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DISSERTATION

Lessons in English:
English as Lingua Franca and School Subject

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Dream.
Dare.
Do.

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This work is dedicated
in loving memory of my brother Erwin

Preamble

If not explicitly stated otherwise the author of this paper always refers to both male and female gender.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	5
Preamble	9
Table of Contents.....	11
INTRODUCTION	15
1 Of Megan, Martin Luther King & Me.....	17
PART I: UP THE DOWN STAIRCASE	25
2 The View from Upstairs: EU Language Policy.....	27
2.1 Introduction	28
2.2 Language and Politics.....	31
2.3 Europeans and Their Languages	37
2.4 Development of Language Policy Questions in the EU	42
2.5 Historical Development of EU Language Policy	47
2.6 Historical Development of Foreign Language Education Policies in the EU	61
2.7 Current Developments	65
2.8 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.....	68
2.9 Conclusion	72
3 Up the Down Staircase: Research Methodology.....	73
3.1 Introduction	73
3.2 Pilot Study A	74
3.3 Pilot Study B	75
3.4 Questionnaire	76
3.4.1 Research Methodology	76
3.4.2 Questionnaire Considerations	78
3.4.3 Questionnaire Design.....	81
3.4.4 Description of the Participants	90
3.5 Conclusion	91
4 The View from Downstairs: Teacher and Learner Attitudes	93
4.1 Introduction	93

4.2	Foreign Language Assistants.....	93
4.3	EFL Teachers.....	96
4.4	Pupils and University Students.....	98
4.5	Conclusion of Part I	112
PART II: OF SQUARE PEGS AND ROUND HOLES: THINGS ARE AS THEY ARE		115
5	Things Are as They Are: English as a Lingua Franca.....	117
5.1	Introduction	117
5.2	What's That Thing Called ELF? Defining English as a Lingua Franca	121
5.3	Friend or Foe? Attitudes towards ELF in the European Union.....	125
5.4	Mine, Yours or Ours? The Ownership Question.....	130
5.5	My Precious: Perceptions of Culture and ELF.....	135
5.6	Native Speakers, Non-Native Speakers and ELF Users	139
5.7	Conclusion.....	143
6	Scholae Et Vitae Discimus: Teaching in School.....	145
6.1	Introduction	146
6.2	The Austrian School System	148
6.3	Verum, Bonum et Bellum: The School Setting.....	151
6.4	Specific Characteristics of a School Subject.....	153
6.5	Doceo, Ergo Sum: The Teacher	155
6.5.1	Quality Teaching and Teachers	157
6.5.2	The Roles of the Teacher	160
6.5.3	Teacher–Student Relationship: What It Is and Why It Matters	165
6.6	Assisto, Quid Sum? The Foreign Language Assistant.....	167
6.6.1	The Fulbright Foreign Language Assistantship Program	168
6.6.2	The Role of the Foreign Language Assistant	171
6.7	Comparison of the Roles of the Teacher and the Foreign Language Assistant	172
6.8	Conclusion.....	174
7	Of Square Pegs and Round Holes: English as a Foreign Language	177
7.1	Introduction	177
7.2	Conceiving Foreign Languages as School Subjects	178
7.3	Great Expectations: Objectives of the School Subject EFL.....	186
7.4	Shortcomings.....	192
7.5	Reconsidering the Foreign Language Assistant's Role in Class	198

7.6	Conclusion	203
PART III: HEADING FOR NEW SHORES.....		207
8	Heading for New Shores	209
8.1	Introduction	209
8.2	Visions of – and for – a New World of ELT.....	210
8.3	Setting the Sails	214
8.4	Conclusion	223
CONCLUSION		225
9	Conclusion.....	227
9.1	Sailing Close to the Wind	227
9.2	Concluding Remarks	230
9.3	Looking Ahead	232
References		235
Appendix A: Pupil Data Sheet.....		251
Appendix B: University Student Data Sheet.....		253
Appendix C: Table of Figures and Graphs.....		255
Abstracts		257
English Abstract		257
German Abstract.....		258
Résumé		261

INTRODUCTION

1 Of Megan, Martin Luther King & Me

For almost 15 years now I have taught English as a Foreign Language at various educational levels and institutions, ranging from part-time vocational school to high school, advanced training courses to universities. I have called the University for Natural Resources and Life Sciences as well as a vocational high school my professional home for over ten years. This professional background has provided me with an extensive practical classroom experience. At the vocational high school I am also the host teacher for so-called Foreign Language Assistants (FLAs): non-professional English native speakers (in my case, from the USA) who come to Europe and join regular English language teachers in class for one to two years. I have functioned as their main contact person for years. I consider myself a reflective practitioner, critically examining the objectives and actual implementation of education and teaching in general, and the subject English as a Foreign Language in particular. As part of this reflective process, I have become aware of a number of discrepancies. Some of these discrepancies have fed this dissertation, such as the following incident, still vivid in my mind:

One late morning in fall several years ago, my FLA at the time - let us call her Megan - and I were sitting together planning the upcoming lessons, discussing what we wanted to teach and needed to cover and how Megan could best contribute to my various classes. Our conversation was something like this:

Me: “Megan, we should work on Route 66 in the second form. Could you prepare an introduction and tell the students about Route 66 and interesting places along the road?”

Megan: “Oh, I have never travelled on Route 66. I can’t say anything about it.”

Me: “Ah, okay. Well, then I will do that. For the fourth form we need to prepare a couple of lessons on the ecosystem of the Everglades. Could you do that?”

Megan: “Sorry. I do not know anything about that part of the USA. I have never been to Florida.”

Me: “You really missed something there. Okay, then I’ll do that. What could we have you do? Let’s see – oh, yes, how about you prepare lessons on Dr. Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement in the USA for our fifth form?”

At that moment, her face lit up and enthusiastically Megan answered:

Megan: “Sure! I can google something!”

It was at that moment that I asked myself: “What is it that Megan can do that I cannot do?” I do not consider myself to be *Superteacher* but I am capable of teaching about Route 66, the Everglades and the Civil Rights Movement in the USA – and, yes, I can also google. Obviously, there must be *something* about Megan and the other FLAs that I have hosted, *something* that I am lacking; otherwise, the Ministry would surely not pay for an assistant to join me in class. After all, no other kind of high school teacher has an assistant: not geography teachers, or chemistry, biology, mathematics or history teachers. So what is it that Megan has, does or brings to the classroom that I cannot offer to my students myself?

This question was the starting point for my dissertation project. The objective was not only to investigate the role of the English native speaker in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms at school but also to reflect on the current understandings and objectives of what the school subject EFL is and could be. I could not have foreseen on that fall morning where my “What is it that Megan can do that I cannot do”-question would lead me. This dissertation provides insights into my inquiry triggered by this question.

So far, in English language teaching in the European Union, focus has been placed on native speakers as ideal role models (see, for example, Council of Europe, 2007 and Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2004a). State-of-the-art research into English as a Lingua Franca, however, has comprehensively shown that the ownership of English (Widdowson, 2003) must be reconsidered as it lies with its international community of users (see, for example, Seidlhofer, 2011, Jenkins, 2007,

Böhringer & Hülbauer, 2010 and Dewey & Leung, 2010). In my dissertation I bring together these two contradictory concepts in such a way as to allow for fruitful interactions and a partnership in the interest of the students and their future roles and needs in a global society.

In order to do so, my dissertation project has combined hermeneutic and empirical research approaches and included theoretical considerations from the field of applied linguistics and pedagogy. The empirical research incorporates inductive and deductive research methods and was analyzed qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

This thesis is structured in three main parts. Part I analyses the current status quo of English language teaching within the European Union. Part II deals with the reality of English as a global lingua franca and its implications for the school setting. Part III will show what a change could look like and proposes an assistantship program that would help develop ELT into a future-oriented school subject that shifts the focus from competence in the language towards pedagogic competence.

Both policymakers and the wider public generally assume that FLAs, as English native speakers, have an important role to play in the school subject English as a Foreign Language. I, however, have experienced their limitations and have asked myself what kind of assistance FLAs can actually provide and how relevant this assistance is for the learning processes of the students. The questions that have guided my critical reflection on this subject are:

- a) What exactly is English teaching?
- b) Which abilities does an English teacher need?
- c) What is the school subject EFL all about?

All Austrian school subjects, including EFL, have prescribed curricula that define the means and ends of the knowledge to be acquired. These curricula are subordinate to the Austrian School Education Act and the School Organization Act. While the School Education Act regulates the day-to-day

school life and inherent order of the school system as foundation for school community cooperation (the school community is composed of teachers, students and legal guardians), the underlying School Organization Act provides the legal basis for the entire Austrian educational system (with some exceptions). This latter act includes general regulations on school organization that set forth the educational objectives for all Austrian schools. The Austrian school-related regulations currently in effect are in turn aligned with EU policy guidelines. Thus, the official EU language policy beliefs will serve as our starting point in chapter 2.

A main aspect that the European Union wishes to promote is plurilingualism so that its citizens can cherish the EU's lingua-cultural heritage. I will discuss the inherent connection between languages and politics within the European Union and examine the historical development of language political questions as well as their impacts on EU member states. In doing so, I will describe how the EU not only prescribes general language political objectives for member states but is also involved in the design and realization of national language curricula. One prominent example is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), a document that dominates individual member states' design of foreign language curricula. By closely examining such major language policy documents, we will see that when it comes to English language teaching curricula within the European Union we are still confronted with a traditional native speaker-centered approach exemplified by the Fulbright FLA program. Here, native speakers function as teachers and role models based on their ability to speak their mother tongue rather than a professional linguistic and pedagogic background.

We will then have to ask ourselves in how far these institutionally accepted views on English language teaching correspond with the views of those people actively involved in the learning and teaching of EFL in the school setting: English teachers, their students and native speaker FLAs. In order to fully understand the importance of the collected data on the teachers', pupils' and FLAs' views on the actual realization of language policy in the

EFL classroom, we first need to clarify how and under which presuppositions the data were obtained. Accordingly, chapter 3 explains the research methodology and thus serves as transition from the institutional level towards the grassroots level.

In the subsequent chapter 4, I then present relevant data of those involved in English language teaching and learning at school, discuss the attitudes reported at the grassroots level, i.e., the actual place where English language teaching is realized on a daily basis. Data from teachers and FLAs as well as current and former pupils at schools are presented and analyzed. The findings are then compared and contrasted with the attitudes promoted by EU language policy as discussed in chapter 2.

To summarize, in Part I of my dissertation I describe the official policy beliefs and the classroom-level beliefs. These are the established views from above and below on what should be taught at school. But, one might then ask, how valid are these established views? We will challenge them in Part II, starting by asking why students actually learn English as a foreign language at school in first place. What is the reason for them to learn *English* and not any other foreign language?

As chapter 5 explains, English is the most widespread global language that functions as a means of international communication. It is defined by its functional use. In this chapter I offer a portrayal of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), highlight opposing attitudes towards ELF found in Europe, and discuss questions related to the ownership of the language and the presupposed connection between language and culture. These considerations then lead us to the question of how the international function of English is reflected in EFL classrooms.

In order to answer this question, we first need to consider the nature of EFL as a school subject. This leads us to investigate several crucial questions:

- a) In how far does a school setting differ from other settings?
- b) What are the characteristic features of a school subject?

- c) Who is involved in teaching and learning at school and which qualifications do they need to fulfill the prescribed learning objectives defined in the School Education Act and School Organization Act?

Chapter 6 discusses these questions, presents the Fulbright FLA program in greater detail so as to allow for an in-depth comparison of the roles of regular professional English language teachers and foreign language assistants and prepares the ground for a closer examination of EFL in chapter 7. Chapter 6 thus serves as foundation by highlighting what schooling involves, or should involve, and which qualification profile is required of teachers to successfully foster learning.

Moving forward, I will examine the school subject English as a Foreign Language in more detail. Chapter 7 portrays the subject and shows how it has become what it is today. This historical overview is intended to clarify the prescribed objectives of the subject. The main question that chapter 7 focuses on is in how far the subject of EFL relates to what we have already discussed before. How is today's reality of ELF reflected in EFL and how does this reality correspond to the language political conceptualizations and realizations presented in Part I? We will conclude that while the functions of English have changed over time, however, the objectives of EFL have not. As a consequence, there is a need to reformulate such objectives and shift towards a more strategic notion of how the subject is to be defined. This will lead us to question the current subject layout and the assumed value and validity of focusing on the native speaker as role model, language and teaching authority, and cultural ambassador in the classroom. Therein, I will argue that the question of a more appropriate assistantship arises, one that is based on pedagogic considerations, professionalization in the teaching industry and ELF reality.

Chapter 8, Part III, suggests one way as to how such an appropriate assistantship might look. I indicate what the needed change in the classroom might involve and describe an alternative assistantship program that

implements real and relevant role models and is based on a concept that highlights pedagogic considerations, professionalization in the teaching profession and ELF reality. This proposed program focuses on the concept of English as a tool for international communication and helps foster an understanding of European and global citizenship.

In a concluding chapter I indicate the current limitations of such a change and briefly summarize the essential aspects and argumentation presented in the dissertation, highlight the importance of a reconceptualization of the school subject EFL, and point towards future research and action.

PART I:
UP THE DOWN STAIRCASE

2 The View from Upstairs: EU Language Policy

Building a common home in which to live, work and trade together means acquiring the skills to communicate with one another effectively and to understand one another better (European Commission, 2003, p. 3).

This passage frames the ideology that within the European Union people share not only a culture but also a space. Accordingly, it is through measures to promote language acquisition that Europe can become a home for everyone. The same idea can be found in the 2005 Framework Strategy for Multilingualism (European Commission, 2003, p. 3) and can be regarded as an underlying concept for EU language policy measures taken over the last decades. Language policy can therefore be considered as a means to create consciousness of common European citizenship among the bloc's members.

As Liddicoat points out, “[l]anguage policies for education play an important role in the ways in which a society articulates and plans for the future of its members” (Liddicoat, 2013, p. 1). For this reason, this chapter focuses on the EU's language policy framework and seeks to shed light on how this framework influences foreign language teaching and learning in its member states as well as the general understanding of the purposes of foreign languages and of English language teaching in particular.

This chapter examines current and historical aspects of EU language policy. A general introduction is followed by a section on the interconnection of language and politics within the European Union. After exploring how Europeans use their languages, I discuss general developments of language policy questions in the EU as well as the historical developments that have led to today's situation. After that, a subchapter covers the historical

development of foreign language education within the EU context and then portrays current challenges and developments. Towards the end of this chapter, I turn my attention to one of the most influential European language policy documents of our day: the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

2.1 Introduction

Europe represents a unique language reality – from the Carpathian Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Barents Sea. It “has been multilingual for at least 2.5 millennia” (Green, 1998, p. 12). In a global context, Europe occupies a special position with regards to languages. The European linguistic landscape has a number of characteristics that differentiates it from others around the globe, with respect both to the number of languages and to those languages’ socio-cultural relevance. Europe is the macro-geographical region with the lowest number of languages. There are a number of individual states in which far more languages are spoken than in all European states combined. The total number of languages in Europe equals that of multilingual states such as Sudan or Chad. A distinct feature of the European linguistic landscape is that a third of the continent’s languages are spoken by more than one million people – a far higher proportion than on any other continent. With regards to minority languages that are used by fewer than 1,000 people, Europe has the lowest number among all continents. In addition, Europe is distinct as regarding officially acknowledged languages: while the proportion thereof is very low in other macro-geographical regions, almost half of all European languages enjoy official status. Furthermore, Europe is the continent that has the largest language export rate. Most world languages have European origins.

Language	Number of Users (in million)	Percentage of Users in Europe (in %)
English	573	10.7
French	131	47.6
German	101	96.0
Portuguese	182	5.4
Russian	242	71.4
Spanish	352	11.2

Table 1: European world languages: number of users in Europe (Haarmann, 2002, p. 33)¹.

In no other region of the world is international communication integrated in such a dense web of world languages². The percentages of user groups in Europe in comparison to those on other continents vary from one language to another and the numbers of users of European world languages are partially disproportionate to their reach. Spanish and Portuguese, for example, have a special status as world languages since their lingua franca role extends beyond Europe.

Organizing principles and strategies of language policy are affected by these characteristics both on a national as well as a European level. There are various national language policy measures within the European Union that range from regulations on several regional community languages to the integration of regional and immigrant languages in education. The responsibility for language related questions lies mainly with the member states and the transfer of any such responsibility to Brussels can be considered a highly sensitive matter. Language policies of European organizations stand in a tense relationship of unity in diversity and uniformity. Indeed, one can sense a certain paradox since, on the one hand, economic integration has been promoted as a main objective of the EU,

¹ In comparison, the top ten languages by their estimated number of speakers worldwide in 2010 according to Nationalencyklopedin are as follows: Mandarin, Spanish, English, Hindi, Arabic, Portuguese, Bengali, Russian, Japanese (Nationalencyklopedin, 2010).

² A world language in this context is defined as one that is used internationally and used by many as a second or foreign language. In addition to the number of its users, the geographical distribution as well as its use for international organizations and diplomatic relations are also important (Baker & Jones, 1998, p. 301).

which would seem to lead automatically to a functional reduction of linguistic diversity. On the other hand, the numerous first languages of the EU are referred to as an active field of action of the European Commission (Schübel-Pfister, 2007, p. 169). One question that results from this paradox is whether current European language policy can strike a balance between English and the other European languages or whether it generates new political conflicts through its actions. While some believe that “[i]f we want to be more than just an association of nation states, if we want it somehow to have a political character that is European, then a common language is needed” (Lever, 2003, p. 110), others worry about the “dominance of English” and understand it as “linguistic imperialism” (Phillipson, 2003, p. 162).

Globalization and international communication have influenced language use within the European Union and have opened discussions on the position of English as a lingua franca in a European setting. The European Union wishes to marry the idea of economic integration into a world market with respect for national identities. Languages play a major role in this respect and can have a strong function as defining and maintaining identity or identities. They can also be misused as instruments of hostile discrimination. The European Union sees itself as the keeper of linguistic heritage while also being confronted with the problem of asymmetry of languages in its member states and institutions. As Els observes

[t]he EU has many languages and a great variety of languages. The multilingualism of the EU therefore merits considerable attention, but this does not mean that multilingualism should be cultivated for its own sake. The preservation and promotion of languages is a good thing, but the inspiration for this should proceed primarily from the interests of the speakers of these languages. Doing justice to the multilingualism of the EU does not mean that one must do justice to all languages under all circumstances. Citizens have the right not to be disadvantaged because of their language. The difference between domains of language use, in particular, makes it possible to pursue a differential policy in respect of the many languages so that the interests of the citizens may be optimally respected (Els, 2005, pp. 277–278).

The EU has brought about many new relationships – be they economic, cultural or linguistic. As of July 2013, the EU consists of 28 member states with 506 million inhabitants and 24 community languages (as well as many additional languages that are recognized as regional or minority languages).

2.2 Language and Politics

“Language policy [...] is not just a text, a sentence or two in the legal code, it is a belief system, a collection of ideas and decisions and attitudes about language” (Schiffman, 1996, p. 59). For several hundred years there have been politically motivated interventions in linguistic issues. In most of these cases, political considerations and linguistic research were not connected.

Basically, language policy is grounded in linguistic culture and is inherently contextualized in language ideologies. By “linguistic culture” Schiffman means a “set of behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religio-historical circumstances associated with a particular language” (Schiffman, 1996, p. 5). For Shore, policy documents can be seen as a paraphrase and a representation of various cultural models of the concepts that they enshrine. He argues that “cultural models” refer to “an extensive and heterogeneous collection of constructs ‘in the minds’ of members of a community” (Shore, 1996, p. 44). Such models form human behavior and influence the members of a society in terms of how they see and understand the nature and purpose of language and communication, a point also mentioned by, for example, Berthoud and Lüdi (2013, p. 479).

Bochmann describes language policy as being hesitant in its aim to regulate the communicative reality by a group that has or tries to achieve the linguistic-cultural hegemony over others (Brumme & Bochmann, 1993, pp. 6–7). As with every other form of politics, language policy is

subordinate to the interests of a specific social group or class. Language policy decisions may also represent other or additional political or socio-economic interests. According to Liddicoat,

[t]hese [language] policies are sometimes explicitly articulated in official documents but may often exist in more covert forms underlying the assumptions and practices of language use and language learning in educational contexts. Policies deal with what is valued in a society and so language policies represent articulations of the beliefs and attitudes of a society about the value of languages and their use (Liddicoat, 2013, p. 1).

Bochmann points out that the relationship between the intended and the realized language policy measures and proclamations needs to be analyzed since the symbolic value of certain measures may be higher than the practical success (Brumme & Bochmann, 1993, p. 7). At the same time, it is apparent that public discourse on language policy can also be ideologically based, i.e., meaning that it is based on collective ideas and beliefs. Such is certainly the case within the European Union according to Lüdi (2007, p. 144).

Bussmann defines language policy as political measures that aim at the introduction, development and realization of individual languages through acts such as the recognition of official or working languages in international organizations or regulations for foreign language education in schools (Bussmann & Gerstner-Link, 2002, p. 409). In addition, language policy involves controlling and influencing the public usage of language by means of regulations and sanctions. Ricento defines language policy in similar terms, namely as a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to bring about language change in a society, a group or a system (Ricento, 2000, p. 23). All of this may be realized at a number of levels, ranging from very formal documents and pronouncements such as laws, degrees, ministerial directives or circular letters to more informal statements of intent. However,

language policy documents are [...] only a part of the overall language policy of a society. Nonetheless, language policy texts are useful examples of a particular class of ideological production. This is because they function within their ideological and discursive ecologies in particular ways to shape the way languages are used and understood. In particular, they are interventions into the language ecology that seek to shape that ecology to particular ends by mobilising the resources of the state for language objectives (Liddicoat, 2013, p. 4).

