2020) suggests regarding interview data as a text which is accountable for critical analysis rather than evidence or truth. The generation of interview data should be considered a dialogic process, taking the position of the researcher and pre-existing assumptions into account and regarding interviews as social actions of shared meaning-making, or as "situated talk influenced by broader social practices" (Dordah & Horsbol, 2021, p.2).

Magnusson (2015) closely examined the interactional work between the interviewer, participants and people who are not present – but still relevant in the nexus of practice. When investigating this action-oriented approach to speech the author refers to *talk-as-action* and analyzed the actual interpersonal context of interview partners and the larger societal setting, since local contexts are clearly linked to larger socio-political contexts. NA enables a more flexible and interconnected examination of the personal historical body, the interactional order – which is intertwined with both immediate interaction and as well as socio-cultural contexts and discourses in place, which can be concerned with debates on individual and specific (micro) levels and socio-political (macro) levels. The teacher interviews which focused on LTs' reflexive thoughts are the social action which is a starting point for data analysis in this thesis.



**Figure 3. Nexus analysis interview data**

The interview guide connects the research aim and research questions with relevant literature. Furthermore, it creates a framework to uphold consistency through the individual interviews and enables an exploration of teachers' understandings and attitudes as educators with teaching experience between 7 months and 2 years. Through analysis of what Magnusson and Marecek (2015, p.3) name "talk-as action" the interview data is investigated as "interpretative researchers hold that the best way to learn about peoples' meanings and meaning-making is to listen to people talk about their experiences in their own way and in their words." Apart from examining *who* said *what* and *how* a focus is set on the intersection of the three dimensions of NA. People's own words afford the best access a researcher can have to how they understand their experiences. The interviews lasted from 40 - 80 minutes with a combined recorded interview time of 5 hours.

**Table 2. LT interview information**

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Teaching background</b>	<b>Interview length</b>
LT 1	7 months working experience exclusively in ÖIF courses (A2 and B1 language level)	40 min
LT 2	11 months teaching experience exclusively in ÖIF projects (literacy course, A1)	45 min
LT 3	10 months teaching experience in ÖIF projects (previous online teaching experience)	80 min
LT 4	2 years teaching experience in ÖIF projects (A1-B2)	54 min
LT 5	18 months teaching experience in ÖIF projects (A1-B2)	80 min

### 3.2.2 Dataset 2: Teachers' lesson plans

The language teachers were asked to provide a written lesson plan, or the planning of a sequence related to cultural studies. Research questions two and three are concerned with the application of learning goals set in the frame curriculum and theoretical knowledge about reflexive approaches towards language and culture. Teachers utilize written plans to structure and reflect upon processes of teaching, thus they are valuable data concerning the implementation of ideas, learning goals, underlying concepts, and curricular requirements. Written plans have a functional and pragmatic purpose for lesson planning but can also be the basis for reflexive processes when re-evaluating specific parts, like the timeframe and whether learning goals were reached or not. The LTs provided their lesson plans for sequences they taught in the value and orientation course relating to the following topics: geographical information, family constellations, freedom of speech (the Pride parade in Vienna), regional traditions and the Austrian labor market.

When looking closer at the LTs' lesson plannings I kept Scollon and Scollon's (2004, p.15) guiding question in mind: "What action is being taken by what social actor in a concrete material place in the world at a specific time and how is the document or text (or any other mediational means) used by the social actor as a tool for taking that action?"

### 3.2.3 Dataset 3: Frame-curriculum for German as an L2

The frame curriculum for German as an L2 was developed by the ÖIF in 1960. From 2002 onwards the tasks and responsibilities of the ÖIF have been expanded significantly to implement the government's integration agreement. Within this framework, the ÖIF offers language acquisition courses, conducts German examinations at various language levels and evaluates German integration courses. It specifically addresses the needs of people entitled to asylum, subsidiary protection, and so-called third-country nationals (outside the EU), people with a migration background, as well as institutions and organizations in the fields of integration, social affairs, and education. As stated on the ÖIF's homepage (Österreichischer Integrationsfond ÖIF, n.d.) "the acquisition of the German language is the key to successful integration and is the indispensable prerequisite for successful participation in social, economic, and cultural life in Austria."

The frame curriculum for German courses including the so-called *Werte-und Orientierungskurs (values and orientation course)* is available for the levels A1, A2, B1 and B2 level of the CEFR. It is based on a 68-page long document with the title "My life in Austria" developed by the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs and it describes the learning goals of each course, offers a methods section, general quality standards, the course content and documentation/evaluation standards. The following content is included:

- General orientation knowledge about Austria
- Education & language
- The labor market & economy
- Health (system)
- Housing and neighborhood
- Principles of coexistence – legal integration – democracy
- Diversity

Concerning teaching knowledge about culture and values, the set goal includes a reflection of values, rules, conventions, collective social knowledge, rights, and duties thus making these themes the subject of instructional discussion in the German course (ÖIF, 2018).

### 3.3 Engaging – Navigating – Changing the nexus of practice

Engaging in the nexus of practice includes identifying important actors and discourses, choosing the research topic and questions, and positioning oneself in the investigated nexus. In Chapters 1 and 2 the research field and relevant debates are presented. As a part of the ethical considerations, I have reflected upon my position as a researcher who is involved in the nexus of practice as a newly educated LT for German as an L2/German as a foreign language.

LTs of German as an L2 in Austria, immigrant language students, researchers investigating language- and culture-reflexive approaches and policymakers were identified as relevant actors, however, I set a focus on teachers since they are educated professionals who are used to reflecting upon their teaching strategies, materials, curricular guidelines, learning goals and theoretical approaches to language teaching when planning and evaluating their lessons.

Due to their historical bodies which include formal education at the university level they are familiar with what semi-structured interviews are and what steps would be taken by the researcher, such as asking for written consent, providing the interview guidelines, and explaining the research aim at the beginning of the interview. Since gatekeeping and getting access to relevant actors are crucial factors in ethnographic research it was important to consider, which actors of the nexus of practice would be accessible to me and who could provide information about both the academic debate about reflexive approaches and the practical side of teaching language and culture.

As NA is concerned with the interrelations between discourse and practice, the researcher's position within the investigated social action as well as the researcher's positioning regarding current debates concerning the nexus of practice are important. Therefore, I chose to take what Almén (2021, p.51) calls "the role of the interested other rather than the interrogator". I was hoping that the interviewed LTs – as they already gained some teaching experience – could provide valuable insights into my topic of interest, thus the interaction order during the interview was influenced by me as the moderating researcher and *interested other* with some focal points in mind and the more experienced LTs with their theoretical and practical knowledge about language teaching. In terms of gatekeeping, I experienced difficulties when asking the Department for German Studies for the email addresses of previous students, as data protection regulations did not allow the program coordinator to forward them to me.

However, I was able to ask my fellow course colleagues and found 5 teachers who work in the governmentally funded ÖIF courses and were willing to give an interview. The requirements for the interviewed LT were the following: firstly, they should have encountered language- and culture-reflexive approaches as theoretical concepts and furthermore, they would have to work at the governmentally funded German courses provided by the ÖIF, as the ÖIF frame curriculum was investigated as the main guiding policy document for LT concerning value and orientation knowledge. Moreover, they had to agree upon the points stated in the research consent form, which included audio recordings of the interview and access to the transcribed interview data for the researcher, the supervisor, and the examiner. Out of 28 people who participated in the continuous education course for teaching German as a second/foreign language at the Postgraduate Center of the University of Vienna, 14 people fulfilled these requirements and also expressed interest in participating in the interviews; out of these approached teachers, 5 LT agreed to be interviewed by returning the signed consent forms.