Such language regulations serve as the foundation for national school curricula and are therefore relevant for this research project.

Language policy can be related to one or several languages. First, it refers to political measures affecting one individual language, its words and usage. Through regulations and norms, it seeks to influence awareness among language users of various words (Glück, 2010, p. 658). Second, language policy can also be regarded as the relationship among various languages. Included here are political measures related to the introduction, development and implementation of individual languages as well as the recognition of official and working languages in international organizations and foreign language education (Glück, 2010, p. 654; Liddicoat, 2013, p. 5).

Language policy comes into action where language norms of usage and social interests collide or where there is a danger of such a clash. International language policy is tightly connected to political interests. Political and economic leaders are interested in promoting their language in the international environment since a better status also implies better conditions to dominate the international market, to gain or keep political power, to win support and prestige in an international setting, or to gain and keep domination over specific regions of the world with respect to politics, economy, culture and ideology. Individuals, too, aspire towards a problem-free or at least improved international communication. These factors (a combination of economic, political and military power, and individual benefits) constitute one important reason that English has turned into the most important and widely used international lingua franca of our age.

Language political strategies comprise linguistic colonialism, language export, and international communication policy, the development of planned languages, second and foreign language education and loanword policy (Brumme & Bochmann, 1993, pp. 26–58).

Language policy is interrelated with language planning, language regulation and language guidance, all umbrella terms for expressing the exertion of influence on one or several languages. Language planning, for example, is the attempt to actively shape language with regards to higher-ranking objectives. It serves a specific language policy and includes measures such as the introduction of new official languages as well as educational languages, the spread of languages in the world or the development and modernization of languages (Glück, 2010, p. 667). While language planning may be considered to some extent to be a part of language policy (Berthoud & Lüdi, 2013, p. 479), some scholars differentiate between the impact of language policy on the status of a certain language and the influence of language planning on the language itself as a result of language political measures (Grin, Jensdóttir & Ó Riagáin, 2003, p. 28). For yet others, language policy is the outcome of language planning (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p. xi). No matter how language policy and language planning interrelate, both have a vital influence on language behavior of people(s).

Language planning is normally discussed on the institutional policy level, where three major fields can be distinguished: corpus planning, status planning and acquisition planning. Acquisition planning refers to questions of how language acquisition is planned. Such planning, as Lo Bianco points out, is usually thought of in terms of an official statement about the curriculum. Such statements would normally include EU language policy documents or national curricula policies of various governments. However, Lo Bianco (2014) extends the term to include the grassroots level as well. He argues that whenever a syllabus is designed based on a curriculum or whenever a teacher plans a particular lesson, such actions can and should also be referred to as acquisition planning. Thus, there is continuity and a relationship among the various levels of planning – ranging from “upstairs”

EU language political decisions all the way to the “downstairs” classroom situations. As a curriculum is planned, so are syllabuses for individual courses and particular classroom activities since basically every lesson planned is part of acquisition planning. It is the relationship between the higher level, institutional language political decisions and the actual realization of these decisions in the classroom that is of interest (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 175). It is crucial that the decisions at the various levels are related. The reality of acquisition at the ground level, i.e., how people actually acquire language through pedagogic interventions, has to affect policy. There is no point in acquisition planning at the general, institutional level if it does not match the activities at the grassroots level. However, it seems that this crucial relationship is neglected since policy makers make bland language political statements without considering actual classroom reality³. Language policy at the “upstairs” and “downstairs” level must be interrelated to be relevant.

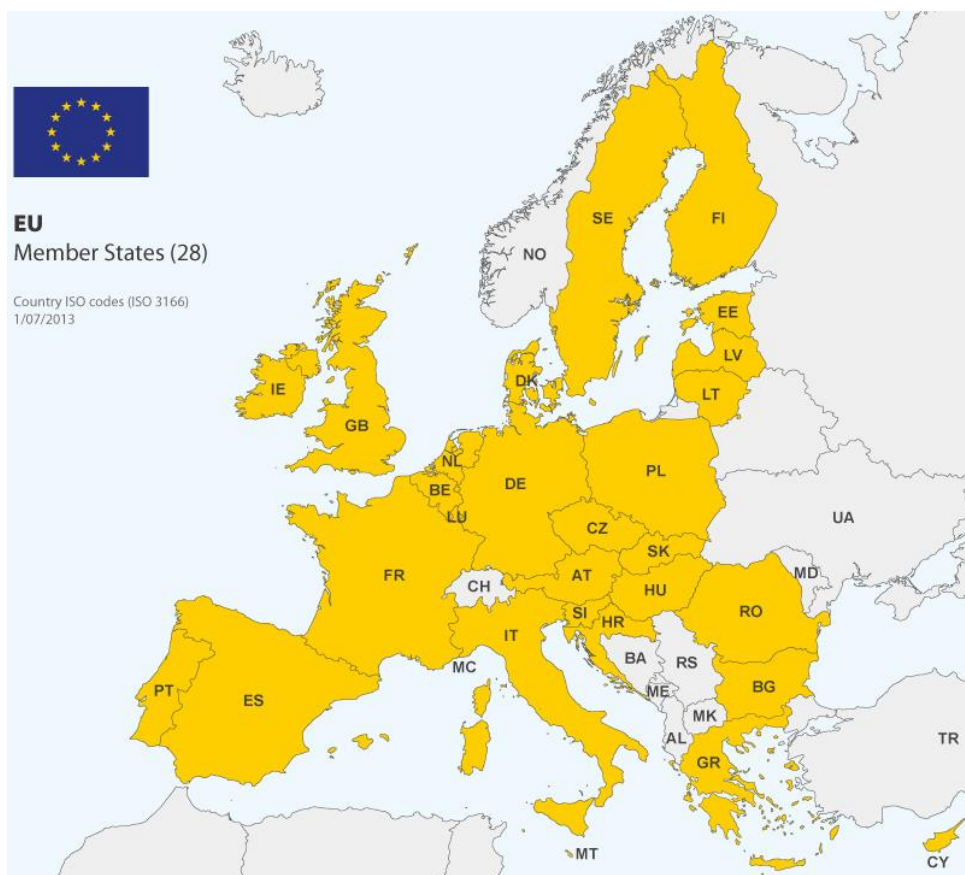
The various aspects of multilingualism in Europe present a highly topical and explosive issue, even if the question which language(s) to use when, where and how is neither a specifically European nor a purely modern-day topic. However, multilingualism in Europe impacts the social, cultural and occupational life of its citizens as well as the economic and political actions of states on the continent. Europe has always been a mix of various languages and multilingualism has contributed to the (cultural) wealth of ancient and modern Europe and its 503 million inhabitants (in the EU). With an expansion of more than four million square kilometers, the European Union covers the largest part of the European continent. The number of languages used in each member state as well as their status within the EU varies greatly. According to SIL International, 3.5 percent of all languages of the world are native to Europe (239 out of a total of 6,912 languages) (Lewis, Simons & Fennig, 2013). The diversity of Europe crystallizes in both its linguistic and its cultural dimensions, with various degrees of

³ A similar misguided relationship could also be seen in the 1970s when the Communicative Approach was imposed on local ELT situations without considering classroom realities in various places.

interrelation between these two. According to Kraus, language is a distinguishing feature par excellence for the European Union (Kraus, 2004, p. 97) and

[i]t is this diversity that makes the European Union what it is: not a ‘melting pot’ in which differences are rendered down, but a common home in which diversity is celebrated, and where our many mother tongues are a source of wealth and a bridge to greater solidarity and mutual understanding (European Commission, 2005, p. 2).

With this statement the European Commission also makes two things clear: First, the Union should not be regarded as a melting pot; and, second, at least officially, assimilation to one common norm is eschewed. This, however, also means that “[t]he challenge of the European Union is to promote diversity within a structure that is very centralist” (Clyne, 1995, p. 16).



Graph 1: EU member states as of 2013 (Eurocontrol, 2013).

2.3 Europeans and Their Languages

Language fulfills fundamental functions. In order to find out about the situation of Europeans and their languages, the European Commission conducted a study in 2005 and again in 2012 in which various language-specific characteristics within the EU were investigated. Among those were aspects such as numbers of first and foreign languages used, attitudes towards foreign language learning and the importance of multilingualism. So, what is the situation of Europeans and their languages today? Currently, German is the most widely spoken mother tongue within the EU (European Commission, p. 5, see Table 2).

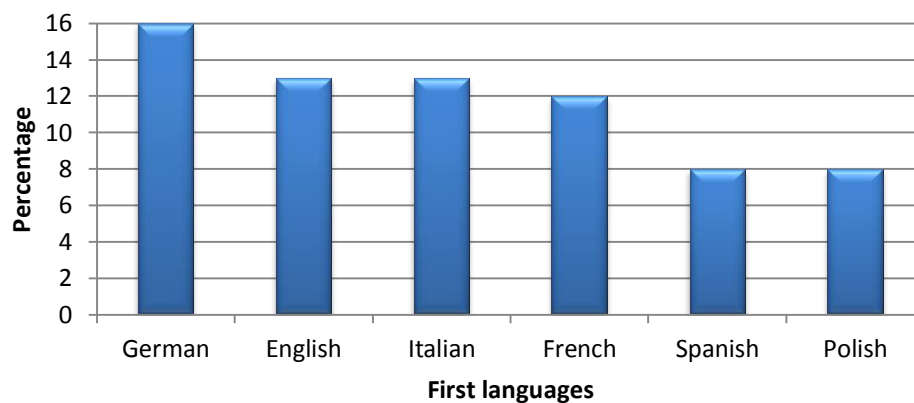


Table 2: Percentage of L1 speakers within the EU (European Commission, 2012a, pp. 10–11).

However, if we compare the numbers of language users (first and foreign language users), we can see that English is by far the most widely used language within the European Union today, being the first and most fluent foreign language spoken (by 32 percent of EU citizens, see Table 3) (European Commission, 2012a, p. 20). A little more than half of the EU population (54 percent) can use at least one European language additional to their native language, for a quarter of its citizens it is two foreign languages (European Commission, 2012a, p. 12, see Table 4). This also means that 46 percent – almost half – of the European population cannot speak any foreign languages, including English.

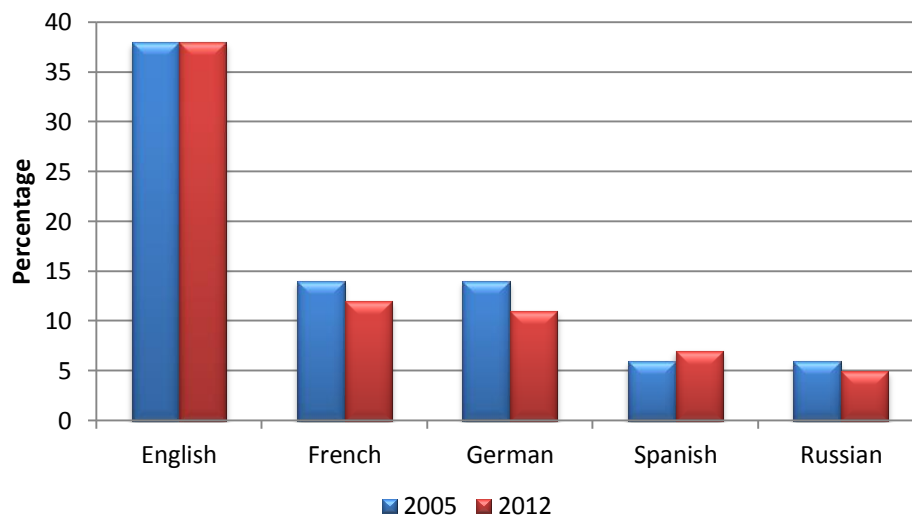


Table 3: Comparison of EU citizens' foreign language competences 2005 and 2012 (European Commission, 2012a, p. 19).

These numbers vary dramatically depending on various factors such as age and country (European Commission, 2012a, p. 17). For example, as far as age is concerned young people are more likely to have acquired a certain (although not defined) level of competence: 37 percent state that they can speak two foreign languages in comparison to 17 percent of those aged 55+ (European Commission, 2012a, p. 17). Related to the country of residence it can be seen that in Hungary, Italy and Great Britain the proportion of those that state that they do not speak any foreign languages is high with 65, 62 and 61 percent respectively (European Commission, 2012a, p. 15).

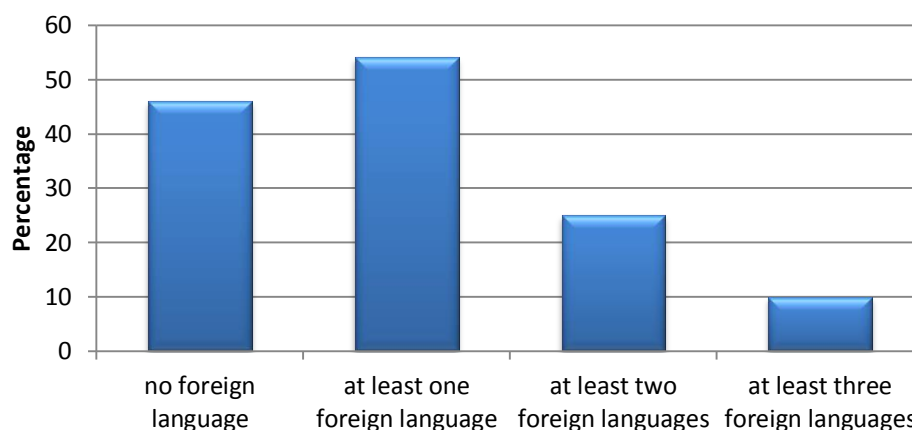


Table 4: Number of used foreign languages per EU citizen (European Commission, 2012a, p. 15)⁴.

⁴ It has to be noted that these figures are based on self-assessment and the – very vague – formulation of language competence which is defined as being “able to speak [a foreign language] well enough to hold a conversation” (European Commission, 2012a, p. 12).

Unsurprisingly, the proportion of persons that have acquired one or more foreign languages is also dependent on other factors, such as education level. Independent of the number of foreign languages acquired, almost 75 percent of respondents considered competence in a foreign language as very or quite important with English being of most personal use (67 percent)⁵, followed by German (17 percent). Just as was the case in 2005 (Kiijarvi, 2006), it can be seen in this respect that younger and more educated persons are more likely to regard foreign language competence as useful. However, most EU citizens are inactive language learners, meaning that they have not learned a language within the last two years and are also not planning on starting to learn a foreign language within the next year or have never acquired any second or foreign languages (European Commission, 2012a, p. 56). In comparison, only one percent of all Europeans can be considered very active language learners, meaning that they have started learning a new foreign language within the last two years (European Commission, 2012a, p. 56).

When it comes to the frequency of foreign language use, English, again, is in the lead with almost half of the respondents using this foreign language on a daily basis (19 percent), often (28 percent) or occasionally (51 percent) (European Commission, 2012a, p. 43). The report concludes that English “is spoken widely across most EU countries” (European Commission, 2012a, p. 46).

For most respondents, foreign language skills are mainly used for vacation, watching movies and TV/listening to the radio, internet communications, conversations with friends and for communication in the work place (European Commission, 2012a, p. 46). For 68 percent, foreign language acquisition mainly takes place in school (European Commission, 2012a, p. 100), and in particular in secondary schools (see Table 5).

⁵ This tendency has not changed over time. The same fact was already mentioned in another European publication more than two decades earlier (Office for official publications of the European Communities, 1985, p. 19).

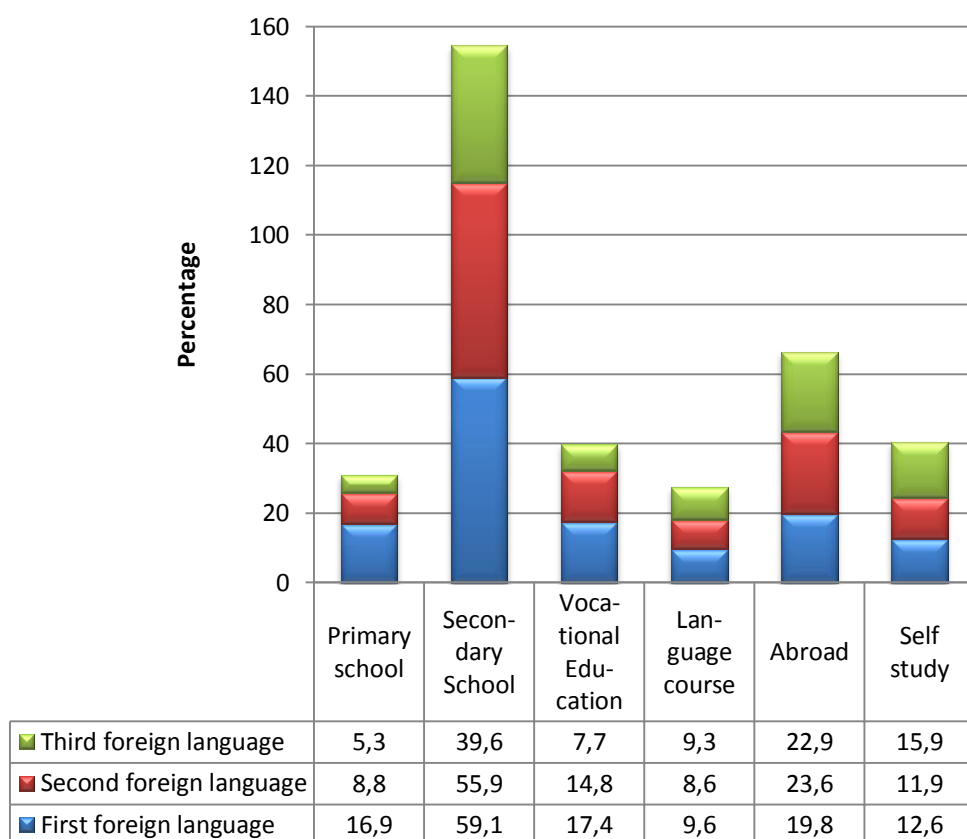


Table 5: Way of foreign language acquisition in percentages (INRA European Coordination Office S.A., 2001, p. 29).

46 percent of the respondents in the Eurobarometer survey considered the school setting as the most effective way to acquire a foreign language⁶ (European Commission, 2012a, p. 100).

In this report, the main motives for foreign language acquisition were language use abroad and at the workplace (European Commission, 2012a, p. 62). This result is interesting insofar as that on the one hand the respondents stated that they mainly used foreign languages in their private environment (vacation, watching movies, etc.) while on the other hand they claim that the main advantages of foreign language learning lie in the professional domain (workplace). The majority of parents wanted their children to learn foreign European languages. For 79 percent this language should be English, far ahead of the next foreign languages considered to be

⁶ In comparison, according to respondents the next most effective way to learn foreign languages is “long or frequent visits to a country where the language is spoken”, which is considered far less effective. Only nine percent consider this method the most effective one (European Commission, 2012a, p. 107).

useful for children to learn, namely, German and French with 20 percent each (European Commission, 2012a, p. 75). It can be noted in this respect that very active language learners consider English as a far more important language to learn than does the average citizen. 92 percent of the former believe in the usefulness of English as a foreign language for children (European Commission, 2012a, p. 82). A similar result can be seen for those speaking at least three foreign languages: 83 percent of these consider English to be beneficial (European Commission, 2012a, p. 82).

Most of the EU citizens surveyed argued for the acquisition of one European language in addition to their first language (84 percent, see Table 6), and 72 percent believe that Europeans should learn at least two foreign languages (European Commission, 2012a, p. 109), while at the same time 25 percent disagree (European Commission, 2012a, p. 110). It is interesting to see that most (69 percent) agree with the statement that EU citizens should speak one common language and that European institutions should communicate with its citizens in one language (53 percent) (European Commission, 2012a, p. 111). 67 percent believe that English is the most useful language (far ahead of the rest, with German being considered the second most useful language by 17 percent⁷) (European Commission, 2012a, p. 69). At the same time, 81 percent argue for the equal treatment of all languages used in the EU (European Commission, 2012a, p. 119). Here a policy shift can be seen towards a more open language policy within the Union. Previously, only European languages were considered to be equal while the 2012 survey references “all languages spoken within the EU” which also includes, for example, immigrant languages.

However positive the attitudes of Europeans towards multilingualism and a multilingual society seem to be, the Eurobarometer concludes that “there are no signs that multilingualism is on the increase” (European Commission,

⁷ Here a considerable decrease can be seen when comparing the figures of the 2005 and the 2012 Eurobarometer. While in 2005, the second most useful language was considered to be French with 25 percent, followed closely by German (European Commission, 2006a, p. 30), in the 2012 survey both French and German show a significant decline and a reversal of their positions – with German at 17 and French at 16 percent (European Commission, 2012a, p. 69).

2012a, p. 142). Furthermore, English dominates as the language most likely acquired within the EU, and, together with Spanish, it is the only language that shows a noteworthy increase in terms of language users (European Commission, 2012a, p. 144).