When developing the interview guideline for the semi-structured interviews I set the focus on the awareness of curricular demands, challenges in teaching cultural studies and the implementation of theoretical knowledge into practice. The LTs were asked about their studies, their previous teaching experience, and the role they see themselves in as educators to find out more about their historical bodies. The questions relating to challenges, limitations, and possibilities for implementation they experienced, were aimed at identifying relevant cycles of discourse for the LTs. After the interviews, which were the initial social actions, all three data sets were examined relating to the dimensions of NA to navigate the nexus of practice. Furthermore, the curricular framework of the ÖIF was considered an important mediating macro-level factor, which affects LTs on individual levels. After engaging in the nexus of practice the next step is navigating it by mapping the discourses in place.

Navigating the nexus of practice includes the analysis of the three data sets by investigating LTs' (multicultural) historical body, the interaction order in the social action of interviews and steering policy documents and relevant discourses in place which include discourses presented in the theoretical chapters but also discourses around the challenges and limitations teachers experience in their everyday practice. As LTs work embedded in an institutional education system with clear guiding curricular documents set by the government, they are constantly balancing their understanding of their roles as teachers and making decisions about how to approach the value and orientation course and given instructions by the ÖIF.

In the interviews the LTs could present their perspectives, gave information about their historical bodies and some common themes emerged; relating to their historical bodies their multicultural and multilinguistic backgrounds were identified as a dominant rationale of how the teachers approach their teaching practice in the value and orientation course. In addition, their previous studies affected the way they perceived language- and culture-reflexive approaches; however even though all LTs seemed to have an openness to these new approaches, they mentioned challenging working conditions, lack of preparation time and lack of vocabulary on the student's sides, as major limiting factors to include reflexive approaches but rather stick to materials provided by the ÖIF. These materials were partly seen positively as representing diversity and offering a wide range of topics but also criticized as being simplified, comparative and infantilizing.

The aim of navigating the nexus of practice is to identify new discourses as well as crucial social actors by analyzing the data (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) and thus, to contribute to a change in the nexus of practice, as I will discuss shortly.

Even though LTs work at local language schools the frame curriculum is a governmental regulation on a macro-level. As Almén (2021) states even though we might not be able to track most policy processes the results of these processes are (often) publicly available as policy documents, as is the case with both the frame curriculum as well as the document "My life in Austria" which are published by the ÖIF. The teachers' lesson plans function as a representation of how the curricular guidelines were implemented in specific teaching sequences on a micro-level.

Finally, changing the nexus of practice is concerned with contributing by addressing research gaps and widening the research field. According to Aarnikoivu (2020), NA does not necessarily intend to answer a set of research questions but to define new nexuses of practice asking different and original questions to open unknown debates and thus eventually change the nexus of practice that has been explored. Thus, I integrated newly emerged debates and considerations circulating among LTs who teach language in multicultural group settings when answering the research questions. Furthermore, by investigating reflexivity connected to terms (culture and language), research ethics and the social action of asking LT to reflect upon their teaching practice and implementation strategies, the NA presented in this study may initiate change in the educator's practice of teaching language and culture.

### 3.4 Ethical considerations

When researching issues of multilingualism, cultures, and intercultural identity the researcher should be skeptical and critical of dominant narratives, questions of bias and possible contradictions (Byrd Clark, 2020). By including normative ideas of culture, language and interculturality newly developed approaches like culture-reflexivity, translanguaging and intercultural citizenship are at risk of recreating standardized and simplified notions that they wish to critically investigate. Normative intercultural research has tended to consider integration as the ideal social example to be accomplished by educational institutions. Conforming to emerging ideals of intercultural awareness and intercultural communication skills is regarded as a beneficial practice for immigrants.

Concerning the theoretical framework, the main limitations are the focus on the countries of the Global North and the normative stance of conceptions and approaches. Concerning the data gathering and analysis in the methodological part the following considerations are important: (1) Is the conducted research in line with the ethical guidelines for good research practice of the Swedish Research Council (2017) and (2) How has the researcher's position possibly influenced the whole research process? In accordance with the Swedish Research Council's (2017) guidelines for good research practice I made sure to take ethical considerations into account concerning i.) the research topic ii.) used literature iii.) data sampling, gathering of data and data protection.

i.) The research topic and related question should aim to contribute to existing knowledge by offering valuable new insights into the field. As the literature review presenting previous research has shown, there has been an academic debate about teaching cultural studies. However, there is a research gap concerning implementation strategies in teaching practice which my research topics and questions aim to address.

*When the **benefits** of research are discussed, this concept should be considered in a broad sense. It is not only a case of creating conditions to produce more and new products or increasing society's industrial competitiveness (...). It also concerns promoting other values that have to do with **critical thinking**, better quality of life and a revitalised public discourse.*

(Swedish Research Council, 2017, p.19, emphasis added)



ii.) Another important ethical consideration relates to the used literature. Participation in current debates regarding intercultural issues is dominated by scholars of the Global North and the hegemony of former colonial languages and cultures must still be de-created (MacDonald, 2020; Makoni & Pennycook, 2006). Most academic texts are written and published exclusively in English. Code-switching between one or more languages would be beneficial for representing a more holistic picture by unfolding their entire emotional and cultural impact (Kramsch, 2004). Being open to the utilization of translanguaging practice in the Global South and the knowledge of multilingual communication practices in pre-colonial communities (Canagarajah, 2006) could offer valuable insights to address practical and theoretical difficulties in the Global North (Severo, Abdelhay & Makoni, 2020). According to de Souza (2019), the hegemonic (Western) and marginalized constitute each other by being interconnected; this perspective is essential to establish new ways of thinking instead of creating a dichotomous divide. Increased cooperation regarding intellectual, intercultural, and multilingual exchange from different geographic areas could add valuable new ideas and real diversity to current debates about interculturality.

*If linguistics is as much a cultural construct as any other aspect of culture – kinship, religion, politics – then is its view of language tied to a distinctly Western cosmology? And if so, why should it apply unproblematically to languages in other cultures or even to the minority languages of subcultural groups in the West?*

(Branson & Miller, 2006, p.117)

iii.) In interview situations, the reproduction of hegemonic norms can occur, even if they are being critically examined (Söhner, 2002). Furthermore, there are various terminological challenges where terms that are being criticized and reflected upon are being used in direct and indirect citations as culture- and language-reflexive approaches are newly emerging concepts. In addition, ethical considerations and limitations must be considered regarding the theoretical and methodological approach of this thesis. As the Research Council (2017, p.13) states “research results are often valuable in their own right.” One could say that there is an ethically motivated imperative to conduct research: the *research criterion*. Balancing the research criterion with the *criterion of protection of the individual* is essential for ethical research practice.

When handling personal data, the researcher should act responsibly by ensuring secrecy, anonymity, and confidentiality; the research consent form which was sent to the teachers beforehand was concerned with providing these conditions and informed the LTs that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any point. They were informed about the interview being recorded through the research consent form and a second time before the interview started. The data generated in this project was stored on a password-protected hard-drive, to which only the student, the supervisor and the examiner have access to.

It is important to shed light on the researcher's positioning within the nexus of practice that is investigated. Just as teaching relies on reflexivity and re-evaluation of e.g., methods, didactics, teaching tools, learning goals and language, the process of analyzing data and engaging, navigating, and changing the nexus of practice asks for a clear positioning of the researcher, acknowledging power relations, privileges, and possible blind spots. I position myself as a white, female, multilingual, European research student, who has the privilege of studying at a Swedish University; this position influences my point of view and analysis. Even though I have experienced the immigration process (to Sweden) to some extent, e.g., by participating in language courses called *Svenska för invandrare and Svenska som andraspråk* (Swedish for immigrants/Swedish as a second language) it is essential to stay aware of the fact that immigration, the language acquisition process and formation of intercultural citizenship are often influenced by hardships I never had to experience: fleeing war or persecution, traumatic experiences, lacking school education or insufficient recognition of educational qualifications and linking language learning success to residency permission, just to name a few.