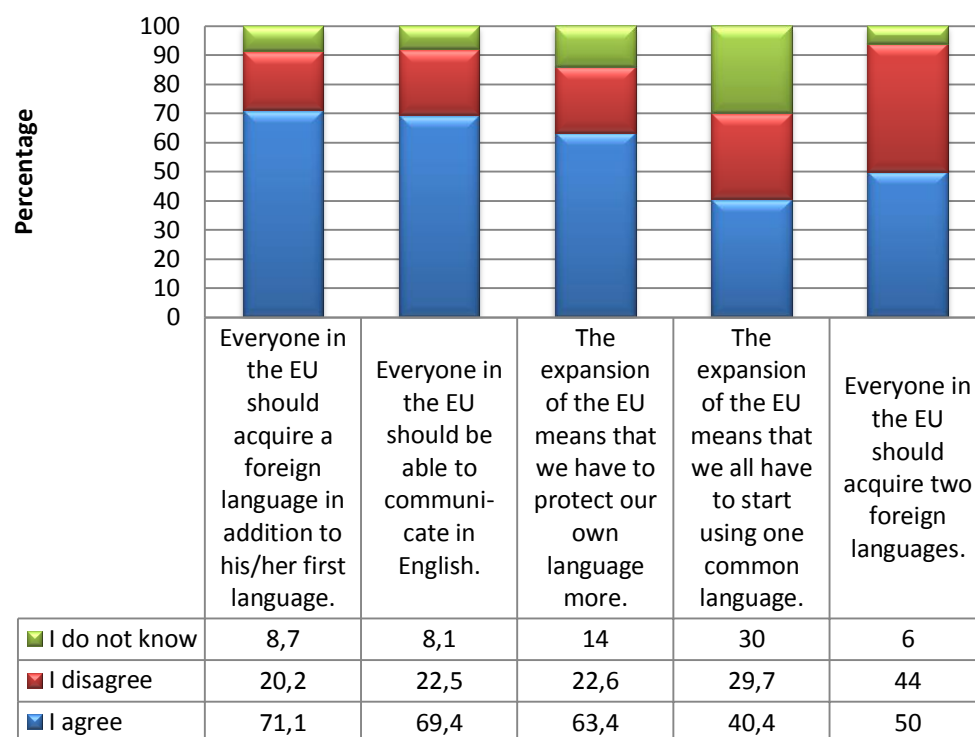


Table 6: Statements on language questions (INRA European Coordination Office S.A., 2001).

2.4 Development of Language Policy Questions in the EU

One of the principal tasks of the EU has been to bring together the continent, its diverse states and peoples. The history of this unifying process reaches far back in history and its development can be characterized by a variety of competing reasons and developmental tendencies. Depending on the policy, supranational, national and subnational players and pressure groups with varying authority are involved in the decision-making processes. It has been the objective to further European integration processes on all levels.

According to Kraus, language policy has always played an important role for the construction of a union (Kraus, 2004, p. 105). Questions related to the modality of a language policy imply sufficient political cause for conflict. This, among other things, also has to do with the tight connection among language policy and regional, national, economic, and educational issues. Such an interdependency among politics, economy, media culture(s) and language(s) has led to language policy being a highly sensitive political field. This is especially true for international organizations and institutions within the European Union. EU language policy is, without a doubt, a challenge, and is closely connected to the cultural objective of promoting respect for various identities and one common European culture. However, strategies for societal multilingualism as well as individual plurilingualism are in close interaction with other common policies of the European Union such as culture, education, social aspects or the employment market, just to name a few. A central aspect in the framework of language policy undoubtedly deals with the question if and to what extent language policy should, could and must be transferred from the individual state level to a supranational level.

It can be seen that on a global scale, state borders and distinct languages do not coincide. This also holds true for Europe. The resulting coexistence of several languages in one state demands language policy regulations that determine the legal status of languages. Individual countries within the European Union show a large spectrum of various language constellations and offer a variety of language policy approaches in order to reflect and respond to various linguistic realities. In this context, Siguan differentiates five basic types of language politics that represent various strategies of how countries handle their linguistic wealth (Siguan, 2001, pp. 56–59).

- Spread and defense of monolingualism: These countries (for example, France) mainly consider national languages.
- Protection and/or tolerance for linguistic minorities: Linguistic minorities do not have political rights, but their languages are recognized and supported (for example, Welsh in Great Britain).

- Language autonomy for linguistic minorities: Although there is only one national language, regions that use another language have political autonomy which means that the respective language has an official status in this region (for example, Catalan in Spain).
- Linguistic federalism: Different regions are associated with distinct languages that are all recognized as national languages (for example, Belgium). Each region can pursue its own linguistic policies.
- Institutionalized multilingualism: Several languages are officially recognized (for example, Luxembourg).

All of these language policy approaches share the characteristic of the promotion and defense of a main language. In addition to the various possibilities with regards to languages and linguistic rights, there are also various procedures with respect to political measures for the promotion and preservation of language(s) abroad that are referred to as language spread policy.

Language-related issues can be discussed in various ways. The European Commission sees the main responsibility for language policy as resting with member states. The EU understands it as its task to encourage, promote and complement the actions of member states in their language policy measures. The most important instruments of the EU in this respect are its promotional programs as well as its resolutions, regulations and papers. In general, the EU only has those lawgiving competences that are assigned to it in various treaties. There are three main types of competences that are split between the Union and its member states:

- Competing or shared competences (the most common case);
- Exclusive competence of the EU (member states have irrevocably resigned from any possible course of action);
- Areas of supporting action (the European Union only acts in order to help coordinate and support member states).

On the one hand, there is a desire to centralize more policy areas at a European level. On the other hand, in various areas there is tendency to ask for a shift towards more political decision-making processes at lower levels. As far as language policy is concerned, there is an overlap between national competences and those of the EU, meaning that the EU supports measures but does not have an explicit competence. Thus, in areas that do not fall within the sole competence of the EU, it can only act when its measures are more effective than national, regional and local actions. It is a fact that the European Union does not bear the burden regarding the promotion of multilingualism. Orban, former Commissioner for Multilingualism, stated that “[w]hen it comes to language rights, I am not in favour of adopting legislation at European level to be imposed on Member States” (European Parliament, 2006). The power shift of essential *ultra vires* of individual national states towards the European level, which is the result of economic pressures, proceeds in a subtle but accelerating way. Although only parts of the legislative power are transferred, due to the interdependent character of economic factors and the increasing standardization tendencies, this process reaches all EU citizens. Here, efforts for a united Europe run into efforts to protect national linguistically or culturally desired singularities (Nelde, 2001, p. 28).

Over time, language policy has gained significance. Still, at least officially, it has remained a national issue. There are, however, numerous initiatives that can be summarized as EU language policy and constitute an attempt to influence the language situation of member states through financial incentives. This is the case since the EU does not have any judicial instruments to enforce its soft objectives. In contrast to other policies such as environmental protection where transnational regulation is welcomed, common regulations for linguistic usage are rather unwanted.

The objective of EU language policy is to promote plurilingualism in its citizens. The foundation for this goal rests on the idea that plurilingualism (of individuals) and multilingualism (on a societal level) represents a core competence that is important for personal development, vocational mobility,

appreciation of other culture(s) and identity formation. Language competences are regarded as an important aspect of the economy and of a higher standard of living. Whether these factors are truly the driving forces of the EU language policy remains unclear. One might, however, question whether in fact the main objective is of an economic nature with the cultural aspects being only side-effects. Indeed, apart from the human, cultural and political advantages, foreign language acquisition does show considerable economic potential (EUR-Lex, 2000).

In principle, the protection of European multilingualism has been an objective of the EU since the 1950s and was regarded as part of its *Policy of Peace*. Today, the Union supports a policy of multilingualism - rather than one of bilingualism - and believes in the promotion of individual plurilingualism as a means of protecting European multilingualism. In 2005, the Framework Strategy for Multilingualism was the first Commission paper that dealt with this language policy aspect (European Commission, 2006b). In it, this positive attitude towards multilingualism is reinforced. In this paper, the EU is seen to reject the idea of it being a melting pot in favor of promoting the understanding that language is an immediate expression of culture. Its diversity is presented as wealth that should be respected according to Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Official Journal of the European Union, 2010).

With regards to multilingualism, the following three goals are pursued:

- Promotion of language acquisition and individual plurilingualism
- Access to legislation, proceedings and EU related information available to all citizens in their first language
- Advancement of a healthy, multilingual economy.

Originally, the promotion of plurilingualism referred only to official European languages. Only over the last several years one can observe a broadening towards languages outside the EU as well. This shift appears especially important considering the idea that foreign languages can support economic development. Clearly relevant here are the languages of emerging

markets, such as Chinese, with more than 1 billion speakers, or Turkish, estimated to be spoken by more than 7 million people within the European Union alone. However, it needs to be said that the current language policy of the EU mainly focuses on official member-state languages - and increasingly also minority languages - but there is little attention paid to languages that go beyond the borders of the Union (Besters-Dilger & Rosskogler, 2003, p. 10).

The Union has already launched a number of programs to promote the acquisition of foreign languages. In order to underline the importance of linguistic diversity, the EU tries to also raise awareness - for example, with the European Day of Languages (Council of Europe). 2001 was dedicated as the Year of Languages. “Europe’s linguistic and cultural diversity is a source of richness which also needs to be nurtured and promoted” (European Parliament, 2006). According to Orban, “[w]e cannot be satisfied with the use of just English. All my actions will keep this in mind” (European Parliament, 2006).

2.5 Historical Development of EU Language Policy

The European Union is a multilingual union. Since the first day of the European Communities, a number of papers have been developed on language-related issues.

Language policy in the EU has undergone a paradigmatic shift as “not only scientific scholars but also political stakeholders set out to rethink the heterogeneous linguistic landscape in Europe in the scope of the diversity framework” (Rindler Schjerve & Vetter, 2012, p. 1). When looking at the history of the EU and the Council of Europe one can see that multilingualism has been an essential element of EU policy legislation and practices since its predecessor, the European Economic Community was founded in 1958.

Since the 1950s, the idea of European multilingualism has been part of the founding and treaty texts of the European Community, originally only in the form of a language regulation for the institutions of its communities. The first regulations on language issues were developed in the Treaty of Paris of the European Coal and Steel Community ("Treaty Establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (Paris, 18 April 1951)", 2013). It was already during the negotiation process that preceded this Treaty that the language question led to intense debate⁸.

In his book, Labrie describes how from the outset, European institutions focused on the use of language at the institutional levels, i.e., the language for internal and external communication within the institutions of the European Economic Community (Labrie, 1993). From the beginning onwards, the official languages of the European Economic Community all enjoyed an official and equal status. At the level of the Council of Europe, the Language Policy Division was established in 1957, which concentrated on the democratization of language learning for the mobility of persons and ideas in order to promote democratic citizenship.

The development of six founding states and four equal official languages was supposed to reflect the supranationality of the European Commission. It was this idea of a new language policy that set the European Commission apart from other international organizations at that time. Further steps towards integration followed in the Treaty of Rome in 1957 ("The Treaty of Rome", 1957), although this treaty excluded language issues initially. In the Treaty on the foundation of the European Economic Community, the competences regarding language policies are delegated to the European Council: "The rules governing the languages of the institutions of the Community shall, without prejudice to the provisions contained in the Statute of the Court of Justice, be determined by the Council, acting unanimously" (FRONTEX, 2002). This regulation leaves it to the European

⁸ France saw its chance of promoting French as the sole official language and justified this with its leading role in the development of the Community. However, the other member states did not support this attempt. Germany, in particular, was forceful in its own language promotion work, that in the end the – at least legally – equal status of all member state languages was proclaimed (Stark in Kelz 2002: 37-62).

Council alone to decide on language policy issues. Based on this foundation, the Council released its Regulation Nr 1 determining the languages to be used by the European Economic Community (EUR-Lex, 2007) in 1958. In this document, the European Council extends its principle of equal multilingualism to also include its secondary legislation and the communication of its bodies. This regulation can be regarded as the founding basis of language policy activities.

However, during the time of the European Economic Community French was *de facto* the sole official language. With Regulation Nr 1 the idea of multilingualism was revitalized although French kept its privileged position as working language. One reason for this was that three out of six member states had French as their national language and European institutions were installed in French-speaking regions (Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg). It is, therefore, interesting to note that already as early as 1958 official regulations on the one hand and practical implementation on the other hand did not match ("European Navigator", 2007). In short, Regulation Nr 1, which remains in force today, is an agreement that establishes national languages as official and working languages of the Community, recognizes the right of every member states and its citizens to communicate with the institutions of the Community in its officially recognized languages and sets forth the obligation of the Community to publish general papers and gazettes of the European Communities in all these languages. Article 6 of the same regulation leaves it to the institutions of the Community to decide on their own how to apply this regulation in their particular cases. As such, institutions gained some flexibility but had to define the working languages in their by-laws.

The beginnings of the EU's language policy can be characterized as having a monolingual and separatist motivation, with citizens having one first language and then acquiring a second and probably also further foreign languages in a very clearly defined and separated setting. The idea of multilingualism developed in the 1980s when the European Commission and the Council of Europe became interested in the issue and promoted the

idea of every citizen acquiring two foreign languages. A report by the Committee on a People's Europe that was submitted to the Milan European Council in 1985 highlights the importance of EU languages as part of the Community's cultural heritage, richness and diversity (Office for official publications of the European Communities, 1985, pp. 18–30).

At the same time, the European Economic Community put an increasing focus on mobility programs, which goes hand in hand with its promotion of free movement of persons, goods, services and capital as decided upon in the European Act of 1986. This was also the reason for the launch of the Lingua Program in 1989. Along with the publication of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, linguistic and cultural diversity within the EU were promoted and the importance of languages for the Union was especially acknowledged since this document also includes the idea of European education through language learning: “Community action shall be aimed at [...] developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States” (Official Journal of the European Union, 1992, p. 29).

Parts of this idea were taken up in the White Paper on Education and Training – Towards the Learning Society in 1995 (European Commission, 1995). It was in this paper that the famous ‘One Plus Two’ recommendation was launched, which established the idea that all EU citizens should be proficient in two community languages apart from their first language as “[m]ultilingualism is part and parcel of both European identity/citizenship and the learning society” (European Commission, 1995, p. 47).

While recognising the emergence of English as the most widely-spoken language in Europe, the Union also wants to make sure that this does not become, over time, a factor limiting linguistic diversity within its frontiers. This is why the Commission's Action Plan has set the target of ‘mother tongue-plus-two’ (European Commission, 1995, p. 22).

Multilingualism was thereby established as a cornerstone of a knowledge-based society and is still promoted today as an important factor of European identity and citizenship. One year earlier, in 1994, the starting signal had been given for the development of reference instruments such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The new millennium started with the European Year of Languages in 2001, which tried to promote the EU's ideals of multilingualism among individuals and the concept of lifelong learning and to raise the awareness of the wealth and value of the European linguistic diversity. This European Year of Languages was later changed into the European Day of Languages which has been organized⁹ every year since. In 2000, the Lisbon Strategy (European Parliament, 2000) was passed. Therein the role of languages for increasing competitiveness was highlighted, as the underlying strategy at that time was to turn the EU into the most competitive knowledge-based region in the world by 2010. It remains open for speculation whether or not this goal was actually reached.

It can be noticed that an increased emphasis was put on Content and Language Integrated Learning, which could be seen at the Barcelona summit (European Parliament, 2002) in 2002 where the idea that had been presented in the White Paper was taken up. It is also interesting that at the same summit a modification with respect to the 'One Plus Two' recommendation was put forth: From then onwards, European citizens should be able to speak at least two languages in addition to the mother tongue. What might appear as a slight change from 'community languages' to 'languages' actually had a big influence as, suddenly, immigrant languages, minority languages and even sign languages were included in addition to the set of traditional community languages. As a result of this development, the action plan for the promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity also came in force in 2003 (European Commission, 2003). Therein, the European Commission states a number of actions intended to aim at "extending the benefits of life-long language learning to

⁹ For further information on the European Day of Languages see <http://edl.ecml.at/>.

all citizens, improving language teaching, and creating a more language-friendly environment” (European Commission, 2003, p. 6) while at the same time making clear that “English alone is not enough” (European Commission, 2003, p. 4). At the level of the Council of Europe, the new millennium started with the introduction of the CEFR and the language portfolio. Increased attention was now given to the notion of plurilingualism and plurilingual education: In 2003, for example, a draft version of the Guide for the Development of Language Educational Policies in Europe (Beacco & Byram, 2003) was published. At around the same time, in 2002, it was decided to establish linguistic competence indicators that were meant to promote the 1995 ‘One Plus Two’ recommendation (European Parliament, 2002, p. 19).

As the EU faced a tremendous enlargement from fifteen to twenty-five member states in 2004, even greater emphasis was put on developing what was meant to be a more coherent language policy at the level of the European Commission. As such, in 2005 the Framework Strategy on Multilingualism, which presents language as the most immediate manifestation of culture and as playing a major part in defining an individual’s self (European Commission, 2005, p. 2). Just as in the Action Plan, this document again mentions that English will not suffice (European Commission, 2005, p. 6). In 2007, Orban was installed as commissioner for multilingualism and published a commission paper entitled Multilingualism: An Asset and a Shared Commitment. At the same time the High Level Group on Multilingualism worked on questions relating to which languages EU citizens should acquire as part of their ‘One Plus Two’ repertoire and on how multilingualism constitutes an asset for individuals, while highlighting mainly economic aspects such as increased employability (European Commission, 2008a, p. 8).

The European Commission still promotes the ‘One Plus Two’ recommendation whereas the Council of Europe talks about individuals’ plurilingual repertoire in broader terms. There is still a large discrepancy between this theoretical concept and real life as only 28 percent of all

EU citizens speak two foreign language, whereas 44 percent state that they do not speak any other languages apart from their mother tongue according to a Eurobarometer poll conducted in 2005 (Kiijarvi, 2006, p. 8). A key question in this respect is what is meant by the term ‘speaking a foreign language’. How proficient does a speaker have to be to count here? How would such proficiency be measured? Unfortunately, these crucial questions are not answered in the Eurobarometer document. It would be highly relevant to receive answers on these questions in order to provide a comprehensive framework for the numbers published.

Also in 2008, the approach of a personal adoptive language was born. In this concept, the additional language should not be regarded as a further foreign language but instead, be considered as a second mother tongue and thereby including not only communicative aspects but also cultural ones (European Commission, 2008b, pp. 1–2). The underlying idea was to counteract the competition between English on the one hand and the other European languages on the other hand. This would appear to be a move to counter the hegemony of English by promoting other European languages instead. Implied here is an assumption that if you adopt a language, you take up a whole package of the culture. The personal adoptive language is contrasted to the foreign languages in the EU documents. It seems that the EU wishes to contrast these two ways of using a language. While a foreign language remains foreign to the language user and might only be used as a vehicle to transport content in a communication setting, the personal adoptive language means that a language plus its entire cultural load is fully integrated into a person’s life. The language is deforeignized on the terms of the people who speak the language as their mother tongue, not on the terms of the language learner.

However, the point about English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is, of course, that one appropriates English on the language users’ terms and not on the terms of the native speakers of the language. In contrast to ELF, the personal adoptive language seems to suppose that if you adopt a language it has to be on the terms of the language speakers whose language you are

adopting. For example, when deciding to “adopt” French, you actually try to “become” French. This, again, highlights a fundamental problem of how a language is perceived, namely, that there has to be a whole package. Under this understanding, a language belongs to a particular culture: If a person learns Spanish, he has to learn everything about the cultural context in which Spanish is spoken, he has to become Spanish. While for some languages it may be reasonable to assume that to some degree you have to become a part of the respective society, the point about a lingua franca is that you can adopt and adapt it on your own terms and do not have to do so on the terms of native speakers. It can be concluded that the proposal of the personal adoptive language does not relate to the real problems of using a language for intercultural communication.

Ideas about plurilingualism, pluriculturalism and intercultural education as well as papers on the implementation of the CEFR have been elaborated at the level of the Council of Europe. In 2011, the European Commission and the Council of Europe published a joint declaration for more cooperation in the field of education and culture, among other areas. This document also contains a list of shared values and principles. Linguistic diversity of all languages, including less widely used and taught as well as migrant and sign languages, can be found among those shared values.

The right of all citizens to communicate with institutions in their own language is based on the supranational legal character of the community that is the immediate effect of community legislation within its member states. Citizens gain – at least theoretically – unrestricted access to the entire EU legislative corpus. At the same time, this right was intended to highlight the politically symbolic function of multilingualism. These language regulations for internal and external communication modalities are crucial since the way that linguistic operations within and outside of institutions and between institutions and the EU citizens are carried out gives direction. The EU itself does not have competences that allow it to directly influence the language policy of its member states. However, the EU has by all means an important indirect role to play for European language constellations. These

institutional regulations are significant in so far as that they can have consequences for the future of a language: continuance and expansion or restrictions. Linguistic policy with European institutions thus has an influence on multilingualism since a particular language's status in institutions has effects on its prestige and as a consequence, on the willingness of EU citizens to learn the respective language as a foreign language.

Regulation Nr 1 does not come close to sufficiently regulating the actual language use within its institutions and the community at large. There is neither a differentiation between working and official language nor an explanation of what “documents of general application” actually are. Moreover, there is no regulation as to what in particular has to be published in all languages in the Official Journal of the European Union. In addition to these unsolved issues, other grave problems have arisen:

Article Nr 1 of Regulation Nr 1 differentiates between official and working languages. However, there is no definition of the difference between these two. The agreement that all official languages also serve as working languages might have made sense during the Community's early days. Facing today's reality, though, this regulation seems unrealistic. Originally, restricting the gamut to just a few working languages did not seem appropriate and so the politically explosive issue was postponed. This *égalité* of official languages has increasingly led to a divergence of sophisticated demands on the one hand and reality on the other. Over the decades the number of official languages increased with each wave of expansion of the EU. As a result, 22 states and 20 further languages have become part of the Union since 1957 (see Table 7).