I chose interviews with LTs as the starting point for my study since the teachers are relevant social actors within the researched nexus of practice and their insights into their experiences when teaching cultures are important to further develop discourse around multilingualism, TL, culture-reflexivity, and intercultural citizenship education. As Scollon (2001, p.7) states, any social action is based on habitus. This includes all the actors within this social action, and each action "reproduces the identities of prior social actions as well as negotiates new positions among the participants within the nexus of practice." I aim to encourage LTs to reflect upon, share and critically re-assess their teaching practice by talking about it.

The researcher working with analysis of present discourse should be highly critical of their position and their personal link to the investigated discourse group. The critical lens of discourse analysis sheds light on what we perceive as common knowledge or common sense by highlighting the social determinations these debates produce (Rogers et al., 2005). In alignment with the critical and reflexive approach of this thesis, I am aware that the theoretical chapter and data analysis have been impacted by subjective views as it is an illusion that the position of an objective, neutral observer can be obtained. Moreover, I am aware that my interest in the implementation of culture- and language-reflexive approaches might have impacted the LTs, e.g., they apologized for not implementing their knowledge about these approaches more often into their teaching of cultural studies. Prior to the interviews, I was concerned that the LTs might feel pressure to answer the semi-structured interview questions professionally and constructively rather than openly talking about challenges and difficulties they experience in classroom practice, however, this concern was unjustified as they were open and ready to share and reflect upon their experiences and their needs. One LT even called the interview “a therapeutic experience” as she was finally able to voice her dissatisfaction with her working conditions. The teachers’ openness and urge to talk about the advancement of cultural studies indicate the importance of giving educators a voice and conducting further research within this field.

## Chapter 4: Data analysis and results

NA offers a nuanced perspective when analyzing and discussing a moment of social action and illustrates the complexity of social situations by connecting action with discourse. The data analysis process focuses on the intersection of different dimensions of social actions or what Scollon (2001) calls *sites of engagement* that, in this study, consist of the teacher interviews and the mediational means - like written lesson plannings, textbooks passages provided by teachers, online platforms used for the interviews, policy documents by the ÖIF - in the nexus of practice. After engaging in the nexus of practice by establishing the relevant social actors and sites of engagement in the previous chapters, the data analysis aims to navigate the nexus of practice and to use *reflexivity* as a means of changing the nexus of practice: by encouraging LTs to reflect about how they include TL and culture- reflexivity into their teaching practice.

### 4.1 Navigating the nexus: Discourses and actions

An important element of NA relates to the relevant discourses that shape social action and vice versa, it focuses on *what* is talked about by different actors in the nexus of practice. In this study, the relevant discourses focus primarily on the discrepancy between academic debates, language policy and LTs' experiences of teaching culture. Some relevant discourses in place have been discussed theoretically in Chapters 1 and 2 and I aim to contribute by identifying new discourses through the interview data, lesson plannings and policy documents. The LTs' plannings show how the themes in the policy documents are implemented in real-life teaching practice. The discourses appear primarily through self-reported challenges, possibilities, and limitations during the interviews but are also influenced and mediated by the policy documents i.e., the frame curriculum for the respective language level. Discourses in place focus on *what is talked about* by language teachers and *what is written in* policy documents; a focus is set on the social actors (LTs) as they are acting (reflecting upon cultural studies) in a social situation (the interview).

Some key elements that the LTs mentioned in the interviews were the following: normative conceptions of culture in the frame curriculum, comparative practices/othering, challenging working conditions, difficulties of teaching cultural studies, especially at beginner's levels, exam pressure, and the focus on the employability of immigrants on the labor market.

These topics are relevant discourses in place connected to teaching culture to immigrant students, raised during the interview and intersecting with LTs' historical bodies and the interaction order at the interview situation as well as the representation of learning goals for "norms of interaction" stated in the frame curriculum.

Even though the interview questions aim to cover wide parts of the relevant information to present a holistic picture of the nexus of practice, there were some limitations, like a limited number of interviewed LTs, the strongly predetermined topics of teaching culture in ÖIF courses and the researchers own critical stance concerning the frame curriculum and culture-comparative practices in textbooks. However, some of the commonly mentioned themes by the LTs and the curriculum can be presented as a starting point for navigating the nexus of practice. The reflexive thoughts mentioned in the interviews relate to explicit and non-explicit norms of society including specific themes like LTs' working conditions, textbooks, teaching materials, and curricular guidelines (related to immigration, intercultural citizenship, and education policy).

Both LTs and the policy documents acknowledge the interdependence of culture, language, and society. The frame curriculum is in line with the understanding of language and culture as intertwined as displayed in the introductory words of the frame curriculum:

*Language cannot be taught in isolation from social and cultural aspects – societal and cultural aspects are therefore incorporated into language teaching. Social values, rules, and conventions as well as orientation knowledge manifest themselves in the process of reading texts, and dialogues, in vocabulary as well as in idioms or pictures.*

(ÖIF frame curriculum, 2018, p.5)

This statement acknowledges the interconnection of various dimensions – language, culture, and society – and how the representation of values and beliefs is incorporated into speech, text, and audiovisual content. Some LTs chose to use the frame curriculum as a guiding document, and yet decided to use other materials and authentic texts to work with, especially for more advanced students of German as they felt that teaching in a reflexive way and opening discussions was easier to implement when using "authentic" materials from the internet, pictures, videos, newspapers, or music.

LT 4 provided a sequence planning where she used a document called *Bilderwelt Kursbuch* (world of pictures) by the linguistic department of the University of Zürich; this 11-page long document is concerned with how diversity is presented in course books for teaching German and aims for reflexive learning through the confrontation with own stereotypes. Furthermore, a focus is set on the visibility of diversity in course books and educators are encouraged to critically reflect upon teaching material, as “looking closely at teaching material can help to reconstruct and reflect on the *secret curriculum* or rather the prevailing image of society” (Bilderwelt Kursbuch, p.2). She worked with 10 pictures that show different people, family constellations, ages, genders, ethnic backgrounds, and the different didactic possibilities to work with them on beginners and advanced levels.

As previous research has shown, the topic *diversity* has gained popularity in research concerning German language acquisition and this document is a positive example of how well-prepared teaching materials by university departments can offer implementation possibilities that do not rely on normative notions of values and beliefs but rather encourage reflexive thinking skills. However, most LTs mentioned that finding culture-reflexive teaching material is a time-consuming task, time they do not get paid for and sometimes cannot find due to documentation requirements, exam preparation and specific topics they are obliged to cover during the lessons.

Educators draw on their individual knowledge, experience and critical thinking skills when implementing themes from the value and orientation curriculum into their teaching practice. This was shown in the interviews where LT reflected upon *what* to teach, *how* to teach it and whether to further discuss certain topics in-depth depending on how much previous knowledge their students already have. While LT 1 shared that her students do not have a lot of factual knowledge about Austria as they hardly travel within the country, LT 3 mentioned that she often relies on her students’ existing knowledge about the country coming from everyday life experiences. In line with the idea of incorporating students’ everyday life experiences is Groenewold’s (2005) notion that the focus of cultural studies is not set on a country but on the people learning about this country and how they experience encounters in the new environment, which factors influence them and how to reflect upon these situations.