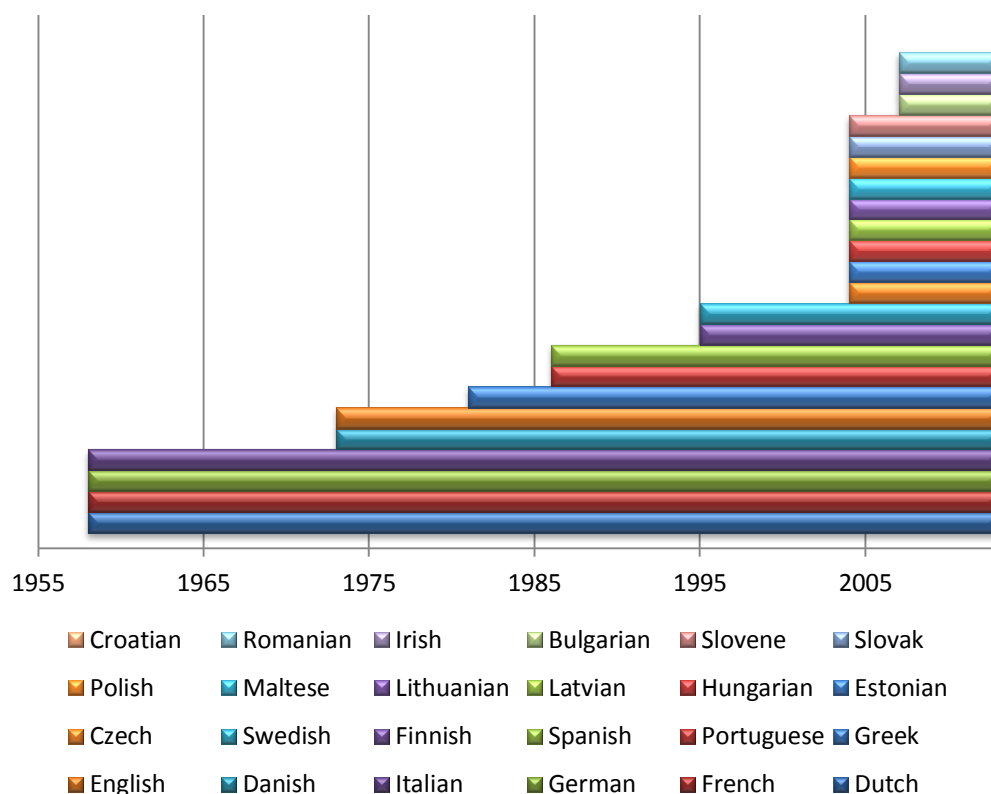


Table 7: EU official languages timeline (European Commission, 2013a).

With its equalization of official and working languages, the European Union differs from other international organizations such as, for example, the United Nations, which has more than 190 member states, six official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) and two working languages (English and French). With its principle of coequal multilingualism, which at least theoretically guarantees every language the same status, the EU demonstrates a first.

Language diversity as an expression of equality is a noble aim. One, though, that cannot be realized in reality and entails administrative, financial and political problems. For example, in its efforts to ensure the unrestricted application of Regulation Nr 1, institutions of the EU are confronted with major financial and administrative obstacles. Interpretation and translation costs are enormous: The maintenance of multilingualism within EU institutions amounts to about one percent of the overall budget of the Union (European Commission, 2013b). In 2005, this meant 1.123 billion Euros for translation and interpretation work (European Parliament, 2008). One third

of the total expenditure of the European Parliament can be allocated to multilingualism. More than 1.76 million pages (each containing 1,500 characters without spaces) were translated in 2012 alone (European Commission, 2013b). On average, 2000 translators and 80 interpreters are needed every day.

The discrepancy on the European level between the legal claim and the factual reality inevitably leads one to investigate the reasons for this discrepancy. These reasons might to a certain extent be found in linguistic consciousness and self-confidence that are present to differing degrees in various regions. There are some languages that are very closely linked to culture and whose speakers strongly identify with the communal value of their language and their cultural identity that is connected with it. French might be a good example of this case. There are historical reasons for this strong connection that go back to the French Revolution and the idea that the French language was the one binding force for society¹⁰. Such tendencies (“one culture – one language – one community”) are stronger in some communities than in others and also help explain the different perceptions of ELF. People who make strong connections between their own language and culture will quite likely also assume that there is such a connection for other languages, including ELF. From this emerges the idea that there must be a *proper* English version that is the *property* of a community¹¹. Such a tendency is, of course, not helped by those who postulate that learning a language includes learning the culture of its native speakers¹².

Yet, one needs to differentiate between the external and the internal language policy of the European Union, as Limbach points out (Limbach & Gerhards, 2012, p. 4). While the external language policy promotes

¹⁰ This also explains why the French later suppressed language minorities and why French still is an amazingly homogeneous language across France. This is not the case with other languages, such as German, for example.

¹¹ It is therefore of utmost importance to explain to people that ELF does not have such a national connection.

¹² Such a statement presupposes that there is something like *a* culture. However, a culture is neither fixed nor stable. Quite on the contrary, culture is made and constantly changed by individuals.

language diversity and grants the right to use any of the 23 official languages of the European Union, the internal language policy appears to be very different. This internal communication takes place within EU institutions and is clearly regimented. For the European Court of Justice, for example, French is used as the official working language. For the EU Commission, the official internal working languages are English, French and German. Other EU institutions decide on other regulations for their internal communication. But, as a rule of thumb, it can be said that the more that political decision makers are in the foreground, and the more open and public the situation, the more likely it is that all working languages of the EU are used (one example here is the EU Parliament where all EU languages are used). The more administrative communication is concerned and the lower the public character of the committee, the more one will find a reduction of working languages (down to only three or fewer languages being used). This can, for example, be seen in various boards and commissions. Informal counseling is mostly reduced to two official languages: English and French (Limbach & Gerhards, 2012, p. 4).

Without a doubt, the EU has numerous documents and postulations regarding language policy. However, at the same time, there is no explicit reflection on language policy - one might even suggest that these issues are taboo. There are several open questions related to European integration that need to be dealt with. These include the questions of how the ever-increasing number of official languages in the EU can be managed and how the EU wants to deal with English, which is used today as a supranational lingua franca (Rindler Schjerve & Vetter, 2012, p. 3).

It seems that at a certain level of institutional language policy-making, statements are made based on general principles or pronouncements that are simply meant to sound good. These statements do not find a reflection in reality (since, for example, everybody knows that all languages are *not* equal in reality). However, it appears to be the case that such expressions have to be made since they are part of democratic principles. At the same time, though, a gap opens up between these expressions of the ideology of

what the world ought to be and the disregard of the reality at the ground level. This disregard would be obvious if one had a closer look at these principles and realized that they are actually fictitious. Perhaps even more harmful than this is the fact that at the political and institutional level there seems to be the understanding that once this kind of statement has been made, once it has been written down in a document, the problem is solved. However, the question remains as to how these political postulates are actually realized on the ground. The actual implementation of these postulations proves to be very problematic and impossible at times¹³. What becomes visible here is the conflict between institutional ideologies on the one hand and the actual realizations at the ground on the other hand. The danger that I see lies in the denial of the reality found at the ground level since the language-related problems of the EU are not solved by simply pronouncing postulates.

This state of affairs thus looks like an irresolvable dilemma: In order to have a sense of community, a common language is needed, but having a common language is seen as a threat to European multilingualism. How can one promote a common language for the community while supporting equal rights for all community languages at the same time? (Seidlhofer, Breiteneder & Pitzl, 2006, p. 24)

Just as the quote here suggests, this missing discourse on languages and language policy poses a number of problems since it also the case that not making a decision can also be a decision. It could be that this issue is not dealt with because the paths out of the dilemma are unclear or because of the sensitivity of the topic in question, which for many seems so tightly connected to identity but to economic interests as well. After all, the enforcement of a language as official language is, of course, a matter of not only prestige or national pride but also – and probably mainly so – of economic interests. By way of conclusion, it can be said that the principle of equality of all official and working languages can be seen as a commitment to multilingualism or it may simply be an example of a pragmatic matter

¹³ For example, the EU postulates that all languages are equal. However, at the same time languages are not equal for educational matters – and for good reason. It would not be practical.

principle giving way to practical expediency. The EU faces a drift of ambitious standards and reality of language use within and outside its institutions. Current language policies illustrate this rift between *de jure* regulations and *de facto* practice. The co-existence of these official and unofficial regulations stokes moroseness as institutionalized language regulations are, after all, a highly political issue. In order to not provoke conflicts, institutions have so far avoided openly addressing the language question. This strategy, however, does not help reduce the extent of the problems but rather shows that “there is a certain dishonesty in maintaining the fiction that the EU gives equal weight and respect to all official languages of the member states if, in reality, the languages which permit access to the European centres of power are one, perhaps two, dominant *lingua francas*: English and French” (Smith & Wright, 1999, p. 9). At the same time, the increasing use of English as an international language is considered to constitute a threat to other languages within the EU and to undermine the principle of plurilingual diversity (Trim, 1997, p. 52; Wright, 2000, p. 121).

It appears that the balancing act between the protection of diversity and the indirect standardization will remain with the EU for a long time as there seem to be no reform measures in sight. Every measure that implies a change in the contractual basis of the language regulations currently in force or of Regulation Nr 1 requires the cooperation of all member states and change is only possible unanimously in the European Council. This alone highlights that language regulations are quite resistant to innovation.

The EU has struggled with a number of language-related policy issues over time. These also include questions on foreign language education policies which I will examine in the following part.

2.6 Historical Development of Foreign Language Education Policies in the EU

Apart from the status that languages hold in the communication modalities of EU institutions, the situation of languages in the education systems of member states are also responsible for a language's development. Thus, language teaching in institutionalized settings is based on or at least influenced by "language-in-education planning" (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p. 121).

Language policy will also specifically apply to the scope of education, shaping the teaching and learning of languages within the educational sector, especially in school education - that is, language-in-education policies. Such policies frame the language issues that will be addressed through education and the linguistic resources that education is designed to develop (Liddicoat, 2013, p. 6).

These language-in-education policies mirror the institutional characteristic of linguistic diversity in the European language regime (Schübel-Pfister, 2007, p. 169) and serve to create and further develop language competences that are recognized as important for various objectives, such as social or economic factors. These policies express and define which languages are to be developed through education and to become part of what can be considered the linguistic repertoire of a specific society as well as the purposes for which these languages are developed¹⁴ (Liddicoat, 2013, p. 6). In doing so, "some types of relationships between speakers of different languages and members of different cultures will be highlighted while others will be omitted or backgrounded" (Liddicoat, 2013, p. 22). Therefore, language education policy plays a major role in language politics and "represents a particular understanding of the nature of and value given to language" (Liddicoat, 2013, p. 13). The promotion of (foreign) language skills has always been regarded as an important factor for the – mainly economic – success of the European Union. This is why the EU has

¹⁴ Such as, for example, economic purposes.

repeatedly pointed to the significance of furthering foreign language education in schools. Education as one aspect of human resources also poses a considerable economic factor. Plurilingual individuals, therefore, do so, too. Education has a strong political dimension but has only partially developed in an EU driven project.

The main institution responsible for language policy decisions related to schools is the Department on Education and Culture (European Commission, 2013a). In 1976, an action program for the strengthening of European cooperation in the educational field was defined. One of the mentioned goals referred to foreign language education and postulated that every student should get the opportunity to learn at least one further language of the EU apart from his/her official language (Official Journal, 1976). In 1984, the bar was raised when the member states agreed to promote all suitable measures in order to provide students with practical knowledge in two foreign languages while they undergo compulsory education (Official Journal of the European Communities, 1997).

In 1995, a further step was taken to enhance the quality of foreign language competences in the educational systems of the EU and thereby to increase the ability to communicate in foreign languages and spread the languages and cultures of all member states. In order to do so, students' contact with native speakers of the foreign language should be encouraged (Official Journal of the European Union, 1995). Furthermore, it was agreed that the education and training of foreign language teachers as well as the foreign language skills of teachers of other subjects should be boosted so as to allow for vocational and bilingual education in foreign languages. Pupils should be given the opportunity to learn two foreign languages that are official languages of the EU for at least two consecutive years while completing compulsory education. Educational opportunities for less-commonly taught languages should be strengthened and diversified. In 2002, the European Council put an emphasis on learning the languages of neighboring countries and/or regions.

This chronology of developments, objectives and initiatives might seem comprehensive. However, statistics show that reality is still far from the high aims that have been postulated. The 2007 annual report of the Union, for example, notes that “[t]here is insufficient overall progress in Europe’s education and training systems towards the goals set in the Lisbon strategy” (European Commission, 2007) and that “the pace of reforms in education should be accelerated” (European Commission, 2007).

When the Treaty on European Union was signed in 1992, member states declared their cooperation in various areas, education being among the central elements (Official Journal of the European Union, 29 July, 1992). Today, the contents of the treaty, with some slight modifications, still form the legal foundation of general and vocational educational politics of the European Union. In the Maastricht Treaty, the EU committed itself to “contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore” (Official Journal of the European Union, 29 July, 1992, Article 128). In this framework, the EU stated that

[t]he Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging co-operation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organization of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity (Official Journal of the European Union, 1992, p. 28).

The agreed-upon objectives of the Treaty of the European Community comprise, among other aspects, the acquisition and spread of member-state languages, the promotion of student and teacher mobility as well as the enhancement among cooperation of educational institutions. The European Council passes incentive measures as a contribution to the actual implementation of these objectives “excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States” (Official Journal of the European Union, 2002, Article 149) and only “after consulting the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions”

(Official Journal of the European Union, 2002, Article 149). This formulation already shows the confined character of the EU's competencies as compared to national ones. The former mainly comprise the fields of incentives and coordinating measures. Basically, educational policies remain with individual member states. Risager states that despite an ongoing unifying movement in the EU, foreign language teaching is still heavily influenced by a nation's culture, which undermines the process of becoming an EU unity (Risager, 1998, p. 242). However, the EU has increasingly sought to implement common guidelines for educational policies. This has revealed tensions between two opposing developments within the European Union: On the one hand, developments towards centralizing an increasing number of policy areas on a European level; on the other, specific political decision processes occurring at the national and/or regional level due to the subsidiarity principle. Educational policy finds itself trapped between centralizing tendencies and particularization.

Furthermore, foreign language learning is promoted as a means to achieve the full social and professional potential of all EU citizens: "the Council of Europe has promoted language learning not for its own sake, as a mental discipline or as an aspect of elite personal culture, but as a tool for everyday social interaction among fellow Europeans, promoting and facilitating vocational and educational mobility" (Trim, 2007, p. 2). Foreign languages are regarded as a basic competence that every EU citizen should strive for in order to enhance one's standard of living and make use of the right of free movement of persons.

In 2012, the First European Survey on Language Competences (European Commission, 2012b) was carried out in 14 EU countries. In this study, it could be seen that English was the first foreign language learned in all of the participating countries¹⁵. Surprisingly, and contrary to other official statements, the survey found that "[t]he importance of the English language as a basic skill and as a tool for employability and professional development requires concrete actions to further improve competences in this language"

¹⁵ This does not hold true for the United Kingdom, where English is taught as the first language in schools.

(European Commission, 2012b, p. 12). Furthermore, the Languages in Europe Towards 2020 document, a publication that summarizes a variety of findings of the ‘Languages in Europe, Theory, Policy and Practice’ project, concluded that

English is effectively a lingua franca in the EU Institutions so the current reality of [the] aspiration is in most cases MT [mother tongue] plus English plus 1. This is the uncontroversial view of our students, and in all of our discussions in 2009/2010 there was little evidence of a different reality (King, 2011, p. 34).

2.7 Current Developments

Languages are also the key to knowing other people. Proficiency in languages helps to build up the feeling of being European with all its cultural wealth and diversity and of understanding between the citizens of Europe. [...] Multilingualism is part and parcel of both European identity/citizenship and the learning society. (European Commission, 1995, p. 67).

This is why foreign language acquisition is stated as one of the prior goals and communication in foreign languages is regarded as one of the eight key skills for the enhancement of quality and efficiency when it comes to the general and vocational education of every EU citizen. It is also pointed out that

[d]iversity, and in particular linguistic diversity, thus represents the ideological basis for the project of European integration. Alternative options for achieving integration into a transnational Community via a common language are not only omitted or perceived as a threat. A language regime based on a common language which would support European integration, as is already emerging with English as a lingua franca (ELF) in certain areas [...] clearly runs counter to this ideology (Rindler Schjerve & Vetter, 2012, pp. 13–14).

In this joint declaration, we are confronted with a combined discourse of both the European Commission and the Council of Europe. Still, different layers can be distinguished on the basis of these institutions' historical development and mandate. While for the Council of Europe there is a focus on integration, democratic citizenship and language learning for all, the EU puts more emphasis on the importance of language learning for economic purposes. The Council of Europe had played a pioneering role in developing instruments for language teaching, learning and assessing that were then taken up and transformed according to the economic goals of the European Commission. According to Rindler Schjerve,

[t]he EU's move towards multilingualism was primarily fostered by the requirements of the Europeanisation process, where multilingualism was to ensure not only economic growth and transnational communication but also sociocultural cohesion and the development of a common European identity (Rindler Schjerve & Vetter, 2012, p. 2).

In contrast to former publications, it seems that both the European Commission and the Council of Europe today no longer emphasize a balanced multilingualism or equal competences in each foreign language but highlight practical skills. Even today, as was stated in the last sub-chapter, there is no common understanding of terminology between the European Commission and the Council of Europe as far as the terms (dynamic) “multilingualism” (used more often by the European Commission) and “plurilingualism” (as used in the terminology of the Council of Europe) are concerned. This terminological conflict is a serious stumbling block that has not yet been resolved. What is generally meant in both cases is that persons use their languages or language varieties in different contexts, for different purposes and with different interlocutors and so they do not necessarily need the same level of competence or skills for these varying situations. That is why, according to the EU, there is no need for symmetrical skills in all the languages belonging to one's repertoire. Multilingual communication can therefore take place among not only people with identical repertoires but also interlocutors with semi-identical or totally different repertoires. In the

European Commission's document from 2008 the possibility to rely on linguistic nodes – i.e., translators or interpreters rather than one common lingua franca shared by all EU citizens – is presented

[t]o ease access to services and ensure a smooth integration, some communities make basic necessary information available in different languages and rely on multilingual people to act as cultural mediators and interpreters. In particular, metropolitan areas and tourist resorts in Europe have gained considerable experience in coping with the needs of foreigners who do not speak the local language. The Commission attaches great importance to this and will support the dissemination of good practices in this area (European Commission, 2008a, Section. 4.2.).

Such a concept, of course, poses many still-unsolved questions about the organization of society as well as about plurilingualism, multilingual institutions and communities. One officially supported vision of the plurilingual dream that overcomes all EU language barriers might be found in a video clip called “The Forest of Babel. Finland” presented on the EU homepage (Pohjola & Pohjola). This video clip of less than two minutes tells the story of a baby elk that is trapped under some trees. A girl finds it and wants to free it but is not strong enough to pull the logs away on her own. She finds two boys, both speaking different languages. In the video we can also see a woman, also speaking yet another different language. The girl approaches her too and asks her for help but the woman – now speaking English to the girl - just says that she does not understand the girl and turns away. Her son, however, helps the girl despite their different mother tongues and alleged language barriers – he understands her without understanding her language. Together with the second boy they are able to free the animal and share their success and happiness. I believe this video clip summarizes very well how the EU wishes plurilingualism to be perceived by its citizens: it promotes the idea in people that plurilingualism is the best option to communicate successfully. One message might be that communication in English does not lead to success; it is of no real help. Although the woman uses English as a lingua franca here she does not

understand what is wanted and needed in the situation. However, the others, despite using various different languages understand one another beyond all language differences.

To sum up, EU language policies have increasingly turned towards a plurilingual concept (Rindler Schjerve & Vetter, 2012, p. 10) in which languages enjoy a high priority. For the European Commission, language is regarded as an essential component of our identities and the most immediate expression of culture. The EU praises itself for actively promoting and living language diversity: the motto of the EU is unity in diversity, and multilingualism within the EU is contractually guaranteed and based on Regulation No. 1 for the ruling of language related questions for the European Economic Community, which dates back to 1958 (Limbach & Gerhards, 2012, p. 4). In addition, the Treaty of Lisbon highlights the respect for linguistic diversity within the European Community and bases this on the principle of equality (Official Journal of the European Union, 2007, pp. 1–271) by which all member-state languages are understood to have the same value.

2.8 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2007) is one of “the most influential instruments in European language education policy” (Rindler Schjerve & Vetter, 2012, p. 2). Decided upon in 1996 by the Council of Europe, the CEFR is designed to serve as a corporate basis for language learning and teaching within the EU.

Byram, a strong supporter of the CEFR, sees this document and its importance in line with major historical developments going back to the beginnings of the Modern Age:

Many of the values and attitudes which it embodies can be traced back at least to the Protestant reformers of the 16th century, with their concern for mass literacy and direct access to the Bible as the basis for independent thought and action, and particularly to the ideas of the great Czech educational thinker, Jan Amos Komensky (Comenius) (Byram & Parmenter, 2012, p. 14).

The document itself claims that it

provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis. [...] By providing a common basis for the explicit description of objectives, content and methods, the Framework will enhance the transparency of courses, syllabuses and qualifications, thus promoting international co-operation in the field of modern languages (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 1).

The recommendations set standards to evaluate the level of language learners and provide a definition of proficiencies.

According to Byram, the CEFR “should serve to improve international understanding and cooperation, promote methods that strengthen democratic practices and develop the learner's independence of thought and action combined with social responsibility” (Byram & Parmenter, 2012, p. 23). By doing so, the “CEFR represents a significant step forward in a long process of educational reform, firmly rooted in a developing tradition under a wide-range of intellectual, cultural, socio-economic and political influences and pointing forward to a period of further educational advance” (Byram & Parmenter, 2012, p. 32). In addition, this document is designed to

give all those working in the language field greater autonomy based on knowledge, understanding and skill and as a basis for the negotiation of objectives and methods between teachers and learners. It is also intended

to facilitate communication and interaction among independent agents while increasing rather than limiting their freedom of action (Trim, 2007, p. 2).