LT 4 wants to create a safe space for her language students at school while at the same time being confronted with their experiences of discrimination. This shows that teaching language and cultural studies are not neutral and context-free tasks but are severely impacted by real-life

experiences of both LT and language students. In other words, what is discussed in the classroom is influenced by life stories and the co-construction of meaning: when the teachers talk about democratic values, human rights, and anti-discrimination laws in Austria on the one hand, and language students share experiences of discrimination on the other, an intercultural conflict might occur which calls for a critical reflection of the representation of an ideal society in policy documents vs. immigrants' everyday life encounters and issues. As LT 1 mentions:

*With the normative presentation of the course content in the value and orientation course, it is important to include the realities of life of the course participants. One of the learning goals is, of course, to make people aware that we can live together in society as a diverse, intercultural community without discrimination (...) that it works (...) but to be honest, reality is often different for many participants. (LT1)*

#### 4.1.1 Othering and normative conceptions of culture

While the majority of LTs positively highlighted the choice of themes, the structure, and the representation of diversity in the materials and textbooks provided by the ÖIF, they said that there are many simplistic statements in the frame curriculum and comparative tasks in the textbooks. Almost all LTs mentioned how intercultural teaching was reduced to asking students *how things are done in their home countries* as opposed to social practices, norms, and beliefs in Austria. LT4 put forward that she is critical of the term *Heimatland* (home country) which is used in most textbooks since immigrants might not be able to name one home country or they might want to distance themselves from a country they fled from or have been banished from. According to LT 4, calling the cultural studies course *value and orientation knowledge course* can be critically questioned as it implies that (1) there are typical Austrian values and beliefs and (2) these can be taught and learned in a process of assimilation. She is also critical of normative and idealizing representations in the teaching material:

*Some of the ÖIF materials show a normative, distorted picture of the country which makes it look as if Austria is the ideal country, e.g., if you ask about typical male and female jobs and comparing it to the participant's countries (...) The aim is once again to establish the narrative that Austria is a very modern country that values gender equality. (LT4)*

Also, LT 5 was especially critical of hegemonic Western perspectives and reflected upon the importance of an analytical stance concerning the underlying hierarchy that is represented in the curriculum and some of the materials. The reflection of curricular guidelines, textbooks and teaching materials is in line with Blommaert's (2005) view that discourses are consciously influenced by authorities and are at risk of being unconsciously reproduced. According to Söhner (2022), it is vital to establish an understanding of normality when investigating intercultural issues like the construction of social realities and collective norms and values. The relation between belonging to and deviating from what is considered “normal” – i.e., religion, language skills or behavioral patterns – is affected by individual interpretations and what is perceived as the norm by majority communities. Through the discursive confrontation with what is perceived as “the other”, own experiences, values, beliefs, and interpretation patterns can potentially become more visible and made explicit by being identified, reflected upon, and consequently adapted. Hence, perceptions of self and others are mutually dependent, and reflexivity can help navigate the complexities of intercultural communication.

As mentioned in the theoretical section 1.3 in Chapter 1, a key issue of traditional *Landeskunde* studies (cultural and regional studies) is the presentation of imagined and hegemonic monolingual nation-states. As Heinemann (2017, p.192) criticizes “the dominant *we* needs and produces the submissive *other* to stabilize its own position of supremacy”; therefore, it is fundamental that teachers, researchers, policymakers, examiners, textbook authors, and all others who are actors within the nexus of cultural studies in multicultural language acquisition classrooms, are especially careful not to re-produce these hegemonic ideas based on utopias of a homogenous society. This claim seems obvious because most of the mentioned actors are trained professionals, and yet, previous research has shown a gap in theoretical knowledge and reflexive thinking skills and practice, whether it is a teaching situation, representation of language and culture in textbooks and policy documents or informal talk among colleagues.

#### 4.1.2 General working conditions

All LTs mentioned the challenging working conditions as a limiting factor for their teaching, especially for teaching the themes of the value and orientation course. The most prevalent limiting factor was the lack of preparation time which would be needed to address cultural studies in an interesting, creative, critical, and sensitive way. According to the LTs, they get paid for only 4 hours of preparation time for a full-time language course which consists of 20 hours of course time per week. Four of the five LTs have pointed this out as a limitation for



being able to offer high-quality teaching. One educator specifically mentioned how the ÖIF guidelines are limiting since the documentation of their teaching lessons is taking up a lot of time which could be used for more creative and reflexive approaches to teaching culture. Moreover, the number of course participants even in beginners' courses is highlighted as a challenge. While the frame curriculum (2018, p.4) states that "the maximum number of course participants is 16 people. The maximum number is allowed if space permits, and the learning objectives can be achieved (...)" one of the LTs claimed that she must teach 14 -16 people even in her beginners' courses which does not allow much individual support. Classroom size, as another example, is a major mediating factor that influences teaching practice. LT 3 mentioned how having to teach 16 course participants is hindering her from allowing reflections, discussions and working individually with language learners. She would like to provide more individual support to the students, especially in the beginners' courses as the preconditions for successful language acquisition differ considerably. LT 2 specifically voices her needs and emphasizes how she considers her work as important:

*I think the framing conditions for successful language learning should be significantly improved, e.g., less participants, more teachers, and more preparation time for the lessons. It is a job that requires so much finesse and empathy (...) what we do is so important. (LT2)*

The way in which LT2 explicitly explains her needs and furthermore legitimizes her demands for better working conditions by emphasizing the relevance and required competencies for teaching German in multicultural language acquisition classes, shows her deep desire for change and a sense of self-awareness and self-confidence in her role as an educator.

Concerning prerequisites for enabling successful learning processes LT 3 described how trust and transparency are necessary for a positive atmosphere and highlighted how she sees room for improvement. For example, her students were not provided with the ÖIF's textbooks at the beginning of the course as "they might sell the books and not return to the language course". In addition, she mentioned that teachers change frequently, and she sometimes must switch courses unexpectedly which causes uncertainty as the following statement describes:

*I see the sudden switch of teachers as a lack of respect towards teachers and language students. This is also a part of the culture. We expect immigrants to be open towards a new culture when a lot of things in the trust-building process go wrong, for example by switching language teachers regularly. (LT3)*

Another challenge mentioned by LT 5 is teaching value and orientation knowledge at beginners' levels, as:

*You have to be extremely careful with the words you use to convey a message as a teacher (...) but also, the students do not have sufficient vocabulary to express what they want to say at beginners' levels. (LT5)*

To address this problem, the ÖIF regularly offers an online seminar about the implementation of knowledge about values and orientation in the early stages of language acquisition. The seminar takes 3.5 hours and addresses exclusively LTs which teach in the governmentally organized German courses for immigrants, hence it is not accessible for German language teachers working at private institutions. The seminar aims to examine the challenge of conducting value and orientation courses, especially on the basic A1/A2 levels.

Additionally, teaching materials are evaluated, new focus materials are presented and practical tips for independent didactic preparation of cultural studies, including suggestions for linking these to existing fields of action are given. Even though the interviewed LTs participated in this seminar, they still felt that simplifications from their side as well as students' lack of vocabulary were hindering the process of learning and discussing culture in the beginners' courses.

#### 4.1.3 Exam pressure/ Preparation for employability

The frame curriculum addresses the topic of employment and integration regularly and at all language levels. It is included in both topics (1) Education & language and (2) The labor market & economy, as well as in (3) Health (system) as it states that "Austria has a very good health system that only functions if people in Austria work and pay their taxes" (ÖIF frame curriculum 2018, p.9). In both sections (1) and (2) a clear focus is set on the importance of language skills for employment and working, thus contributing to the welfare system is directly linked to successful integration as the following excerpts show:

*Learning **German** is **absolutely necessary to find a job** in Austria, to settle in, and to cope with everyday life. In Austria, there are good opportunities for education, i.e., for learning and gaining qualifications for the labor market.*

(ÖIF frame curriculum 2018, p.6, emphasis added)

*An important goal of integration is to be able to take care of yourself economically and to not need financial support from the state. To be able to support yourself financially, it is necessary to be active and to actively apply your skills.*

(ÖIF frame curriculum 2018, p.8)

LT 2 drew on an experience of a seminar where she sees the major difference between teaching German as an L2 (as a majority language) and German as a foreign language, which is mainly taught at schools and universities. The conditions are more challenging for immigrants as they are more dependent on good German language skills for integration and employability. Two LTs brought up the issue of feeling responsible for career counseling for immigrant language students which they don't see as a part of their jobs as language educators.

## 4.2 Engaging the nexus: Policy and actions

In this study, I am interested in the reflexive thoughts of newly educated LTs which they share in an interview situation i.e., which challenges and possibilities they see for reflexive approaches in their daily teaching practice. In addition, top-down policy documents, i.e., the frame curriculum for value and orientation courses, influence LTs' teaching practice in governmentally funded German language acquisition courses and are therefore relevant in mediating the social action of teaching culture. The interaction order is concerned with all the social arrangements that are relevant for social interaction. Moreover, it tries to point out and illustrate certain behaviors, which are conventionally expected in these social interactions. For "teaching culture", actions mediated by discourses in place could include the accepted ideas and norms of language teaching, the perception of cultural studies, and used materials (textbooks, curriculum).

The results of the data analysis indicate an interaction order where teachers demonstrate a profound knowledge of their "role" as an interviewee as they have all successfully participated in higher education and two of the teachers mentioned having used interviews for their own Master's thesis. Moreover, the LTs were used to the digital setting on the online meeting platform Zoom since they have either had online teaching experience or have had seminars on Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic. This knowledge of how to act and interact digitally is part of their historical body, thus, there were no insecurities from either the interviewees or the interviewer.

There are numerous issues affecting local LTs that are established by higher-level actors such as governmental demands set by the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, the ÖIF and relevant research by universities. Teachers do not act independently but they are dependent on and influenced by debates around language and culture. The interviewed teachers shared their experiences and challenges openly and did not hold back their emotions like frustration with some of the difficult conditions they encountered at language acquisition classes. As an example, they all shared challenging situations when teaching themes of the value and orientation course and expressed situations where they felt overwhelmed, speechless, or unable to stop a discussion. LT 3 mentioned that two students would refuse to work together based on each other's nationalities and how she would agree to separate them in group work while at the same time aiming for an atmosphere of respect regardless of ethnical, national, or religious backgrounds. Through acknowledging feelings of confusion about how to handle situations of intercultural conflict, teachers had to use coping strategies like switching the topic or taking a break when an intercultural conflict occurred, and they reflected on their role as teachers in multicultural groups.

Furthermore, they reflected on the framing working conditions quite critically and expressed a wish for change, not only to improve their working conditions but to enhance the students' possibilities for successful language learning and the implementation of reflective approaches in cultural studies.

Four out of five LTs expressed critical thoughts concerning the frame curriculum of the ÖIF. These curricular guidelines are the most important mediating tools used by the teachers as they affect language acquisition classes on various levels: they influence LTs' lesson planning, specify the themes and topics to be discussed in the classroom and what is considered as "value and orientation knowledge" immigrants must acquire when living in Austria. They impact classroom practice significantly as it is not only a guiding document but a defining element of what must be taught at which stage of language acquisition (A1-B2). All LT stated that they are aware of the curricular demands and that the implementation of the set learning goals is obligatory.

This is monitored (1) by an exam part of the ÖIF exams after each language level and (2) by the obligation to document the implementation in the value and orientation course which must take place at least two times per week during the language acquisition course as stated:

*The content covered in the course, **especially the material covered in the values and orientation course** must be documented daily.*

(ÖIF frame curriculum, 2018, emphasis added)

The frame curriculum furthermore mentions that within the German language acquisition classes a conscious reflection, a linguistic and content-related discussion, and an understanding of the content of value and orientation knowledge, which is set in a social context, should take place. Yet, most of the LT have critically mentioned that they feel limited in various ways by the ÖIF regulations and guiding documents as the following statement shows:

*I see the ÖIF as quite controlling...for example, they did unannounced evaluations from time to time. At the exam about value and orientation knowledge you should not give your opinion but just choose what they (the ÖIF) see as the right answer (...) since a main goal at the exam – for example when comparing to the home country - is to **conclude that Austria is in many ways better and more developed than other countries.** (LT 4, emphasis added)*

Similarly, LT5 mentions the challenges and limitations by the ÖIF which she faces in her teaching practice as following:

*The values that we are supposed to convey should be taught in a short amount of time in the value and orientation course and with only limited time for preparation. I often feel as if a focus is not set on language acquisition but on **integration into the labor market**, regardless of their skills and competencies while presenting the **Austrian culture as a culture of higher value.** (LT5, emphasis added)*

One element of data analysis is that the specific learning goals of the frame curriculum aim at establishing an interaction order that is based on simple, normative understandings of cultures and intercultural communication, the underlying assumption that the “Austrian way of doing things” is the ideal approach and that intercultural misunderstandings are easy to fix.

This simplifying perspective is demonstrated in the document when presenting intercultural issues with five examples of ideal behavior in Austria; two examples are presented as follows

*Here are some examples of situations where there may be cultural misunderstandings. For example (1) what does “being on time” mean in Austria? (2) How loud can one be among other people?*

*(1) Very often, an appointment is made for a specific time. Sometimes it is not possible to arrive upon the agreed time. Then it is common to call and tell the other person that you are going to be late. (...)*

*(2) When you meet friends and acquaintances in public of course you want to talk, laugh, and discuss with them. However, you should not be too loud when talking or when being on the phone. You should also not play music too loud. This could disturb people nearby.*

(Document “My life in Austria”)

Three of the five LTs mentioned how they find it difficult to teach simplified and infantilizing topics that “do not display Austrian values, but human values (LT5)”. LT 3 perceived these curricular guidelines as “almost embarrassing” and reflected critically on how much of the content presents an idealized picture of life in Austria. In conclusion, all LTs critically reflected on whether it makes sense to include parts of the topics stated in the frame curriculum which present rather obvious norms of respectful behavior. The dilemma of trying to artificially produce an ideal picture of norms within value and orientation courses is that it is one-dimensional and does not match the complexities of intercultural communication and misunderstandings which might occur due to different cultural patterns of interpretations. As Zhou (2015, p. 71) mentions “in intercultural and linguafranca interactions, there is a greater need to negotiate what and which cultural schema, and in some cases, conflicting cultural schemas, participants would go by in interaction.” I view Zhou’s use of the term *schema* not in a narrowing view of set actions but rather in line with Altmayer’s (2010), Koreik’s (2011) and Fornoff et al.’s (2017) idea of cultural patterns of interpretation which influence intercultural communication practice. The intercultural conflicts the LTs in this study highlighted go far beyond what the frame curriculum presents and most of the educators could name occurrences that made them struggle to find the right words; the teachers mentioned homosexuality, family constellations, and religion as themes most prone to create conflict in their classrooms.

### 4.3 Engaging the nexus: Historical bodies and actions

LTs' historical bodies affect their perception of language and culture-reflexivity, their attitude towards intercultural citizenship education and what kind of role they see themselves in as teachers of German. In the context of this study, it is central to consider the backgrounds of the educators in terms of their impact on the teaching practice, their reflexive thoughts and their opinions towards the learning goals set by the ÖIF. The LTs have all worked for months or even years as educators for German as an L2, two of them having taught German as a foreign language at a university and a private language school abroad. An important common feature is that they have all gained working experience within the state-funded German language courses for immigrants in Austria. The LTs have successfully completed university education in Austria either at a Bachelor's or Master's level and participated in the continuous education course for teaching German. One of the LT has furthermore completed a Master's (120ECTS) for teaching German as an L2 at the University of Vienna.

Even though they have all participated in university courses and work in courses organized by the ÖIF, they have different linguistic backgrounds in their families. Two of the participants were born outside of Austria, one of the participants has no right to vote as she does not have Austrian citizenship, and one LT has parents who immigrated to Austria. All teachers are bi-or multilingual, with one LT speaking six different languages and having another first language than German. Multilingualism as well as a migration background are part of LTs' historical bodies and influence their teaching practice:

*My father is a Muslim Bosnian, my mother an orthodox Serb and my husband a catholic Italian; **my own multicultural background is a huge advantage when working with multicultural groups. I think you must be open to other cultures....I would even say that I need this openness for my teaching practice.***  
(LT 1, emphasis added)

*Due to my intercultural background, I have a lot of knowledge and appreciation for other cultures. My classroom should be a safe space for everyone, regardless of the individual background.* (LT 5)

The two LTs who experienced a migration process themselves – LT 1 moved to Austria many years ago from Serbia and LT 3 immigrated two years ago from Germany - claimed to have a better understanding of what it means not to have a citizen's rights e.g., the voting right in Austria. However, their different situation, with LT 1 already having been granted Austrian citizenship, leads to a differing habitus which is displayed in the fact that LT 1 claimed that she - and her language students - find it acceptable not to have the voting right after only one year in Austria while LT 3 critically mentions how she must teach about democracy and the political parties when she is not even allowed to vote in this country. LT 1 stated that her students understand that they still must wait for citizenship and the corresponding rights since they have not been in the country for a long time; this might relate to her historical body as she has experienced the long way to Austrian citizenship herself and likely perceives it rather positively, as she stated that it takes a long time to have sufficient knowledge about the political system and the different parties.