While some (see, for example, North, 2004, p. 89) believe that one of the two major attractions of the CEFR

is that it provides clear goals and measurable achievement by reference to the levels. Like the PISA results tables, the Millennium Development Goals or TOEIC international statistics, the capacity of the CEFR to provide a clear, easily comprehensible, international overview of achievement in a particular aspect of education or competence means that it can take its place as a global frame of reference, thus becoming more available and attractive for appropriation by national, regional and local organizations and systems (Byram & Parmenter, 2012, p. 263),

for others the “Common European Framework is not fixed in stone; in some senses, it is still work in progress” (Morrow, 2004, p. 1) and there is a strong feeling that the CEFR “is much talked about at the moment but little understood. One reason for this is because the only available documentation [...] is very difficult to follow. It is 250 pages of dense text interspersed with a myriad of charts and tables, whose relationship to each other are often hard to perceive” (Morrow, 2004, pp. 1–2). Nevertheless, this document has a powerful influence on individual member states’ foreign language education policies and serves as a guideline for the implementation of language learning at the member states’ level. It is currently embedded in the individual member states’ foreign language curricula. Martyniuk and Noijons conducted a survey on 'The use of the CEFR at national level in Member States of the Council of Europe' and concluded that

[i]n general, the CEFR seems to have a major impact on language education. It is used [...] in all educational sectors. Its value as a reference tool to coordinate the objectives of education at all levels is widely appreciated. [...] [I]t has undeniably contributed to more transparency and coherence in general (Martyniuk & Noijons, 2007, p. 7).

The CEFR wishes to promote and help language teachers and learners to incorporate their own situations in their language learning by using the needs and motivation of learners as their base, and by defining realistic objectives as explicitly as possible (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 3). It wishes to increase transparency and coherence in the language-learning process because “the existence of fixed points of common reference offers transparency and coherence, a tool for future planning and a basis for further development” (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 36).

It claims that “the aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve 'mastery' of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the 'ideal native speaker' as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place” (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 5). At the same time, this publication is founded on the idea of the native speaker being the ultimate authority on the language (Seidlhofer, 2011, pp. 184–185). This can be seen in the following measures of attainment that the CEFR prescribes:

Pronunciation of a very limited repertoire of learnt words and phrases can be understood with some effort by native speakers (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 117),

Pronunciation is generally clear enough to be understood despite a noticeable foreign accent (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 117),

Can keep up with an animated conversation between native speakers (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 66),

Can sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 76),

I can write so well that native speakers need not check my texts (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 232).

I will discuss the underlying concepts that the CEFR is built on in a later section of this thesis (see chapters 5 and 7). For now, suffice to conclude that the CEFR prescribes how EFL is to be taught in the EU member states

and that the document's underlying belief is that every language is the property of native speakers and that all learning and teaching steers towards this objective of NS competence.

2.9 Conclusion

We have so far looked into the situation that can be found “upstairs” or at the language policy level. We discussed the connection between language(s) and politics within the EU and examined the historical development of language policy questions and their effects on EU member states. In doing so, we realized that language policy within the European Union not only prescribes general language policy objectives for its member states but is also involved in the design and realization of national language curricula. One prominent example of such an influential document is the CEFR, a document that dominates the individual member states' design of foreign language curricula and thereby leaves its mark on language learning and teaching in the individual member states.

The following chapter will now examine to what extent these institutional, “upstairs” views on English language teaching correspond with the “downstairs” views of those people who are actually involved in the learning and teaching in the school setting: English language teachers and their pupils and native-speaker Foreign Language Assistants. The following chapter will introduce the methodology used to research the attitudes found at the grassroots level.

3 Up the Down Staircase: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The last chapter described the “upstairs” or EU language policy level. In order to find out if this institutionally promoted view and the school subject EFL correspond to that of those actively involved in ELT at school, empirical research was carried out to capture the opinions and attitudes at the grassroots level. In this chapter, I will outline the research methodology employed for the two pilot studies and the questionnaire used as empirical research tools in this work. This then leads us to the discussion of the empirical data contained in the subsequent chapter.

Two pilot studies and an online questionnaire were carried out. The approach to pilot studies A and B was very much one of inductive research, meaning that I did not have predefined hypotheses when I planned my inquiry but rather tried to gain first-hand information from the target groups and only then drew hypotheses and conclusions from the results gained. As for the online questionnaire that followed the two pilot studies, the approach was a combination of inductive and deductive research methods, i.e., trying to keep my mind open while simultaneously finding answers to hypotheses I had derived from the pilot studies and personal experience.

This chapter therefore serves as a transition – or staircase – from the “upstairs” institutional level towards the “downstairs” grassroots level, which we will look into in the subsequent chapter.

3.2 Pilot Study A

As I indicated in my introduction, what motivated my research in the first place was my skepticism about the role of foreign language assistants (FLAs). Accordingly, my first pilot study aimed at eliciting the views of FLAs who worked in Austrian schools. It was carried out in 2011 using the services of Voycer (www.voycer.com), an online marketing tool for compiling and carrying out web-based surveys. A major reason for using a web-based online questionnaire format was that such an approach allows the user to reach survey participants regardless of their location. In addition, the online survey allowed for a time-independent response and offered a more convenient setting for the participants, who were scattered all over Austria.

Since no official job profile for FLAs is available, I found it interesting and important to see how FLAs themselves understand their job and where they see the impact of their presence in class. This is why the online questionnaire was targeted at English native-speaking Foreign Language Assistants who had been working in Austrian schools. The participants were asked to provide some general personal information as well as answer two open-ended questions in which participants could share their perspectives and experiences gained during the school year. The following two questions were asked:

- (1) As a foreign language assistant what do you feel your role was?
- (2) In what way do you think you helped students in their English language learning?

112 FLAs were invited to participate in this preliminary study, of whom 54 completed the survey, giving a response rate of 48 percent. These FLAs were all employed at Austrian schools and were selected through snowball sampling and a participation invitation on the social media platform Facebook.

In the process of analyzing the data, it became obvious that the English language teachers' points of view are of equal relevance to understand how institutionally promoted language policy is actually viewed at the grassroots level. That is why a second pilot study was carried out – this time focusing on the professional English language teachers.

3.3 Pilot Study B

In 2012, a second web-based pilot study was carried out, again using Voycer. In this questionnaire, the focus was on the perspectives of non-native English language teachers at vocational and general high schools who also serve as hosts to FLAs in Austria. The aim was to find out how the language teaching professionals describe and evaluate the FLAs' participation in class. In order to do so, 53 English language teachers were invited to take part in the online survey of whom 21 completed the questionnaire which corresponds to a 40 percent response rate. Participants had to provide some background information on their work experience as teachers as well as hosts to FLAs and provide general personal information. They were then asked to answer two questions similar to those posed to the FLAs in the previous pilot study A:

- (1) What do you as a host teacher to foreign language assistants feel the role of these assistants is?
- (2) In what way do you think these foreign language assistants help students in their English learning?

Having gained insights into the attitudes of those involved in teaching EFL in the school setting, it seemed necessary to also include the pupils' points of view and find out more about how they as learners of the language see aspects related to the school subject EFL and English in general.

3.4 Questionnaire

In 2013, another, larger-scale online questionnaire was developed and carried out in cooperation with the Center for International Relations (<http://www.boku.ac.at/international.html>), the Information Technology Services (http://www.boku.ac.at/zid.html?&no_cache=1&L=0) and the Methodology Center for Test Planning (<http://www.rali.boku.ac.at/mzv.html>) all of which are institutions of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU, www.boku.ac.at).

The underlying aim of this empirical research was to provide empirically valid data from pupils and university students. It seemed important to find out how these two groups – those currently enrolled in secondary schools in Austria, and those who already graduated from secondary school or are currently enrolled in university – felt about a number of aspects related to English language teaching and learning.

3.4.1 Research Methodology

The approach was a mix of deductive and inductive research and was aimed at gathering data that could subsequently be analyzed qualitatively as well as quantitatively. It soon became clear that the most feasible method of data collection was that of using an online questionnaire. There were several reasons for this decision: Such an approach would make it easy to address a larger number of potential participants and also simplify data collection and evaluation. In addition, a questionnaire allows for a combination of closed and open-ended questions and could thereby fulfill the desired combination of providing quantitative as well as qualitative data, both of which seemed desirable to evaluate. Dörnyei (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 6) among other scholars, points out that among the many advantages of questionnaires, they have proven to be very effective means of data collection and subsequent analysis. This advantage was an important one since there were restrictions as far as project time and

human resources were concerned. For the participants, the online questionnaire presented itself as a time- and location-independent option that proved to be more convenient than other forms of data collection. I assumed that the subject matter of my survey was of interest and relevance to most of the addressed participants due to sample selection (and, in the case of the pupils, personal contact and explanation before the actual survey). This personal contact was considered to encourage possible participants to actually actively participate and also complete the questionnaire. In addition to the advantages already mentioned above, the online questionnaire provided anonymity and enabled snowball sampling for the pupil inquiry, i.e., allowed for pupils to pass on the questionnaire link to other potential survey participants.

It seems important to address problematic aspects that might occur when using online surveys. These might include both practical considerations and issues of research and validity. Survey participants might not be motivated enough to do or finish the questionnaire, especially if the survey is long and/or requires the participants to critically reflect and express their opinions and thoughts in open-ended questions. Also, this research method does not allow for discussions or clarification of any misunderstandings that might occur. Apart from problems that lie within the fields of questionnaire design and personal aspects, there might also be technical problems. Mitigating all of these possible problematic aspects requires very careful, thorough preparation.

In order to avoid as many disadvantages as possible of those mentioned by Dörnyei (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, pp. 6–7), I compiled the questionnaire with the valuable expertise of the Methodology Center for Test Planning at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna. This center offers specialist support for BOKU professionals interested in developing and conducting empirical research. I found myself in the hands of an expert who provided valuable guidance in the development, adaptation and final adjustments of the questions.

3.4.2 Questionnaire Considerations

When it came to the actual development of the survey, I referred to Dörnyei's recommendations for the construction of questionnaires (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, pp. 11–57). In the following section I would like to mention some of the aspects taken particularly into account.

3.4.2.1 Questionnaire Length

Dörnyei (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, pp. 12–13) recommends developing a questionnaire that requires less than 20 minutes to complete. I felt that in my case a longer version would be desirable to allow for coverage of several relevant aspects that all seemed important to be included. As previously mentioned, I assumed that the subject matter would be of interest and importance to the respondents and that, consequently, participants would be willing to invest more time and energy to take the survey. Due to considerations about the length of the survey, it was decided to not use a multi-item Likert scale method as this would have implied providing several similar (positive and negative) items for each question. Instead, a single-item method was used and carefully evaluated in the pre-test period.

3.4.2.2 Layout Considerations

I was in the fortunate position to conduct my empirical research in cooperation with the Center for International Relations at BOKU University and to make use of the resources available at that university. BOKU provided not only expert knowledge but also state-of-the-art software to set up the online version. LimeSurvey, the online survey application used, offers professional graphic layout which according to Dörnyei (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 13) is of great importance for establishing a scientific impression and thereby creating a serious, research-driven atmosphere for survey participants, which in turn leads to more reliable data (as to data taken from badly designed questionnaires that evoke a

non-professional impression in participants). As for page layout, it was decided that all questions related to a subdomain should be shown in one place so as to allow for an appropriate portioning of the questions. A progress bar allowed participants to see how much of the entire questionnaire had already been completed successfully.

3.4.2.3 Anonymity

Among other things, this survey also asked about the participants' personal attitudes towards their English language teaching staff. In order to establish a secure space where participants could openly share their thoughts, anonymity was of utmost importance. The computer program LimeSurvey allows for anonymity and does not trace host servers. This is in accordance with BOKU policy, which does not permit personalized data collection in university-related online questionnaires.

3.4.2.4 Legal Aspects

One of the reasons I chose to carry the survey outside the school setting was due to the cumbersome legal requirements that would have been required. These legal considerations needed to be taken into account as one of the two questionnaires was designed for pupils at vocational and general high schools, some of them not being of legal age. In Austria, official authorization is required for research that is to be carried out in schools and the Ministry of Education must be thoroughly informed about the planned study and grant approval. In addition, for students that are not of legal age, legal guardians have to grant permission for participation in a survey conducted at school. Obtaining these approvals is a long and difficult process, especially in the case of gathering written approval from all participating students' legal guardians (and 'entertaining' those students who did not receive such approval during the actual testing). In addition, as the survey was web-based, computer and online access were required and as listening tasks were also included, headphones were also needed for all participating pupils. These equipment requirements would have meant an additional stumbling block. Taking

all these hurdles into account, I decided not to carry out my research at school and during regular lessons but rather outside this setting. My school visits only consisted of an information session in which I explained the purposes and importance of my research as well as the pupils' participation in it. Students interested in taking part in this study were then invited to enter their email addresses on a list and were later provided with an electronic link to the online questionnaire that they could then access at their own discretion.

3.4.2.5 Participant Motivation

Motivation for participation was a crucial aspect, especially as the survey was longer than commonly suggested and included a number of open-ended questions that require the participants to reflect and provide an opinion rather than simply ticking a provided item. Answering such questions requires a certain amount of time and effort, and therefore, motivation. As I work at BOKU University, I could rely on the infrastructure and support of institutions there. I was strongly supported by the Center for International Relations as well as the Students' Representatives (ÖH BOKU), who helped spread the word about the research and also circulated the questionnaire invitation and link. As for the pupils at vocational and general high schools, being a school teacher myself, I felt that I could reach out and motivate pupils if I got the opportunity to explain to them personally the importance of their participation in this research project. Therefore, I visited several schools, mainly in Vienna but also in Lower Austria, presented my empirical research project and asked for the pupils' support. In addition, my own pupils also helped by functioning as facilitators who circulated my call for participation to their friends via Facebook and other means of electronic communication.

3.4.2.6 Subjectivity

Subjectivity is another problematic aspect that emerges when working with questionnaire-related data. The basic problem in that respect is self-reporting by the research participants. This might be due to wishful thinking, various levels of

self-awareness and reflection competence (especially in young participants who might have limited experience in this respect), and positive profiling, i.e., describing a situation or attitude that does not correspond with reality as such but rather a desired version of reality. It also seems important to keep in mind that the halo effect (by which we understand that participants provide answers that they think the researcher wants to hear) as reported in Baker (1992, pp. 109–110) might play a role. However, personal attitudes can also be regarded as an element of one's self and part of a subjective reality. Seen from this perspective, subjectivity might not necessarily be seen as a negative aspect but rather as part of an individual's expression of attitudes and world views.

3.4.2.7 Language Choice

Language choice was yet another aspect that was taken into consideration when developing the questionnaire. For pupils, the survey was prepared in German as it can be assumed that all pupils at vocational and general high schools in Austria are competent users of this language. For the university students, the questionnaire was developed in two languages, German and English, in order to allow for the inclusion of as many participants as possible. The reason for providing an English version was that English functions as a *lingua franca* at BOKU University. The welcome page of the questionnaire was presented both in German and English and asked students to choose their preferred language before starting the actual study. It turned out that 53 percent of participants chose German whereas 47 percent opted for the English version of the questionnaire.

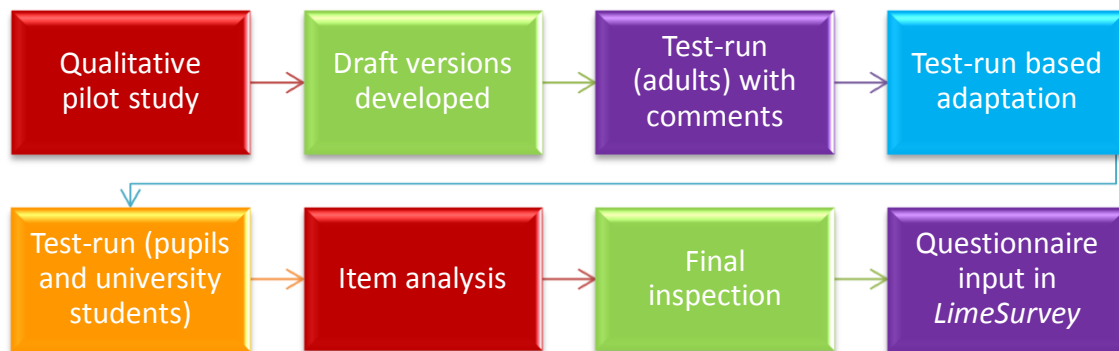
3.4.3 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire design was realized in a series of steps (see Graph 2) following Dörnyei's recommendations (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, pp. 22–23).

3.4.3.1 Questionnaire Design Stages

At an initial stage, a qualitative pilot study was carried out with a group of my own pupils in the course of our regular English lessons and as part of a thematic unit on schools. In this first phase, pupils worked on various aspects related to schools, teachers and English language learning that I wished to include in the survey. In the course of interactive tasks, they developed suggestions for items that they found important. For example, one group of students compiled a list of elements that they considered to be important aspects when learning English as a Foreign Language, while another group developed characteristics of what they considered to be a good English language teacher. The results were presented and discussed in class. I found this to be a very inspiring process that provided valuable insights and helped focus on relevant points for the later questionnaire.

The input from these sessions was then used to compile a first draft version of the survey for pupils and university students, respectively, in phase two. These two versions (the pupils' German version and the university students' versions in German and English) were then tested in a third phase with the help of two insiders and two outsiders with respect to the Austrian school system, who simulated the questionnaires and commented on aspects and formulations that they found problematic. At the next stage of this process, this feedback served as the basis for the adaptation of relevant aspects in both questionnaires. In a fifth phase, the now-revised surveys were tested with a group of 25 pupils with an average age of 16, at a vocational high school and with 23 university students at BOKU University. In the subsequent item analysis (phase six), the system proved to be problem-free for pupils and university students. Thereafter, both questionnaires underwent a final inspection at the Methodology Center for Test Planning at stage seven and were keyed into the computer program LimeSurvey in which they then underwent several trial runs in its final, eighth phase.



Graph 2: Questionnaire Design Process.

3.4.3.2 Sampling Procedures

A good sample is very similar to the target population in its most important general characteristics (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, educational background, academic capability, social class, or socioeconomic status, etc.) and in all the more specific features that are known to be significantly related to the items included on the questionnaire (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 60).

In order to meet this requirement while at the same time “using resources that are within the means of the ordinary researcher” (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 60), I decided to opt for a combination of ‘Convenience or Opportunity Sampling’ and ‘Snowball Sampling’ (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 61). The first allows basing sample selection on “practical criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, or easy accessibility” (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 61). This method was mainly used to get my university student sample. In addition, for the pupils’ questionnaire, modern technology (such as Facebook) allowed for the inclusion of ‘Snowball Sampling’, under which people are selected to then identify further members of the population (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 61). I made particular use of this technique with the pupil sample, asking my own pupils at school to forward the survey invitation and link to friends of theirs that are currently enrolled at vocational or general high schools. The entire empirical study was a self-selected survey since the participants were free to

decide for themselves if they wished to participate in this research project or not and if they decided to join it, all of the pupils as well as students filled in the questionnaire in their spare time and at a location of their choice rather than during a lesson or under any kind of instructor supervision.

3.4.3.3 Question Format

The questionnaires for pupils and university students were almost identical with regard to content. There were differences in the formulations of some sections. These were due to the fact that several items referred to aspects that dealt with present aspects of pupils' situations, such as attitudes towards English language teachers at school, that no longer applied to university students. Furthermore, university students were also confronted with an additional section on international experience (gained, for example, during Erasmus stays abroad).

The following describes the question format of the pupils' questionnaire in more detail. Subsequently, additional aspects incorporated in the university students' survey will be presented.

Altogether, the questionnaire was divided into two main parts and seven sections: Part one included the rubrics (1) background information, (2) school, (3) learning English as a foreign language, (4) aspects of communication, and (5) opposing attitude statements. The second part consisted of sections on (6) language competence and (7) audio samples.

The questionnaire consisted of a combination of closed- and open-format questions so as to allow for a quantitative as well as qualitative analysis and deeper insights into the individuals' opinions and understandings. Closed-format questions are generally preferred for statistical interpretation since open format questions are often regarded as less valid. This is due to the fact that open-format questions imply the formation of categories which in turn is based on the interpretation of answers provided by the research participants. Such an interpretation, it is argued, colors the data gained according to the researcher's

expectations and assumptions. It needs to be clarified, though, that the presentation alone of quantitative data does not suffice as it is the interpretation of the data received that is the essential aspect of empirical research. Such interpretation of quantitative data runs the same potential risk of no longer being regarded as neutral¹⁶. Essential items in the questionnaire were marked and providing an answer to these was required in order to move on in the questionnaire. In addition, research participants were also provided with the option to comment on their closed-format question choices and to provide additional information throughout the questionnaire. Many questionnaire participants made frequent use of this optional input, which, as the researcher, I greatly welcomed, as this extra information allowed for a deeper understanding of participants' choices.

(1) Background Information

The first section consisted of only two questions: informants were asked about their age and gender for subsequent differentiation. Both these variables were envisaged to be of interest related to attitudes presented by the informants that might vary according to sex and/or age of the participants.

(2) School

This section started with information on the school and form that the respondents attended and then dealt with questions related to the respondents' attitudes towards their English teacher(s) and FLA(s) at school as well as the perceived importance of their relationship with these teacher(s) and FLA(s). The pupils were then confronted with statements about the competence of FLA(s) regarding their language and teaching and had to agree or disagree with those. Participants were also asked why they think that FLAs were employed in EFL lessons. They had to rate the importance of having FLA(s) for learning English as a foreign language at school.

¹⁶ Such an understanding might actually lead to more general questions about whether or not neutral research results actually exist.