While LT 1 mentioned how she can make use of her knowledge about different religions LT 4 indicated that she finds it difficult to talk about religion, as she is not religious herself; thus, the educators' historical bodies, their embodied experiences and knowledge, impacts how they comprehend topics of value and orientation courses like religion, family, traditions, democratic values, just to name a few.

Moreover, their historical bodies and the role they see themselves in as teachers influence how LTs prepare the teaching sequences for the value and orientation course. The plannings that were provided ranged from short, hand-written notes to a fully formulated teaching outline with learning goals, a sequence description, materials used and didactic background information (see Table 1). This might have been partly influenced by teachers' historical bodies – their different experiences about what they perceive as sufficient preparation and their different personalities, e.g., LT 3 mentioned that she feels more secure with detailed planning, especially in the field of value and orientation knowledge at beginners' levels as nuances in speaking and how to explain certain topics are a sensitive balancing act for her as a newly- educated language teacher.



When asked about which role they see themselves in as teachers the LT mentioned the “role of a guide” (LT 2) or “moderator role” (LT 5) as stated:

*I see my role as a teacher as a guiding person who gives information, reflects upon which topics to develop more intensively and how to teach reflexively even at literacy courses and A1 level courses (....) I want to make my students **attentive and active participants in the social life** by teaching them sufficient language skills while at the same time strengthening their reflective skills concerning culture. (LT 2, emphasis added)*

*I see myself in a moderator role, especially in the more advanced B1/B2 groups where they can discuss different topics (....) and try to make the students sensitive for tolerance and mutual understanding and that a diverse intercultural community is beneficial for everyone. (LT 5)*

LT 2 put a focus on her role as a teacher of (culture-) reflexive thinking skills and intercultural citizenship education. She aims to present student materials that value diversity in society but mentions that implicit stereotypes are part of socialization and hard to overcome; moreover, she states that black-and-white thinking is not related to specific cultures but must be tackled individually and by using reflective practice. Her attentiveness and reflexive thinking skills are displayed in her teaching goals and her perception of the role of an educator.

LT 5 has a positive attitude towards TL and various cultures and encourages students to share their knowledge of different languages. Her genuine belief that cultural and linguistic variety is enriching for the majority community might be partly influenced by her own historical body with her parents having an immigrant background; she mentioned how important it is for her to create a safe space for people who share experiences of discrimination based on their names, accents, and appearance. Moreover, she called the work as a language educator an “idealistic work” as she would like to change her student’s life for the better while working under challenging conditions. LT 4 stated that she feels inspired by the language teachers she liked and felt motivated by and tries to imitate their strategies to be a good teacher herself; she highlighted empathy and a sensibility for individual needs as the most important skills for teachers who teach language and culture to immigrant learners.

#### 4.4 Changing the nexus: Reflexivity as a tool for change

The final stage of NA is concerned with changing the nexus of practice by highlighting emerging debates that have arisen during the analysis. These new debates are outlined in Chapter 5 when answering the research questions. Furthermore, recommendations for further research are included in the concluding Chapter 6.

The idea of *change* is visible in previous academic research as the practice of teaching culture has been critically investigated and various difficulties with teaching complex themes while simultaneously acquiring a new language have been found. By including the concept of reflexivity, the re-conceptualization of culture and language has been discussed theoretically as presented in the previous research section (1.3).

With this study, I wish to contribute to the change of the nexus of practice by including the concept of reflexivity not only theoretically but also methodologically by utilizing NA to encourage LTs to reflect upon their experiences. LTs' interviews and analysis of lesson plannings and policy documents have shown discrepancies between governmentally set learning goals and the teacher's perceptions of the possibility of successful implementation of these goals; hence, this study attempts to give LT a voice and an opportunity to express their needs while at the same time encouraging them to reflect upon how they teach culture to immigrant learners and which limiting factors they can identify. Thus, *reflection* as a social action and an important task for both LTs and the researcher is an important part of changing the investigated nexus of practice.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The aim of this thesis was to investigate teachers' perceptions of the implementation of culture- and language-reflexive approaches by making them reflect upon their teaching practice of cultural studies and the curricular guidelines provided by the frame curriculum of the ÖIF.

The assumption stated in previous research that more nuanced approaches towards language and culture are practically not yet implemented in cultural studies as a part of language acquisition has been partly shown as a result of the NA of the data sets. The analysis of the interviews with their entanglement with policy documents and teachers' lesson plans indicate an awareness of the multidimensionality of culture. Nonetheless, learning goals, textbook tasks and the ÖIF exams mostly focus on factual knowledge and simplification, as presented in the outdated *Landeskunde* approach. Despite this, LTs also pointed towards challenges relating to the practical implications of the implementation of a language- and culture-reflexive approach.

A key finding of the analysis is that even though the LTs have previously heard about language- and culture-reflexive approaches during their studies they all mentioned difficulties with successfully including them into their teaching practice. When going back to my research questions, I had to reflect on why the teachers chose to foreground the limitations of policy documents and their challenging working conditions when talking about the implementation of language- and culture-reflexive approaches. These struggles with the value and orientation course and time-consuming limitations, like preparing students for language exams, documentation of their teaching, and working as career counsellors seemed to overshadow to some extent their wish to teach language and cultural studies in a more nuanced way, going beyond stable and standardizing conceptions of language and culture. In the following, I present the answers to the three research questions:

### **1. What are the main challenges language teachers experience when teaching cultural studies in multicultural classrooms for immigrants?**

The educators highlighted that even though they strive to teach in a language- and culture-reflexive way, there are some limitations in teaching practice. They raised challenging working conditions in the ÖIF courses, normative notions of culture in the frame curriculum, othering, and hardships when teaching cultural studies, especially at beginner's levels.

The seminar offered by the ÖIF did not seem to sufficiently prepare LTs to tackle this challenge. The topics presented in the frame curriculum and textbook were mostly praised by the teachers, still when teaching in a more reflexive way the teachers had to go beyond the set learning goals by the ÖIF and find new creative ways to talk about their student's linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, they felt that exam pressure and the pressure to prepare immigrants for the job market put them into situations where learning to the test and becoming career counsellors became pragmatic necessities. The fact that the value and orientation knowledge is examined as a separate part after each language level limits teachers and encourages them to use the teaching-to-the-test strategy. Furthermore, intercultural conflicts when talking about sensitive topics at the beginning of the language acquisition process were perceived as difficult and most LTs mentioned one or more classroom situations where they had to use de-escalating strategies like taking a break, switching the topic, or discussing a compromise.

As TL and culture-reflexive teaching are hardly integrated into the curriculum and learning materials for the value and orientation course, the question of whether these approaches can lead to the development of cultural studies cannot yet be answered, as many other debates around working conditions, political implications, the matter of employability, time- and exam-pressure have emerged as predominant in the researched nexus of practice.