(3) Learning English as a Foreign Language

In this part of the survey, participants were asked in an open-format question to provide their personal opinion on why they believe they have to learn English as a foreign language at school. In addition, they were asked to rate various aspects in terms of how important these were for a good English teacher to have. They were then asked to give information on their personal perception regarding the significance of certain aspects for learning English. Respondents then had to decide who they considered more appropriate in terms of helping them to become competent in various EFL learning aspects: FLAs or regular English teachers. This section provided many opportunities for the participants to not only choose an answer but also explain the reasons for their choices in open-format questions. These answers were optional but nevertheless often provided and allowed for meaningful insights.

(4) Aspects of Communication

In an open-format question, pupils were asked to define what they considered to be successful communication in order to prepare participants for subsequent questions that dealt with their perception of important aspects when communicating with others and when others communicate with them. The intention of these questions was to find out any possible differences between self-perception and personal expectations on the one hand and awareness and expectations towards others regarding the use of English for communication purposes on the other.

(5) Opposing Attitude Statements

In this section, participants were confronted with several opposing attitude statements. These focused on a number of issues, including the successful use of FLAs in class, perception of the command in the respondents' first language, the connection between one's first language and the ability to teach that language to others, the importance of teacher education, perceived preference for NSs such as FLAs as language teachers, the perception of NSs' command of English, personal

importance of being taught English by a NS of English instead of a trained English language teacher. This section aimed at finding out more about pupils' attitudes towards the above topics.

(6) Language Competence

The second part of the questionnaire was centered on three audio samples. In an initial question respondents were asked to provide a personal definition of language competence in general. This was an open-format question so as to allow for maximum freedom to respond. Respondents were then asked to provide information as to how, in their view, one can detect a person's competence in a foreign language. Again this was an open format question. These two questions were supposed to tune the participants into the subsequent audio samples in which they then had to rate the speakers' language competence based on their definitions provided in this section.

(7) Audio Samples

Based on the previously provided definitions of language competence and how to identify it, participants were then asked to listen to three audio samples and answer related questions. Each of these three audio samples consisted of spontaneous, non-scripted conversation between two speakers. Altogether, the recordings presented six different speakers: three native speakers of English, and three proficient non-native speakers of English. The pairs had been provided with the same conversation topic, namely, to decide on a vacation destination that they would both enjoy. The speakers were provided with five photos of possible destinations (Paris, a tropical island, mountains, a yacht and camping) to initiate the conversation. There were no instructions other than that they should see if they could reach an agreement. The pairs then self-recorded their conversation. All speakers were invited to listen to their conversation and agree on the recording being used for research purposes. The length of the audio samples is roughly one minute each. Audio sample one was a conversation between a native speaker of

English from the USA (an FLA at the time) and a non-native speaker of English; audio sample two consisted of two non-native speakers; and audio sample three was a recording between two native speakers from Great Britain.

Participants listened to one recording and answered the questions related to this particular recording before moving on to the next one. They were encouraged to listen to the audio files as often as they wished before or during the decision-making process. The questions were identical for all three recordings and asked the questionnaire participants to state whether the speakers were competent users of the language based on their previously provided definition. Another question asked whether the conversation could be regarded as successful and a third question requested the listeners' opinion as to whether or not the conversation partners were native speakers of English or not. In all three questions, the informants were also invited to use the open format to provide information on their thoughts and the criteria they had applied.

The final segment of the questionnaire had respondents compare the audio files by marking their favorite as well as ranking them in terms of usefulness for learning English and ease of understanding. In addition, participants could use this section to make remarks regarding the questionnaire as a whole. They were then thanked for their cooperation and provided with an email address with which they could contact the researcher if desired. The average time needed to complete the entire questionnaire was 35 minutes for pupils and 33 minutes for university students.

Additions in the University Students' Questionnaire

In the section on background information, students were asked to indicate their status at university (regular versus exchange student or another type of university student). Furthermore, an additional section inserted after the background information dealt with the international experiences of respondents. Students had to indicate whether and, if so, for how long they had already spent time abroad and which languages they had used then. This information was considered

relevant in order to find out if and how exchange semesters and other forms of life in another country influence the participants' point of view regarding English and English language teaching.

A second additional section dealt with BOKU University-related English language courses. Participants were asked to share whether they had already participated in an English language course at BOKU University and, if so, were invited to indicate the reasons for enrolling in the language course. They were also asked if they had taken part in a course on English in Science and Technology at BOKU University and to what extent they thought they had profited from this course or whether they would be interested in joining such a course as well as a conversation course. University students were then asked if they considered it important to have an English native speaker as their lecturer for English language courses at university and were encouraged to also explain the reason(s) for their choice. A final question in this section asked the respondents whether they found it important to have a professionally educated and trained English language teacher as their lecturer for English language courses at university. Again, an open-format question invited participants to state reasons for their opinion. As for the segment on school, the university students were also asked to provide information regarding how long ago they had concluded their school education. A question was also added in the section on opposing attitude statements, namely, whether someone lecturing at university should have had professional teacher education and training or not.

3.4.3.4 Administering the Questionnaire

The finalized questionnaires were available to participants for two consecutive weeks from May 6 to May 19, 2013. On the first day of the survey, all students enrolled in English languages courses at BOKU University were emailed an official invitation to participate in the research project by the Center for International Relations at BOKU. In addition, the Students Representatives circulated an email among BOKU students in which they encouraged them to participate in this empirical study and indicated that the results concerned would also serve as a tool to assess and further develop English languages courses at

BOKU University. In its weekly e-newsletter, the Center for International Relations also included information on the ongoing research project as well as an invitation to participate the same day and the following week. I personally informed those students enrolled in my own English language courses at BOKU University about the study, sent the invitation link to all of them and also asked for their participation.

At school I asked my own students to use their connections to fellow pupils and pass on the invitation link to the pupils' questionnaire. I then started my 'promotion tour' through various secondary schools in Vienna and Lower Austria in order to inform students about my research project and invite them to actively participate.

3.4.4 Description of the Participants

Two samples were taken: one of pupils and one of university students. The former sample consisted of 238 pupils (38 percent male, 62 percent female) from various (vocational) high schools in Austria. All the participants ranged in age from 15 to 22 years at the time of testing with an average age of 18. More than 50 percent of all participants attended fourth form of vocational high school or seventh grade of general high school. The latter sample consisted of 147 students (33 percent male, 67 percent female) enrolled at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna. Most of these students were regular students (82 percent) with a small minority of exchange students (2 percent) and others (16 percent¹⁷). The participants' age ranged from 18 to 33 years; the average age was 24. More than half the students had not lived abroad for a long period of time (56 percent). Of the rest, 5 percent were exchange students in Austria at the time of testing and 39 percent had lived in another country for several months or a semester (36 percent each). While abroad, those students mainly used English (39 percent) and German (12 percent) as their working languages.

¹⁷ These could, for example, be so-called "Mitbeleger". These are university students who generally study at another Austrian university and only take some courses at this university.

88.30 percent of the participating pupils and 57.89 percent of the university students currently have (or had at the time) an FLA at school. According to the questionnaire responses, the frequency of FLA participation with the same group of students is once every week or fortnight. Only in a few cases do FLAs attend classes more than twice a week¹⁸ and rarely do they join a class less often than every fourteen days (see Table 8).

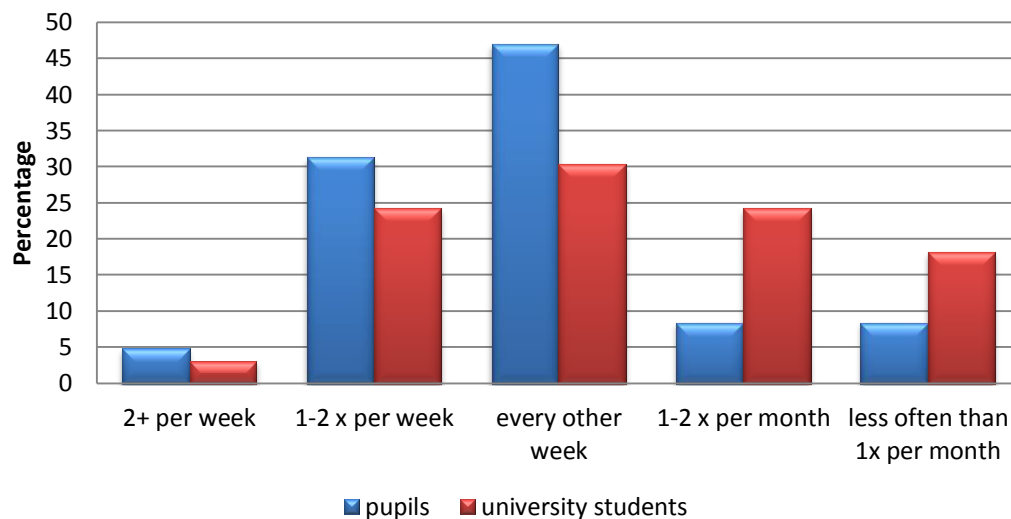


Table 8: Frequency of FLA participation.

The majority of those pupils and university students without an FLA would prefer to have one (73 percent of all pupils and 83 percent of all university students state this wish).

3.5 Conclusion

In chapter 2 we discovered that language policy within the EU is not confined to general goals for its members but also plays a role in national language curricula. One prominent example of how the EU influences national language learning and teaching is the CEFR. This document, in accordance with the EU's general language political understanding, views the NS as language authority and main

¹⁸ This has to do with the fact that depending on the school type there are normally between two and four English lessons in general or vocational high schools.

communication partner. One symptomatic example of how such an institutionally perpetuated concept is executed on a daily basis is the use of non-professional English native-speaking teaching assistants, the FLAs who work together in class with regular English language teachers.

It seems essential to take not only the “upstairs” or EU language political perspective into account but also the attitudes and opinions found at the grassroots level, i.e., the actual places where ELT is realized on a daily basis: the classrooms. While this chapter explained the methodological setup of two pilot studies and the online questionnaire, the following chapter will now discuss the findings and compare the attitudes found “downstairs” or at the grassroots level, with those promoted “upstairs”, or by EU language policy.

4 The View from Downstairs: Teacher and Learner Attitudes

4.1 Introduction

As we saw in chapter 2, the belief that proper English is NS property is well entrenched in institutional policy thinking. It also prescribes how EFL is taught in EU member states via documents such as the CEFR.

Does this institutional view of English language teaching correspond with that of those involved in teaching and learning English in the school setting? What do those at the grassroots level actually think and do? In order to provide answers, I used research methods that bring together a qualitative heuristic approach and empirical research as described in chapter 3.

This chapter now sets out to provide answers to these questions by highlighting the perceptions of those involved in the actual teaching and learning context: FLAs, English language teachers and pupils. We will start by looking at the FLAs and their attitudes. How do they understand their role in class? What are their views on regular EFL teachers? The following section examines these questions.

4.2 Foreign Language Assistants

In order to gain insight into how FLAs themselves understand their role in class, I conducted an online questionnaire with former FLAs. There were 54 responses from FLAs (48 percent response rate). The average age of the participants was

24.5 years with the majority being from the USA (92 percent) and female (62 percent). Regarding work experience as FLAs, a balanced ratio could be seen among participants: 57 percent spent one year working at an Austrian school and 43 percent prolonged their stay and completed two years as a foreign language assistant. In an open-ended questionnaire, the participants were asked to provide information such as their personal perspectives on their job in class and how they themselves see their contribution in class as native speakers.

Question one was open-ended and asked how FLAs themselves defined their position in class. A number of respondents simply stated that their role was to improve students' communication skills, as noted in these example answers:

- (1) To help students improve their English language skills by facilitating classroom activities.
- (2) Conduct conversational exercises within the classroom to get the students fluently and comfortably speaking.

Other participants focused on the FLAs' role in providing real and authentic English to students, as indicated by these answers:

- (3) My role was to bring the subject to life as a native speaker.
- (4) I am a native speaker, therefore a rich resource.
- (5) To teach English in a more authentic, up-to-date way, in a way that was more approachable than the normal teacher could, due to my age and, of course, nationality. I could bring real American culture to the students. For the teachers, I was a help because they could have one lesson a week where they did not have to prepare and could experience a different teaching style.
- (6) To be English embodied, to be the entry point for kids to realize that English is about real Americans, not just a textbook and Austrian teacher.
- (7) I provided access to real English and American culture.
- (8) The work in class is like a framed piece of art on a wall. You need a frame for a picture (the teacher) to hold everything together (check attendance, discipline, collect homework, fill in registers, etc.). The

picture (in this case the language assistant) provides the content of the piece of art. Just the frame would be beautiful but not enough. Also, only the picture without a frame would not work well.

From answers such as these a common perception regarding the role of the regular teacher and the native speaker assistant becomes more or less obvious: while the English teacher provides the – mainly administrative – frame and prepares students for the lesson, he or she then passes the teaching on to the English native-speaking FLA, who supposedly has pedagogic expertise by virtue of providing real, relevant and authentic input on language and culture.

The second open-ended question asked participants to share their view on how they believed their presence as FLAs had helped students in their English learning in class. Many informants stated that they made the lessons more interesting and relevant as they offered authentic language encounters:

- (9) I made English more exciting because I was a real life British person and as a result encouraged them to participate.
- (10) I think that having a native speaker in the classroom motivated them [the students] to work harder on their speaking.
- (11) I think I helped because it's invaluable to hear and communicate with a native speaker when learning a foreign language. This made it more real to the students.
- (12) Because I am a native speaker, I naturally demonstrated correct pronunciation and also real vocabulary. I also provided motivation to learn the language since students could see that real (and hopefully cool) people speak English!

From these statements we can infer that many FLAs have adopted the underlying idea that native speakers are supreme commanders of the language, offering real and more realistic English to the students than the regular English language teacher.

Such results raise the question of how professional ELT teachers understand their and the FLAs' role in class. The following section highlights the perception of regular English language teachers.

4.3 EFL Teachers

In order to find out if the previously discussed institutionally promoted view of ELT and the FLAs' attitudes correspond with that of those professionals actively involved in English language teaching at schools, I conducted a survey with 21 Austrian non-native English language teachers (40 percent response rate) at (vocational) high schools. The majority of these non-native EFL teachers had six to ten years of teaching experience (43 percent) and had worked as hosts for FLAs for several years (91 percent). In an open-ended questionnaire, the participants were asked to provide information on their perspectives of the job of FLAs in class and their perceived outcomes of these embedded English NSs.

Findings revealed that the overwhelming majority of EFL teachers actually support those institutionally prescribed viewpoints. English is regarded as the language of the FLAs rather than a means of global communication. The following are representative statements:

- (13) It is her [the FLA's] language, so she can help the pupils use it effectively. The FLA is the language expert, I am the teaching expert.
- (14) The pupils learn a lot about English culture. I do the normal English with them. I teach the students how the language works (e.g. grammar, vocabulary). [...] The native speaker really speaks with them.
- (15) FLAs are a vital contribution to the English classroom as they provide insights into real English. That goes beyond what I can offer in class.
- (16) I see the benefits of the FLA program in my classes. Students respond very positively to the FLAs. For a good reason: FLAs are native speakers. They simply know the language inside out. My students appreciate this insider knowledge. And I do, too, by the way.

Furthermore, a great number of English teachers differentiate between what they consider to be ‘real’ English, namely that of the NSs, and the kind of English that they use with students – referred to disparagingly as ‘School English’, as exemplified by these statements:

- (17) The role [of the FLA] in class is to show the students what real English sounds like. It is not just ‘School English’.
- (18) I believe it is positive that the pupils sometimes hear someone speak real English. The [FLA’s] role in class is to show the students what real English sounds like. It is not simply ‘School English’.
- (19) I can give my students School English, that’s the grammar, the phrases and the like. FLAs can then work with this foundation and teach students how English is used in the real world.
- (20) The thing is ... I only learned English. My English is fine, I am happy with it, don’t get me wrong but what I mean is – it is not authentic in that it is English as it is really used by native speakers. Especially when it comes to vocabulary and phrases or sayings. That’s why I am happy to have her [the FLA]. She makes up for my deficiencies.

These teachers do not seem to view themselves or their students as authentic users of the language. From my perspective this is doubly disturbing. First, it shows that ELT professionals have not (fully) recognized the implications of the global use of English for teaching and learning. Second, since teachers function as mediators, their attitudes are likely to be passed on to generations of students and so perpetuate the orthodox belief in the pedagogic primacy of NS English.

Another sad tendency that could be observed in the data gained is that many EFL teachers belittle their own professional value by degrading the important role of the teacher as mediator. In addition to example (20) given above, the following two clearly illustrate this attitude as well:

- (21) [M]y assistant brings the language to life, so to say. I help him doing so.

- (22) The FLAs that I have had so far were sources of inspiration. [...] They bring in new teaching methods that my students and also I as the teacher can learn from. [...] They are definitely my role model in class.

My research results paint a gloomy picture of EFL teachers that do not question those institutionally promoted myths but rather seem to meekly and unthinkingly accept them.

It can be concluded that the EFL teachers' points of view correspond with those of the FLAs'. They underline current assumptions regarding the role of the English native speaker and today's reality in EFL classrooms all across Europe. They reveal that the overwhelming majority of FLAs and EFL teachers support the prescribed language policy of the EU. As could be seen in the questionnaires, a great number of FLAs as well as EFL teaching professionals differentiate between what they consider to be 'real' English, namely that of the NSs, and the kind of English that regular English teachers use with their students – referred to and downgraded as 'School English'. While one might expect the non-professional FLAs to express these attitudes, it was surprising not to have received more critical responses from professional EFL teachers.

Confronted with this consensus at both institutional and grassroots level, should one simply concede that this is how English teaching is conceived and leave it at that? But the validity of ideas about teaching of course depends on their effect on learning. So it is relevant to ask to what extent this consensus corresponds to the way learners think about English.

4.4 Pupils and University Students

In order to find out about pupils' and university students' perceptions, I conducted an online questionnaire in which more than 230 pupils at Austrian general and vocational high schools and more than 140 university students participated and shared their perceptions and attitudes towards a variety of areas linked to learning

EFL. These included attitudes towards EFL, FLAs and regular non-native English language teachers at school, personal motivations for learning EFL, relevant aspects of communication in English, and personal definitions of (foreign) language competence(s). In addition, participants listened to three audio files offering short conversations between NSs and non-native speakers of English and, among other things, were asked to state whether they perceived the speakers to be English NSs and why they arrived at that conclusion. They then ranked the recordings based on their opinion of appropriateness for learning EFL, understandability and personal preference.

It seems important to take the learners' attitudes and dispositions into account as well. That is why current and former pupils' attitudes towards ELT were researched. The following discusses some of the findings.

In contrast to the common belief that pupils do not like their English teachers because pupils feel that the demands made on them by the subject and its exams are so high and therefore stressful, it could be seen that the majority of participating pupils have positive feelings towards their English teachers with 55 percent reporting "positive" and another 21 percent "quite positive" attitudes (see Table 9).

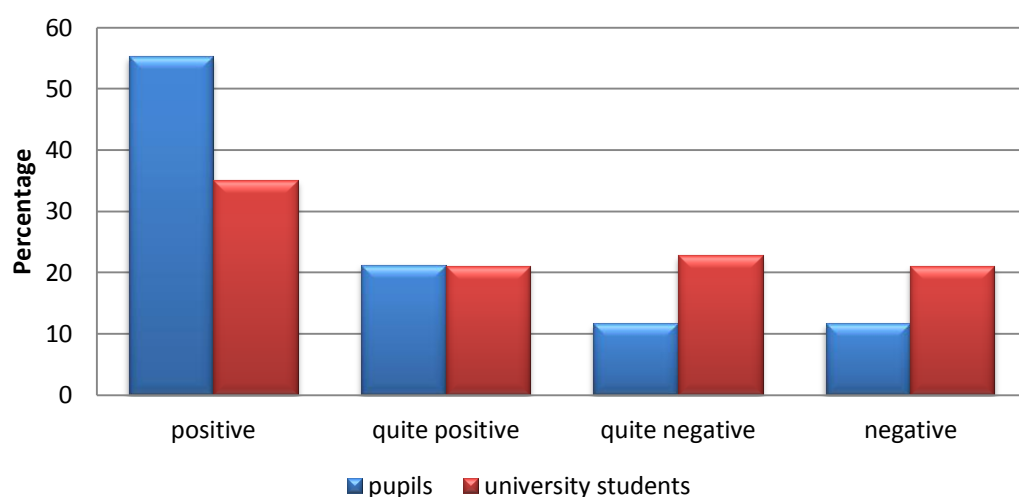


Table 9: Distribution of answers for the question: "How do you feel about your current English teacher?" (for pupils) and "How did you feel about your last English teacher at school?" (for university students).

These numbers can be considered especially high for pupils at school; 77 percent of all pupil respondents described their relationship with their current English teacher as a good one, while only 23 percent reported a negative attitude. The figures for university students are also positive, with a majority having positive memories of their last English teachers.

When asked how important it was for them to have a good relationship with their English teacher, 68 percent of all the participating pupils answered “important” and another 23 percent “quite important” (see Table 10). Again, these are remarkably high figures that clearly highlight the importance of a working teacher-student partnership. The fact that more than half the students considered their actual relationship positive shows the current situation in a very good light. What I believe to be highly interesting is the fact that the majority of teenage respondents understand the importance of a good working environment in class and finds it significant. This somewhat goes against the general public’s opinion that students and teachers are natural enemies or that teenagers cannot understand the important role that teachers play for their own learning process. It also shows that, although EFL is generally considered to be a rather difficult subject, one with which many students have problems and in which many receive bad grades, the overall relationship between teachers and the students that participated in this study is a very positive one.