## **2. In what ways do language teachers report that they implement curricular and policy guidelines concerning cultural studies into their teaching practice?**

The interviewed LTs were aware of their obligation to implement the content presented in the frame curriculum into their value and orientation courses. Still, they were mostly critical of the hegemonic undertone and simplified conceptions of cultural norms. The ÖIF provides the curriculum and the textbooks but also carries out the exams at the end of each language course, thus the organization has a lot of power regarding *what* LTs teach and *how* they should teach it. The majority of the teachers did not report difficulties when implementing the policy guidelines since the textbooks they work with are structured accordingly. Taking the LTs' criticism into account arising discourses are: To what extent should LTs be guided (or limited?) to certain topics regarding cultural studies? How much should policy documents impact language acquisition courses? How can educators and researchers be more involved in the development or improvement of the frame curriculum? Is it possible to "teach a culture" practically and if so, which mediational means are needed?

### **3. In what ways do language teachers reflect upon language- and culture-reflexive approaches in relation to their teaching practice?**

All the interviewed LTs demonstrated high levels of critical and reflexive thinking concerning the topics, the textbooks, the frame curriculum, the exam, and teaching materials relating to cultural studies. Their (multicultural) historical bodies and positive attitude towards working in multicultural groups positively affect their teaching practice. The following examples give a brief outline of LTs' impressions of culture-reflexive teaching in practice:

- . LT 4 demonstrated a broad understanding of the term culture as she reflected on how culture is for example displayed in structural patterns. She mentioned that the teacher changes and the fact that her students were not provided with textbooks at the beginning of the course show a “culture of mistrust and doubt” which is hindering the establishment of a good learning atmosphere. This reflective thought relates to how culture is going far beyond geographic boundaries but also describes e.g., an institutional culture which entails, in this specific example, an underlying fear of the immigrant learners exploiting the free language courses and the assumption that they might sell the textbooks for their financial benefit. This is quite a drastic example, which is probably not representative of the majority of institutions working for the ÖIF, nonetheless, it shows how negative assumptions hinder successful learning.
- . LT 2 mentioned that she sees teaching the value and orientation course as a balancing act between teaching culture in a reflexive way but at the same time ensuring that her students do not feel overwhelmed by the rather abstract academic debates around cultural patterns of interpretation, especially at the language levels A1 and A2. Value and orientation knowledge is a vital part of the language courses and is included in the frame curriculum, teachers' plannings and textbooks even at beginner's levels. The ÖIF seminar which is addressing this problem shows that there is a willingness to further develop implementation strategies.
- . In line with Fornoff's (2015) notion that students should not be seen as representatives of their cultures, LT4 sets a focus on people's individuality by avoiding tasks like “presenting your homecountry” or to bringing “traditional food”. Instead, she integrates regional differences within countries e.g., presenting her home village's traditions which most Austrians are not aware of and encourages her students to do the same.

- . By doing so, the focus is shifted from so-called *typical* and *traditional* representations of a country to a more holistic view of people, who are influenced by their whole historical body; hence, their full repertoire of embodied experiences.

As previous research has shown, (inter)cultural studies have recently been open for debate and more nuanced and reflective approaches have gained popularity. However, there are many pitfalls when trying to integrate this knowledge into the practice of teaching culture. The academic debate around the terms *language* and *culture* is present in newly educated LTs' attention; it is furthermore an essential part of recent university education for German teachers. However, when reflecting on implementation strategies for successfully integrating their knowledge into teaching practice the interviewed LTs described it as time-consuming and too abstract, especially during the early stages of language learning.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study aims to engage, navigate, and change a nexus of practice by conducting a NA that maps the relation of discourses and social actions concerning cultural studies in language acquisition practice. The investigating of whether theoretical knowledge has been successfully implemented in language teaching practice has shown that while all of the interviewed LTs expressed the wish to teach language and culture more reflexively, e.g., by developing tasks that go beyond culture-comparative practices, there are many challenges they have to face.

Previous research has shown that – theoretically – the shift from reductionist notions of languages and culture has taken place. Nonetheless, outside of academia, these reflexive and self-critical approaches have not yet been implemented in an informed manner. This thesis aims to address these areas of conflict: academic accuracy when working with debates about definitions of language and culture versus daily talk, reflexivity versus simplistic perspectives and open mindsets versus Western hegemonic worldviews. The examined policy documents do not yet indicate this nuanced view on culture and language but entail rather pragmatic and simplistic approaches to teaching culture with a focus on fast-track language learning and normative value and orientation course goals. By shedding light on these issues, this study contributes to advocating for a nuanced view of language and culture by adapting a continuous mindset of reflection and criticality towards my missteps when navigating the complexities of talking about and teaching culture.

To get a more holistic picture the voices of the other important– immigrant language students, policymakers, and academic researchers – should be included in the process of engaging, navigating and changing the nexus of practice. As researchers who have previously investigated the field of cultural studies have mentioned, teaching culture as part of teaching a foreign language has not yet been studied in a multidisciplinary way which results in a lack of empirical research and only a small number of studies which have been conducted quite recently.

## 6.1 Sustainability Statement

The United Nation's sustainable development goals (2015) aim at fighting poverty, increasing equal opportunities, ensuring peace, and protecting the planet. There are 17 different intertwined SDGs which focus on economic, social, and environmental sustainability. SDG 4 strives to *“ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”* The UN has furthermore set targets to achieve these SDGs, the following target 4.7 is especially addressed within this study:

*“By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, **human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.**”* (UN SDG, 2015)

The nexus of practice in this study is concerned with global citizenship, intercultural communication and an increased openness and tolerance for individually and culturally shaped patterns of interpretation. It wishes to shed light on immigrant's language education as an important prerequisite for lifelong learning opportunities, active political and social participation, and employment/education possibilities. Within the frame curriculum for value and orientation courses several themes relating to sustainability are addressed: the promotion of human rights, democratic values, equal opportunities and giving information about elements of the welfare state, like the health system that is open for everyone. The interviewed LTs included learning tasks that value cultural diversity by giving students time to talk about their cultural backgrounds and they seemed to show interest in their student's multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. Culture- and language-reflexive approaches intend to present a more nuanced and multidimensional picture of a world that is culturally and linguistically diverse as a counter-position to increasing nationalistic trends in the last years.

Cultural studies enable both teachers and students to critically engage with topics like misconceptions, stereotypes, and discrimination and it can pave the way for sustainabilitygoals in education for immigrants like successful intercultural communication, mutual respect, active participation, and life-long learning opportunities.



## 6.2 Limitations of the study

An important limitation of this study is the short amount of time for this extensive methodological analysis which consists of engaging, navigating and changing the nexus of practice. Navigating the nexus of practice by mapping the trajectories of people and their social actions on scales of place and time can take months and even years (Scollon & Scollon, 2004).

An important limitation in the theoretical framework is the focus on researchers based in Germany and Austria, thus the focus on German literature in the section about previous research. Methodological limitations include the small sample size, hence the group of five teachers who work with language education in Austria can only offer a few insights and the generalizability of the results may be limited. Another limiting factor to consider is the fact that the LTs who agreed to be interviewed are likely those with a specific interest in language and culture-reflexive approaches; thus, the data analysis might display the picture of educators who wish to implement more reflexive ways of teaching when it is possibly not a priority for many teachers in the nexus of practice.

## 6.3 Recommendations for further research

At the specific site of engagement, the researcher and the teachers are participating, but also immigrant language students are important actors within this nexus of practice. I am aware that the learners' voices are missing in this study, as the LTs are many times speaking as the advocates of their students e.g., when talking about problematic learning conditions such as too many people per course, small course rooms or too much pressure relating to the language exams at the end of each course. As I did not talk to the most central actors in the nexus of practice – the immigrant language students – I am missing important discourses in place. I had to rely on the information the LTs shared and had to exclude the students' perspective which could offer valuable insights, especially regarding the relation between language learning and identity formation, their historical bodies which influence their motivation, learning preconditions and openness for reflection.