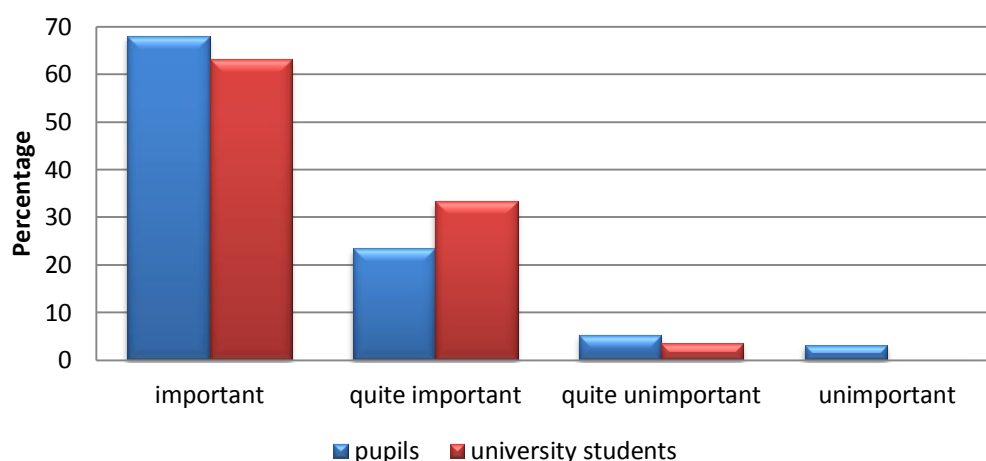


Table 10: How important is it (or would it be) to have a positive attitude towards your current English teacher?

It is not only the attitudes toward regular English language teachers that are described very positively, but also those toward FLAs, albeit less explicitly. I consider this an interesting finding since it is the FLAs who are most often referred to as those doing the ‘interesting’, more fun, student-centered activities (such as oral communication tasks, discussions, games, etc.), whereas the regular EFL teachers seem to be responsible for the less attractive, more learning-intensive aspects such as the teaching of grammar, vocabulary, testing or grading.

In comparing the students’ attitudes (see Table 11), one can see that positive feelings towards regular English teachers generally correlate with – and may be considered to lead to – positive feelings towards the respective foreign language assistants. However, initial negative feelings towards regular English teachers are not compensated by positive feelings towards assistants (i.e., positive feelings towards assistants do not alter the initial, negative feelings toward the regular teacher). In this sense, the decisive relationship is between the students and regular English teachers, one that cannot be replaced by introducing a second person in the classroom.

Attitudes towards EFL teacher		Attitudes towards FLA			
		positive	quite positive	quite negative	negative
	positive	15.66%	26.51%	16.87%	1.20%
	quite positive	3.61%	9.64%	4.82%	0.00%
	quite negative	4.82%	3.61%	1.20%	0.00%
	negative	2.41%	4.82%	3.61%	1.20%

Table 11: Comparison of pupils’ attitudes towards their EFL teachers and FLAs.

Participants were asked to rate the importance of specific aspects of language use when they communicate with others as well as when others communicate with them using English (see Table 12 for the pupils’ responses and Table 13 for the students’ answers). What can be seen in both groups is that, first and foremost, the participants understand the main purpose of language as that of information exchange. Accordingly, mutual understanding and clear communication are rated as the highest by far (university students unanimously rated being understood as “important”, the figure for pupils is only slightly below and in the 90s).

In addition, the findings also show that different criteria seem to apply for themselves in comparison to others when using English since it can be seen that the standards that they have for themselves are always higher than for their communication partners.

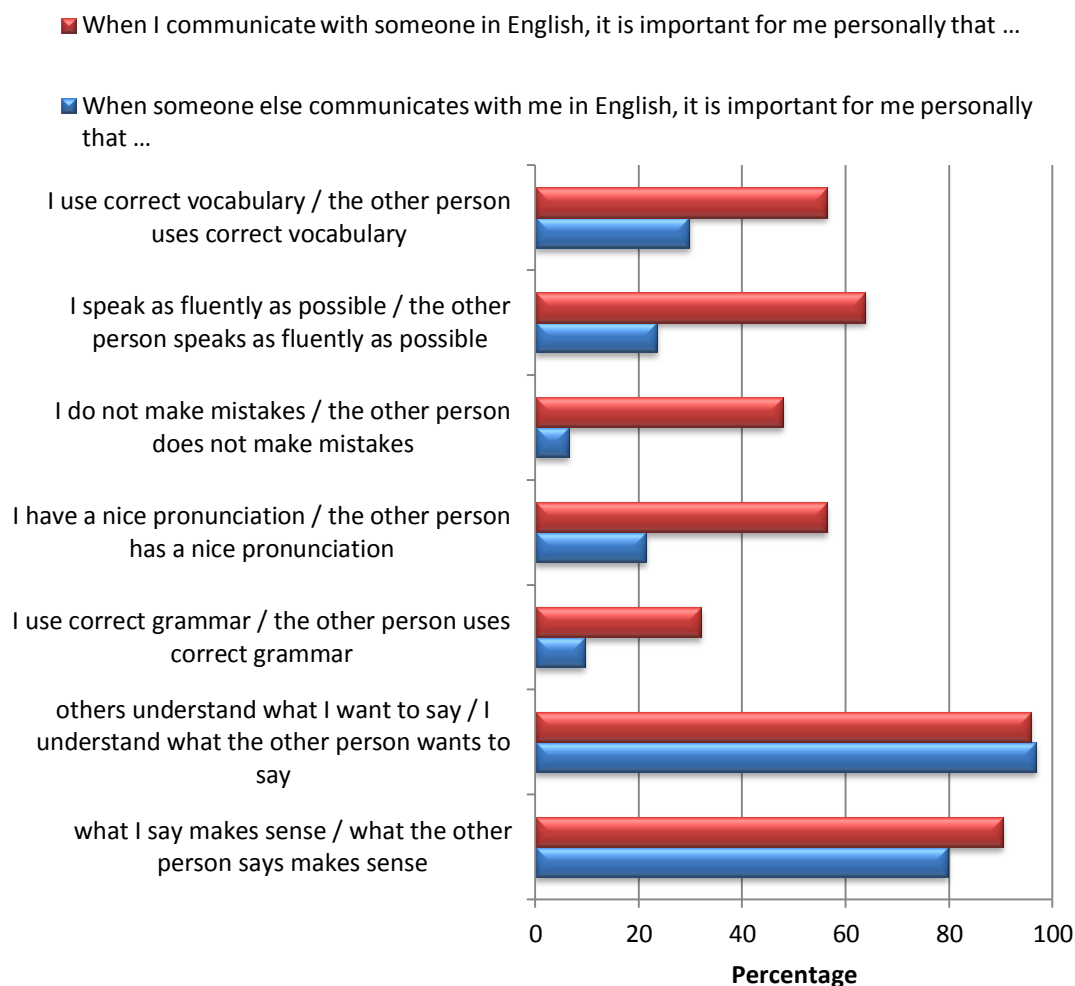


Table 12: Comparison of pupils' answers rated "important" for their own versus someone else's language production in English^{19, 20}.

¹⁹ For the aspect "communicating fluently" a highly significant difference of 1 percent was seen between girls and boys. For the aspects "making no mistakes" and "using the right vocabulary" a significant difference of 5 percent was seen between girls and boys. For the aspects "using correct grammar" and "nice pronunciation" a significant difference of 10 percent was seen between girls and boys.

²⁰ Percentage rates for pupils see Appendix A: Pupil Data Sheet (page 248).

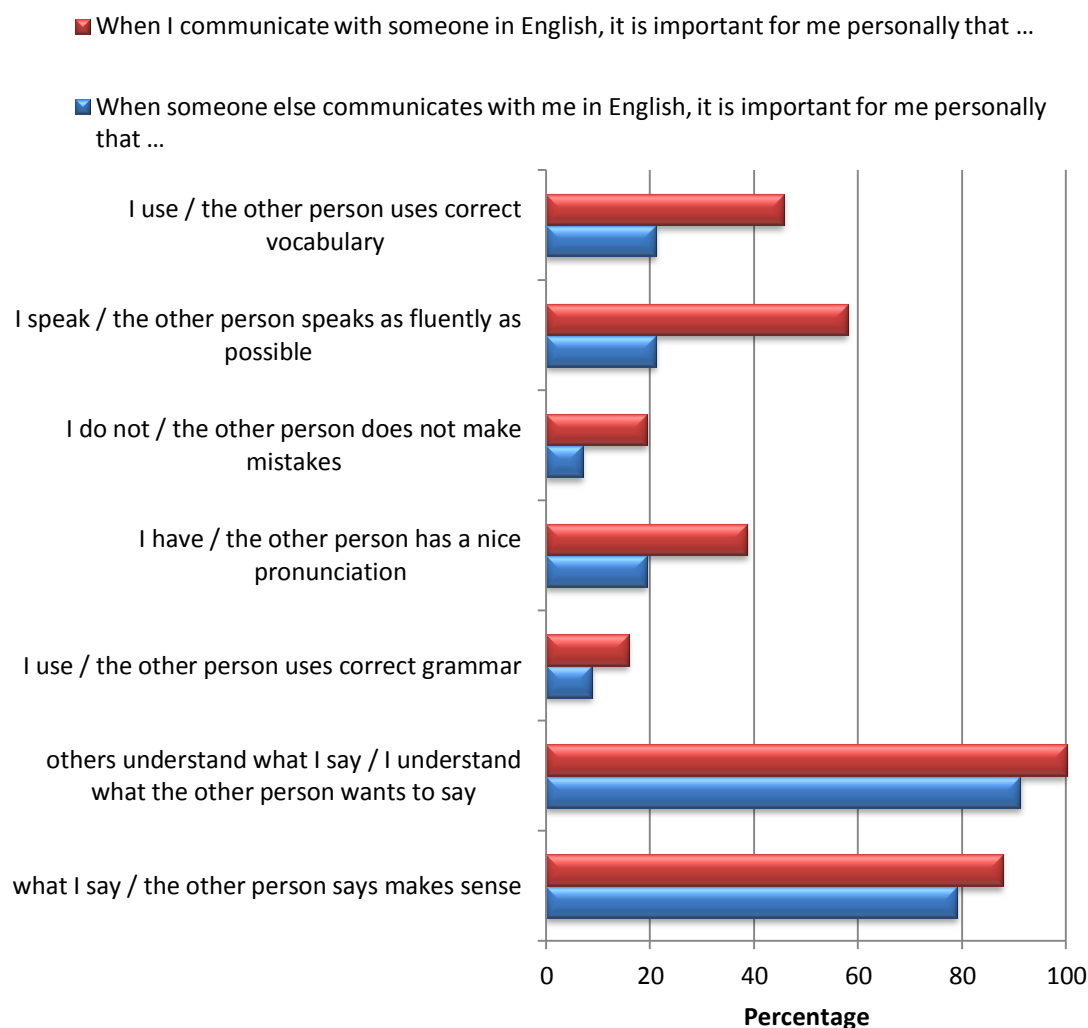


Table 13: Comparison of university students' answers rated "important" for their own versus someone else's language production in English^{21, 22}.

It can be concluded that for both groups, pupils and students, mutual understanding is of utmost importance when using English. When asked in an open-ended question why they have to learn English at school, each and every pupil and university student stated that it is due to the fact that English is the most important world language and therefore required for international communication as these answers show²³:

²¹ No significant differences were seen in the data set for male and female university students.

²² Percentage rates for university students see Appendix B: University Student Data Sheet (page 249).

²³ Examples (23) to (25) were pupils' responses, examples (26) and (27) were university students' answers.

- (23) We learn English because it is the most important language. You can use it to communicate worldwide.
- (24) English is a global tool for work and communication. It is needed in every company, every institution and every country. If you do not know how to use English today, you are seriously limited and pretty much alone out there. Without English you cannot participate in international meetings and cannot contact international clients. English, for me, is like a second language. Without English I would have a lot of problems with my leisure activities, at my school, with my international friends on Facebook or my cousins in Scandinavia. Everyone should know English.
- (25) First, English is THE world language. Second, many people around the world learn English. No matter if you do business internationally or only go on vacation you need a common language to communicate. Third, it is in our curriculum. Forth, a lot of the media are in English (films, music, etc.). Fifth, it is general education.
- (26) It is the world language and especially with growing globalization it is more and more important to be in a position to communicate with all people. I can only learn more about and from others when I can communicate with them.
- (27) English is a basic competence in today's global world.

The results highlight a significant difference in how pupils and students understand their own performance in English and what they expect of their interlocutors. While they have very high expectations for their own performance with regards to correct grammar, vocabulary choice, fluency, pronunciation and other aspects, their expectation level for others communicating with them shows very different results and a much higher tolerance for “errors”.

Knowing that both identity and self-esteem are involved and of utmost importance in language production might help explain this difference between productive and receptive competences. While pupils and students understand that linguistic deficiencies of others do not hinder communicating with them, at the same time they might feel that shortcomings in their own language use could affect their identity as speakers and thus lower their self-esteem.

Although all participants highlight the global importance of English, a large majority of pupils (81 percent) says it is “important” or “quite important” for the learning outcome in English to have a NS in the classroom. More than half the pupils (60 percent) believe their FLAs to be experts in the foreign language English, and another 20 percent consider this to be “quite true”.

In this context, an interesting observation can be made: While more than four-fifths of all pupils (83 percent) state that “Knowing your mother tongue does not mean that you can also teach it to someone else”, at the same time roughly two thirds (63 percent) of the same students agree that “A NS of English [...] is generally better to learn English from than an English teacher who learned English as a foreign language” (see Table 14) and a similar percentage (65 percent) state “It is / would be important for me to be taught English by someone who is a NS of English (but not a professional teacher)” (see Table 15).

	A NS of English (for example an FLA) is generally better to learn English from than an English teacher.	An English teacher is generally better to learn English from than an English NS (for example an FLA).
Knowing your mother tongue means you can also teach it to someone else.	9.57%	7.45%
Knowing your mother tongue does not mean that you can also teach it to someone else.	53.19%	29.79%

Table 14: Relationship between pupils’ opinion on teaching one’s mother tongue and the effects of a NS versus regular English teacher for learning English.

	It is / would be important for me to be taught English by someone who is a NS of English (but not a professional English language teacher).	It is / would be important for me to be taught English by someone who has learned EFL and is a professional English language teacher.
Knowing your mother tongue means you can also teach it to someone else.	10.64%	6.38%
Knowing your mother tongue does not mean that you can also teach it to someone else.	54.26%	28.72%

Table 15: Relationship between pupils' opinion on teaching one's mother tongue and having a NS as teacher.

Two further remarkable discrepancies can be seen in this respect: First, when asked whether they believe their FLA is an expert in teaching, a quarter (25 percent) state that they “agree” or “quite agree” while at the same time the same students indicate that “I find it important that someone who teaches English at school was trained to do so”. Second, more than half of all pupils who state that “Knowing your mother tongue does not mean you can also teach it to someone else” at the same time indicate that they believe the FLA to be a teaching expert.

We can see a clear discrepancy between the desire for professional teachers on the one hand and, on the other, the idea of English NSs being experts not only in the English language but also experts in teaching it, without having any such professional background. This attitude corresponds with institutional and public opinions that also equate NSs with competent teachers²⁴.

²⁴ This can also be seen, for example, with regards to kindergartens in Lower Austria where NSs of English are employed to develop the foreign language competences of kindergarten children without being required to have any qualifications in the fields of pedagogy, child-care and/or English. Parents request and appreciate the presence of the NSs, and policy-makers praise the program's implementation as a milestone for language pedagogy at kindergarten level. At the same time there are currently discussions to increase the education level of regular kindergarten teachers to also include a compulsory bachelor's degree.

When asked about their opinions on relevant qualities of good English teachers the following two aspects are rated highest by pupils: “professional competence (the teacher really knows his/her subject)” with 98 percent²⁵ and “teaching competence (the teacher really knows how to bring his/her knowledge across to students, he/she can pass his/her knowledge on to others)” with 96 percent²⁶. These two items were not only considered the most important ones, but they were also rated more than ten percentage points higher the next two characteristics (see Table 16). These two aspects were the most important ones for university students as well, with 93 percent²⁷ indicating “professional competence” and 88 percent²⁸ “teaching competence”.

With such high numbers for pupils and students it seems beyond question that both professional and teaching competence are regarded as the core elements of good English teachers, according to the respondents. These results are in agreement with empirical evidence (see, for example, Bowles & Levin, 1968; Hawk, Coble & Swanson, 1985; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Myrberg & Rosén, 2004 Heck, 2007; Westley, 2010).

It needs to be pointed out, however, that for the subject English as a Foreign Language the distinction between professional competence, i.e., the competence in the content, and teaching competence, which is defined as pedagogical competence to deliver the content across to students, cannot be completely separated²⁹. The content of the subject EFL is pedagogically designed language that presupposes that the teacher is competent in the language itself. As soon as the content of instruction is designed, its instruction is already presupposed at the same time. Thus, the distinction between professional competence and teaching competence for EFL is uncertain.

²⁵ 1.06 percent “quite important”, 1.06 percent “quite unimportant” and 0.00 percent as “unimportant”.

²⁶ 3.19 percent “quite important”, 1.06 percent “quite unimportant” and 0.00 percent as “unimportant”.

²⁷ 7.02 percent “quite important”, 0.00 percent “quite unimportant” and 0.00 percent as “unimportant”.

²⁸ 12.28 percent “quite important”, 0.00 percent “quite unimportant” and 0.00 percent as “unimportant”.

²⁹ In this way, EFL is different from other school subjects such as, for example, geography, where professional and teaching competences can be more clearly separated.

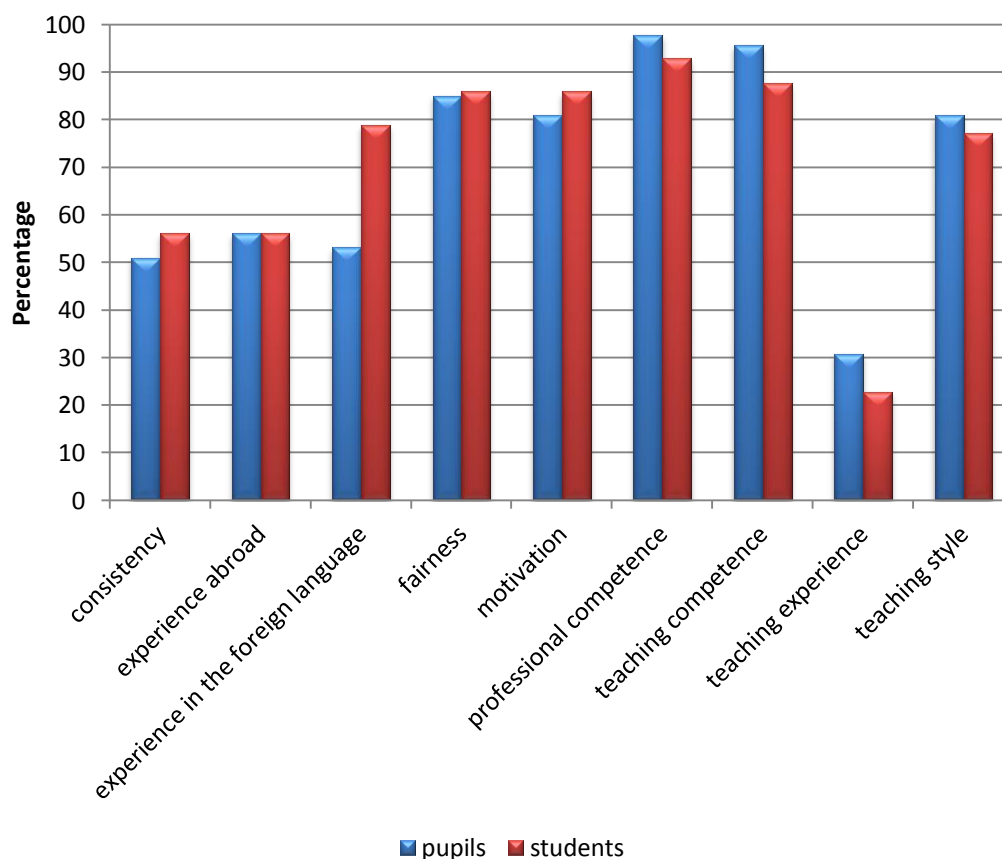


Table 16: Comparison of the pupils' and students' answers of characteristics of a good English teacher labeled as "important"³⁰.

When participants had to explicitly choose one of two opposing statements related to teaching competence, both groups pupils and students, results also showed an extremely high tendency – 97 percent for pupils and 95 percent for university students – towards teaching competence as can be seen in Table 17:

³⁰ The characteristics are defined as follows:

Consistency: the teacher is consistent and consequent in his actions, there are clear rules that are followed;

Experience abroad: the teacher has frequently been to foreign countries;

Experience in the foreign language: the teacher is experienced using the foreign language, for example, due to stays abroad;

Fairness: the teacher is fair; Motivation: the teacher can inspire / motivate;

Professional competence: the teacher really knows his subject, i.e., he has very good language skills;

Teaching competence: the teacher really knows how to bring his knowledge across to the students and can pass his knowledge on to others;

Teaching experience: the teacher already has experience teaching his subject;

Teaching style: the teacher offers lively and interesting lessons.

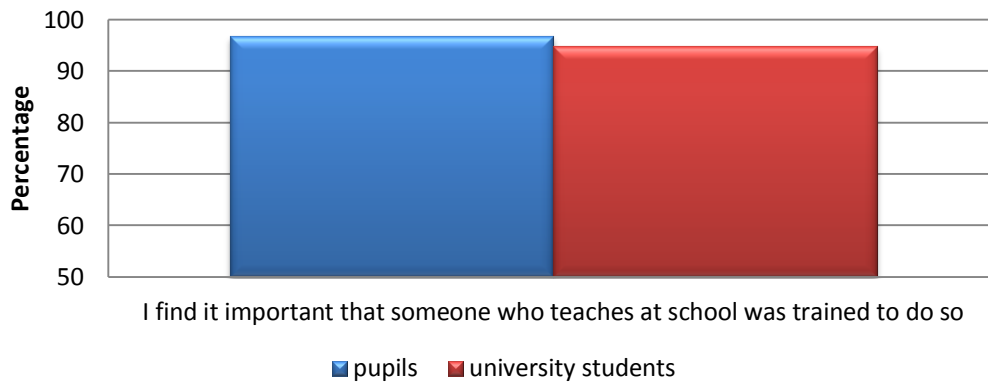


Table 17: Comparison of pupils' and university students' opinion on the importance of teaching competence.