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# List of Appendices

## Appendix 1: RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

**Cultural studies in multicultural classrooms:** an investigation of language teachers' perceived challenges and attitudes towards culture- and language-reflective approaches

Dear participant,

My name is Kathrin Huemer, I am a student at the International Master's Programme in Educational Research at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. You are being invited to participate in a research study on teachers' experiences, challenges, attitudes, and reflections regarding cultural studies as part of the curriculum of German as a second language. The research will be conducted via online interviews, and discussion about lesson planning and implementation. Your contributions could lead to a better understanding of teachers' attitudes relating to modern reflexive approaches to cultural studies and their implementation strategies in practice. The following information aims to help you make an informed decision about your participation in this study.

You consent to participate in this research project and the following has been explained to you:

- participation in this study is voluntary.
- you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any implications.
- you are going to be anonymized and your identity is protected.
- the data generated in this project is stored in a password protected hard- drive, to which only the student, the supervisor and the examiner have access to.

Additionally, you consent to:

- audio-visual recordings of all research activities.
- your contributions being shared with university teachers at the University of Gothenburg.
- publication of the results from this study on the condition that your identity is not revealed.

Thank you for contributing to this study. Your input as a teaching professional is highly valued. If you have any questions, complaints or wish to withdraw feel free to contact me or my supervisor at:

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**To consent to participation, I..... (name) send this form to [gushueka@student.gu.se](mailto:gushueka@student.gu.se) as a confirmation under the conditions and information specified above**

## EINVERSTÄNDNISERKLÄRUNG ZUR STUDIENTEILNAHME

Forschungsprojekt: **Kulturelles Lernen in multikulturellen Spracherwerbsklassen -**

Eine Untersuchung von erlebten Herausforderungen und Einstellungen zu Sprach- und Kulturreflexiven Ansätzen im Fremdsprachenunterricht

Liebe/r Teilnehmender,

Ich heiße Kathrin Huemer und bin Studentin des internationalen Masterstudiengangs Bildungsforschung. Sie sind eingeladen, an dieser Studie über Ihre Erfahrungen, Herausforderungen, Einstellungen und Reflexionen bezüglich Landeskunde/Interkulturellem Lernen als Lehrender für Deutsch als Zweitsprache teilzunehmen.

Die Studie umfasst Online-Interviews, Hospitationen und Diskussionen Ihrer Unterrichtsplanungen. Ihre Beiträge können zu einem besseren Verständnis der Einstellungen von Lehrpersonen bezüglich neuer sprach- und kulturreflexiver Forschungsansätze und deren Umsetzung im Fremdsprachenunterricht, beitragen. Die folgenden Informationen sollen es Ihnen ermöglichen, eine Entscheidung über Ihre Teilnahme zu treffen:

- Die Teilnahme an dieser Studie erfolgt freiwillig.
- Der/die Teilnehmende hat das Recht jederzeit ohne Angabe von Gründen, die Teilnahme zu beenden.
- Alle Teilnehmenden werden anonymisiert und ihre Identitäten geschützt.
- Die im Rahmen der Studie generierten Daten werden passwortgeschützt gespeichert und sind nur der Studentin, der Betreuerin und der Prüfer\*in zugänglich

Des Weiteren stimmen Sie zu, dass:

- Audiovisuelle Aufnahmen aller Forschungsaktivitäten stattfinden.
- Ihre Beiträge zur Studie mit Professor\*innen der Universität Göteborg geteilt werden können.
- Eine Veröffentlichung der Studienergebnisse nur unter Schutz ihrer Identität stattfindet.

Herzlichen Dank für Ihre Bereitschaft zur Teilnahme und Ihre Beiträge als professionelle Ansprechperson. Wenn Sie Fragen, Beschwerden, oder den Wunsch die Studienteilnahme zu beenden haben, melden Sie sich gerne und jederzeit bei mir oder meiner Betreuerin unter:

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Ich, .....(Name) erkläre mich durch die Zusendung der Einverständniserklärung an [gushueka@student.gu.se](mailto:gushueka@student.gu.se) zur Teilnahme an der Studie, unter den oben genannten Bedingungen, bereit.

## Appendix 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Cultural studies in multicultural classrooms:** An investigation of language teachers' attitudes and perceived challenges regarding culture- and language-reflective approaches

1. Please introduce yourself, your teaching experience, your current teaching position, and your experience with teaching cultural studies in multicultural language acquisition classrooms.

#### **Awareness of curricular demands**

2. Can you describe your methods and strategies to incorporate curricular demands concerning cultural studies, stated in the frame-curriculum of the Austrian Integration Fond? into your lessons?

3. What are the most recurring challenges and difficulties when incorporating curricular requirements into your teaching practice?

#### **Challenges in teaching cultural studies**

4. What do you perceive as the main challenge(s) when teaching cultural studies for immigrants?

5. Can you present specific examples of the challenges which arise in multicultural settings?

6. How do these challenges impact teaching and learning practice in your classroom?

#### **Implementation of theoretical knowledge into practice**

7. Could you give examples of how you incorporate theoretical knowledge about teaching culture into your teaching practice?

8. Can you share some of the possibilities and limitations when implementing new approaches into teaching cultural studies?

9. In your opinion, are reflexive approaches detectable in the textbooks you work with and in the frame-curriculum?

10. What are the textbooks and other teaching materials you use in your teaching?

11. What do you consider the most important task as a language teacher? Has this changed over time?

#### **Closing questions**

12. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding teaching cultural studies in multicultural classroom settings?

13. Do you have any recommendations on how to improve teaching cultural studies (methods, textbooks, general conditions, curriculum)?

## INTERVIEWLEITFADEN

**Kulturelles Lernen in multikulturellen Spracherwerbsklassen:** Eine Untersuchung von erlebten Herausforderungen und Einstellungen zu sprach- und kulturreflexiven Ansätzen im Fremdsprachenunterricht?

1. Bitte stellen Sie sich, Ihre Lehrerfahrung, Ihre aktuelle Lehrtätigkeit und Ihre Erfahrungen mit dem Unterrichten von landes- und kulturvermittelnden Inhalten in multikulturellen Spracherwerbsklassen, vor.

### **Bewusstsein von curricularen Anforderungen**

2. Kennen Sie die curricularen Anforderungen für Landes- und Kulturkunde, die im Rahmencurriculum des Österreichischen Integrationsfonds formuliert sind?
3. Sind Sie auf Herausforderungen und Schwierigkeiten gestoßen, wenn Sie curriculare Anforderungen in Ihre Unterrichtspraxis integriert haben?

### **Herausforderungen im Landes- und Kulturunterricht**

4. Was sehen Sie als die größte(n) Herausforderung(en) bei der Vermittlung von Kulturstudien für Migranten?
5. Können Sie konkrete Beispiele für die Herausforderungen nennen, die sich in multikulturellen Umgebungen ergeben?
6. Wie wirken sich diese Herausforderungen auf die Lehr- und Lernprozesse in Ihrem Unterricht aus?

### **Umsetzung des theoretischen Wissens in die Praxis**

7. Können Sie Beispiele nennen, wie Sie Ihr theoretisches Wissen in die Unterrichtspraxis einfließen lassen?
8. Können Sie einige der Herausforderungen und Einschränkungen bei der Umsetzung dieser neuen Ansätze in den interkulturellen Landeskundeunterricht benennen?
9. Sind Ihrer Meinung nach, moderne reflexive Ansätze in den Lehrbüchern, mit denen Sie arbeiten, und im Rahmencurriculum nachweisbar?
10. Welche Textbücher und andere Lehrmaterialien nutzen Sie?
11. Was empfinden Sie als wichtigste Aufgabe als Sprachlehrende(r)? Hat sich diese Auffassung geändert?

### **Abschließende Fragen**

12. Gibt es noch etwas, das Sie in Bezug auf das Unterrichten von Kulturwissenschaften in multikulturellen Klassenzimmern mitteilen möchten?
13. Haben Sie Empfehlungen, wie die kulturwissenschaftliche Lehre/Landeskundeunterricht verbessert werden kann (Methoden, Schulbücher, Rahmenbedingungen, Curriculum)?