Such distinct results paint a picture of pupils and university students who clearly understand the importance of teaching and professional competence when asked explicitly. These characteristics are integral parts of the competence profile of regular EFL teachers. Still, the majority of pupils and university students also states that “A native speaker of English [...] is generally better to learn English from than an English teacher”³¹ and “A native speaker of English [...] is better at bringing English across. He can teach me more.”³² The majority of both groups also opt for “It is / would be important for me to be taught English by someone who is a native speaker of English (but not an English language teacher)”. This inconsistency shows that while both groups are aware of the importance of professional and teaching competence, they seem to be caught in the concept of the superiority of the English native speaker – both as a language user and language teacher. It seems that this understanding is based on a misconception about the relationship between English in use and English as a school subject.

Interestingly enough, though, while the majority believes the English NSs to be better English teachers and better to learn from, the vast majority disagrees with the statement “If you have a Foreign Language Assistant in class, you do not need a regular English teacher anymore”³³. It seems that many pupils and students are

³¹ 62.77 percent of all pupils and 54.39 percent of all university students agree with this statement.

³² 59.57 percent of all pupils and 63.16 percent of all university students agree with this statement.

³³ While 10.64 percent of all pupils and 14.04 percent of all university students agree with this statement, 89.36 percent of the pupils and 85.96 percent of the students disagree.

torn between their own beliefs – on the one hand, they see the NS as the utmost authority in language and teaching, while, on the other hand, classroom reality shows them that teachers are essential for their language learning experience.

The three aspects that participants find most important when learning English are “Practicing speaking skills” (81 percent of the pupils, 91 percent of the students find this “important”), “Learning not to be afraid when using English / learning to feel good and competent when using English” (73 percent of the pupils, 89 percent of the students find this “important”), and “Discussing interesting topics” (67 percent of the pupils, 73 percent of the students find this “important”).

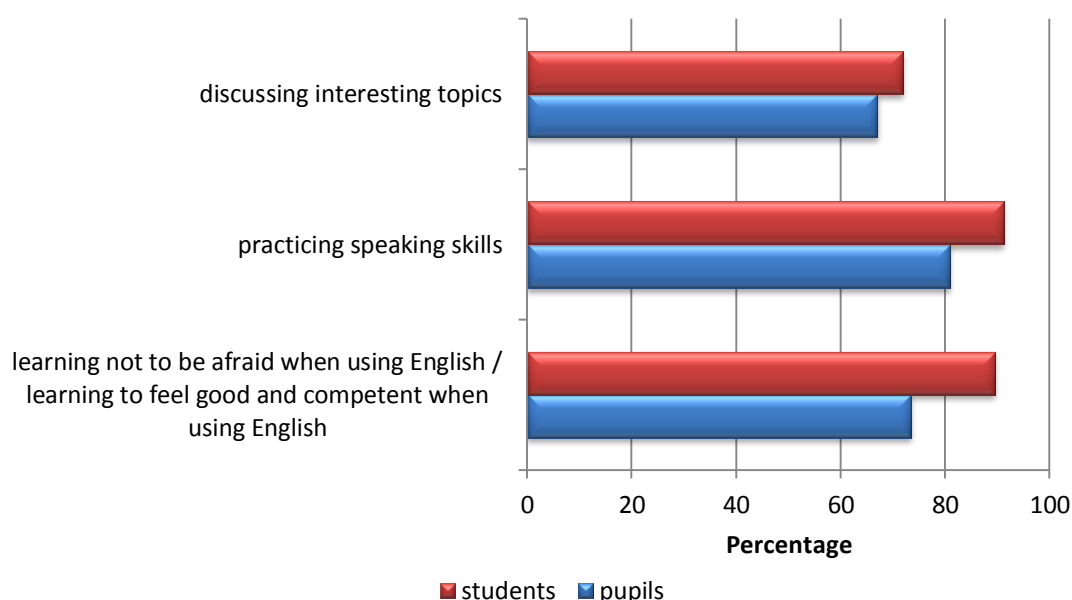


Table 18: Comparison of pupils’ and students’ top three answers of the aspects they consider to be most important for them.

When pupils were asked who they believe can best help them to become competent in these various aspects of the English language, their answers revealed a very traditional role allocation (see Table 19), with the regular English language teacher taking over those aspects that have to do with test preparation, vocabulary training, writing and reading, while FLAs are thought to be of more help than English teachers with regards to discussions, confidence in the foreign language, speaking and listening skills. It seems essential to consider if and how native speakers can actually help to increase learners’ confidence when using the English language. Being presented with a standard of achievement that these students

cannot hope to emulate might actually, and is more likely to, lead to discouragement, frustration and a low self-esteem³⁴ and have long-lasting (if not lifelong) effects on their self-concept³⁵. In addition, the native FLA performance is constantly compared to that of the regular, non-native English teacher and thus undermines the authority of the regular teacher whose English use is less than native-like and regarded as deficient.

	regular EFL teacher	FLA
preparing and practicing for tests together	96.81 %	3.19 %
learning and practicing grammar together	93.62 %	6.38 %
discussing interesting topics	39.36 %	60.64 %
learning not to be afraid when using English / learning to feel good and competent when using English	22.34 %	77.66 %
learning new vocabulary	81.91 %	18.09 %
practicing writing skills	91.49 %	8.51 %
practicing speaking skills	20.21 %	79.79 %
practicing listening skills	22.34 %	77.66 %
practicing reading skills	86.17 %	13.83 %

Table 19: Distribution of pupils' opinion on who they believe can help them more become competent in various aspects of the English language.

Almost two-thirds (65 percent of pupils, 65 percent of students) chose “It is / would be important for me to be taught English by someone who is a NS of English (but not a professional English language teacher)” rather than opting for “It is / would be important for me to be taught English by someone who has learned EFL and is a professional English language teacher”. However, when confronted with three recordings of conversations between

³⁴ This distinctively lower self-esteem could also be seen earlier in this chapter when respondents had to compare important aspects relevant for their own communication skills and those of others.

³⁵ This could be seen in my university respondents who rate their own foreign language skills in English to be poor when they have actually reached a fairly high level of language competence.

- (1) a NNS and a NS of English,
- (2) two NNS of English and
- (3) two English NSs,

it becomes clear that both pupils and students obviously cannot differentiate between them correctly. Merely around 5 percent (5 percent of pupils, 6 percent of students) can classify the speakers correctly while almost half of them (45 percent of pupils, 44 percent of students) mismatch all of the conversation participants.

At the same time, when asked to rate those conversation participants from whom they would find it best to learn English, almost two-thirds (65 percent of pupils, 66 percent of students) chose those in the NNS / NNS conversation (compared to 29 percent for the NNS / NS and 6 percent for the NS / NS conversations³⁶). Of those pupils who first stated that they prefer a NS to a NNS, 43 percent voted for the NNS / NNS conversation as their favorite in terms of learning English.

These results show that while both pupils and students opt for NSs as their favored language teachers when asked explicitly, when actually and unknowingly confronted with various English language users they cannot differentiate between NS and NNS and in fact show a preference for NNS as role models. This then seems to promote the assumption that pupils base their attitudes on false assumptions. These appear to be the same that can also be found institutionally and at grassroots levels.

4.5 Conclusion of Part I

In my research the majority of non-native teachers of EFL as well as FLAs evince the same positive attitude to NS English as do the pupils and university students. This confirms the continuing prevalence of conservative attitudes towards ELF among teaching professionals and underlines Seidlhofer's observation that

³⁶ Percentages given for pupils. The results for university students were similar with 30.56 percent for the NNS / NS and 3.21 percent for the NS / NS conversation.

[t]here is little indication here that the unprecedented global reality of ELF might prompt a reconsideration of traditional ways of thinking: it is generally just ignored as if it simply did not exist. This may not be surprising in the case of governments, ministries of education, and employers, as there is usually quite a long time lag before new insights have any impact on established procedures (such as curriculum design and job descriptions) in these quarters. But the same conservative attitudes are also evident in the ELT profession itself, and here the degree of inertia is quite striking (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 190).

As Dewey also points out

in ELT the normative model is often incongruously homogenized: at an institutional level there continues to be insufficient opposition to the current status quo, with little tolerance, let alone affirmation, of pluralism (Dewey, 2007, p. 344).

It can be concluded that at the grassroots level attitudes towards the teaching of EFL coincide with the prescribed institutional views.

Given this general consensus that the English taught in schools and universities must necessarily be modeled on native-speaker norms, what reason could there be for challenging this established view? To answer this question we need to consider the extent to which the definition of the subject English provides for the needs of learners as prospective users of English, and we need to ask to what degree teaching English as a foreign language is different from using English as a native tongue. These questions will be discussed in Part II.

PART II:
OF SQUARE PEGS AND ROUND HOLES:
THINGS ARE AS THEY ARE

5 Things Are as They Are: English as a Lingua Franca

You'd be surprised how many people
violate this simple principle every day
of their lives and try to fit square pegs
into round holes, ignoring the clear
reality that Things Are As They Are.
The Tao of Pooh

5.1 Introduction

In Part I we discussed the official policy beliefs as well as the grassroots-level beliefs. In doing so, we explored the established views from above and below on what should be taught in school. We concluded that the attitudes towards teaching EFL are in agreement with the prescribed institutional views and are founded upon the idea of the native speaker as authority. Now, in Part II, we will examine how valid these views are and challenge the established beliefs on English language teaching. We will start by asking why students actually learn *English* as a foreign language at school rather than any other foreign language.

As discussed in chapter 2, the European language policy understands language competence as vital for economic development, cultural understanding and the creation of a common European identity. Statistical information indicates that today a little more than half of EU citizens can use at least one additional European language and that in most cases this language is English. Thus, English is by far the most widely used language within the European Union when considering the numbers of both first and foreign language users (Berns, Bot & Hasebrink, 2007, p. 2; Kiijarvi, 2006, p. 12). Dewey outlines the specific situation of English as an international language:

Although there are, and have previously been, other international languages, the case of English is different in fundamental ways: for the extent of its diffusion geographically; for the enormous cultural diversity of the speakers who use it; and for the infinitely varied domains in which it is found and purposes it serves (Dewey, 2007, p. 333).

This development of English as a world language is one of the most profound linguistic developments of our time according to Fischer (2007, p. 149). The dominance and special status of English is not limited to the European Union (see, for example, Ammon, 2007) but can be seen all around the globe (Graddol, 1997; Jenkins, 2007; McKay, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2011). The reasons that English, rather than another language, has developed into today's most important world language are manifold. However, historical developments, globalization, economic, political and mass media developments can be identified as crucial factors (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Cenoz & Jessner, 2000, p. 5; Crystal, 2003, pp. 29–70; Fischer, 2007, p. 149; Goodman & Graddol, 1997; Graddol, 2000). For Seidlhofer, there are two main processes that explain the spread of English:

it has been 'exported' to many regions of the world by its 'native' speakers, primarily through colonialization, and so has invaded these places. It has, however, to an even larger extent been 'imported' by people all over the world who decided to learn it as a useful language in addition to their first language(s) (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 3).

In more recent times, the development and widespread availability of new technologies have boosted these processes and have “enhanced the social prestige attributed to typical global users of English” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7) through “the media [...], advertising, popular youth culture, and entertainment” (Seidlhofer et al., 2006, p. 5). English has also spread as a means of intercultural communication, assuming an economic-cultural function in facilitating business as well as scholarly exchange, tourism and cross-culture relationships, according to Brutt-Griffler (2002, pp. 110–111).

It needs to be pointed out that trying to provide any exact estimates of English speakers around the globe is an almost impossible endeavor since there is no clear-cut definition of when a person qualifies as an English speaker. Still, even very vague estimations make it clear that “‘native speakers’ of English are clearly

outnumbered by 'non-native speakers'" (Crystal, 2003, p. 69). Today, as Kachru highlights, English is "the most widely taught, read and spoken language that the world has ever known" (Kachru & Nelson, 1996, p. 71). The rapidly growing trend of English is very likely to accelerate even further in the future (see Myers-Scotton, 2002, p. 80; van Parijs, 2004).

When deciding which language among those you know you should pick, the question you will spontaneously tend to ask yourself will [...] [be] which language is best known by the member of your audience who knows it least. In other words, you will systematically ask yourself whether there is any language that is known to some extent by all (van Parijs, 2004, p. 115).

Indeed, the more people learn English, the more global and important it becomes, which in turn increases the motivation among others to learn it. "Each day, all over the world, tens of millions of students are busy learning English, in the process improving their own position in the world language constellation and, unwittingly, improving the value position of all other English speakers" (Swaan, 2001, p. 51).

The reason for such a high percentage of English language users rests with the fact that English is not a language used primarily to communicate with its native speakers but rather to communicate with the world. English as a Lingua Franca serves different purposes and is used in different situations and ways than other foreign languages, both within the European Union and outside of it. Although the EU may, as a matter of policy, portray all languages as being equal, it is obvious that they are not. This is clearly reflected in the fact that the foreign language most people learn at school is English and not, for example, Danish. The reason is obvious: Danish is spoken by about six million people, mainly in Denmark but also in some parts of Northern Germany, where it has the status of a minority language, as well as some areas in the USA, Canada and Argentina and by a percentage of the population of Greenland (Official Journal of the European Union, 2007). Most people would agree that Danish is learned in order to communicate primarily with the Danes. As such, this language is of rather limited use if one wishes to communicate with the rest of the EU, or the rest of the world for that matter. English, though, serves exactly this purpose (Böhringer

& Hülmbauer, 2010, p. 171; Graddol, 2006). English quite clearly is used for different purposes and fulfills different functions than Danish (Crystal, 1997, p. 106). English is no longer a language used primarily to communicate with its native speakers but rather to communicate among speakers of various first languages. It is this global importance of the language that sets English apart from other foreign languages and is the reason why the overwhelming majority of European students learn English rather than Danish or any other European language as a foreign language at school. And as Kachru points out, English also carries considerable symbolic capital:

Competence in English and the use of this language signify a transmutation: an added potential for material and social gain and advantage [...]. English is considered as a symbol for modernization, a key to expanded functional roles, and an extra arm for success and mobility in culturally and linguistically complex and pluralistic societies. As if all this were not enough, it is also believed that English contributes to yet another type of transmutation: It internationalizes one's outlook. (Kachru, 1986, p. 1).

Crystal adds that “[m]ost of the scientific, technological and academic information in the world is expressed in English and over 80 percent of all the information stored in electronic retrieval systems is in English” (Crystal, 1997, p. 106). It is this international power that gives English a distinct position in comparison to other European languages (Widdowson, 2003, p. 61). As Widdowson states “the global spread of English as an international language has come about, and continues apace, because it operates in a range of institutional and professional domains of an academic, economic, and political kind” (Widdowson, 2003, p. 61). This holds especially true for the EU, where English serves as the main vehicle for intercultural communication (Graddol, 2006, chapter X) and also offers a vital contribution to the linguistic repertoire of its citizens (Böhringer & Hülmbauer, 2010, p. 171) as part of a globalization movement that “may be thought of initially as the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life” (Held, McGrew Anthony, Goldblatt & Perraton, 1999, p. 2). Just as globalization affects the spread of English (Limbach & Gerhards, 2012), so the “virtual resources of English are integral to processes of globalization” (Dewey, 2007, p. 344) since one common language helps support togetherness and sharing.

From these facts we can conclude that the distinctive role of English is a reality both within as well as outside the European Union. This reality has become common knowledge since “[n]obody is likely to deny that English has, in one way or another, in some shape or form, become a global lingua franca in the contemporary world” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. ix). However, a question that still causes heated debate is what kind of English it is that is and should be used.

5.2 What’s That Thing Called ELF? Defining English as a Lingua Franca

The term *lingua franca* refers to the “language of the franks³⁷” (Kahane & Kahane, 1976, p. 26) which originally meant a pidgin language, that is “an auxiliary language with a reduced structure and lexicon which develops to meet the communicative requirements of speakers of mutually unintelligible languages, mainly for rudimentary transactions in trade, seafaring, or the management of labour in general” (Schendl, 2001, p. 59). Originally, it was “a variety that was spoken along the South-Eastern coast of the Mediterranean between appr[oximately] the 15th and 19th century” (Meierkord & Knapp, 2002, p. 9). This language mainly served economic purposes. However, various other *lingua francas*, albeit with different names, were most likely also used before this period in time (Meierkord & Knapp, 2002, p. 9). Generally speaking, a *lingua franca* allows communication for specific purposes between speakers of various first languages (Meierkord & Knapp, 2002, p. 9).

Prior to the modern era within Europe, both Latin and Greek functioned as *lingua francas* and were used for religious, scientific and various other domains before they were replaced by French as the new language of diplomacy and the elite. English as a *Lingua Franca* became important in the middle of the 20th century. Thus, English is neither the first nor the only *lingua franca* but quite likely “the only genuinely global *lingua franca*” (Seidlhofer, 2009, p. 39) of today’s world.

³⁷ “Franks” was a term that was used by Arabs when referring to Western Europeans (Ostler, 2005, p. 407).

It is, however, not a new phenomenon since language does not “settle into a fixed state transmitted over time, but is continually in flux, exploited and adapted in response to changing circumstances” (Seidlhofer, 2010, p. 148). Therefore, Seidlhofer points out that the development of English as a Lingua Franca can be considered “an entirely natural adaptive process” (Seidlhofer, 2010, p. 148). What distinguishes English as a Lingua Franca from former or other lingua francas, though, is that it has penetrated so many people’s lives. No other language before “has ever had both the global expansion and the penetration of social strata and domains of use that English has now” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 3).

Seidlhofer defines English as a Lingua Franca as “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7). Such a definition is not restricted to so-called non-native speakers of English but rather includes communication participants of all L1s. In this respect, Seidlhofer provides a more open and flexible definition than, for example, Firth, who defines English as a Lingua Franca as “a ‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen *foreign* language of communication” (Firth, 1996, p. 240). Along with House’s definition (House, 1999, p. 74), what can clearly be seen is that with ELF communication the majority of the language users do not have English as their L1. For Seidlhofer, however, the more open definition also allows the inclusion of ELF interactions in circumstances such as “meetings at the United Nations headquarters in New York, tourist cruises around Sydney harbour, or academic conferences in Hyderabad” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7) that would otherwise be excluded due to the presence of English native speakers.

The main purpose of ELF is to fulfill communicative functions and the reason why English is chosen is that it constitutes the only possibility to communicate it is the only language “shared by all interactants” (Seidlhofer, 2011, pp. 18–19). I believe that the strict exclusion of native speakers is not helpful and therefore go along with Seidlhofer’s more open approach.

In her research, Seidlhofer points at hybridity and flexibility as two central elements of English as a Lingua Franca (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 80). By hybridity, Seidlhofer refers to the original meaning of a lingua franca, namely a mix of different languages, or as Jenkins puts it, a “plurilinguistic composition” (Jenkins, 2007, p. 1). The term “flexibility” refers to language norms that are not oriented towards the native speakers and their norms but those that are created and used in personal communication situations (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 80). This flexibility makes users of English as a Lingua Franca “highly skilled communicators who make use of their multilingual resources in ways not available to monolingual NSEs [NSEs meaning native speakers]” (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey, 2011, p. 284).

This definition also makes it clear that English as a Lingua Franca cannot be considered a variety that is characterized by stability and a stable speech community (Cogo, 2011, p. 98). English as a Lingua Franca is, on the contrary, highly flexible in terms of both its use and its users. Seidlhofer points out that in English as a Lingua Franca, communication “norms are negotiated ad hoc” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 8).

In addition, contrary to the traditional view of a speech community that is stable and comprises a set of speakers who share one native language, English as a Lingua Franca arises when people from various international backgrounds interact. Such an environment requires them to adapt the language according to their needs, shared knowledge and background while also considering aspects of diversity (such as cultural diversity, for example). English as a Lingua Franca fosters a common ground to interact and communicate. Since the participants and their backgrounds in such international interactions may vary considerably, the language norms are adapted to suit each specific situation, which requires the aforementioned flexibility. Such an understanding, however, requires us to see English as a Lingua Franca as a set of “registers as used in different kinds of communication” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 86) rather than as a variety used by a stable community.

Assuming that ELF users have different levels of language proficiency and adapt the language to their needs, one might conclude that it is hardly possible to produce mutual understanding in such interactions. But evidence of ELF usage suggests otherwise. ELF users make use of their multilingual background and develop their own norms that seem to be most appropriate for their particular communication situations. As Seidlhofer explains:

What [...] happens is that the participants gauge a level of language at which they can operate, and settle on ad hoc, pro tem norms that are adequate to the task and commensurate to the command of the linguistic resources they have in common. The crucial point in all this is that these norms are tacitly understood to be established during the interaction, within the current possibilities, and that they are primarily regulated by interactional exigencies, rather than by what native speakers would say, or would find correct, or 'normal', or appropriate (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 18).

This explanation makes it clear that ELF communication is flexible and makes creative use of interlocutors' resources from their various languages. It also suggests that ELF users should not be looked upon as "language learners" but rather treated as capable "language users" who can use the language for their needs as Widdowson's explanation of language proficiency shows:

Real proficiency is when you are able to take possession of the language, turn it to your advantage, and make it real for you. This is what mastery means. So in a way, proficiency only comes with nonconformity, when you can take the initiative and strike out on your own (Widdowson, 2003, p. 42).

This clearly holds true for ELF users. As a language teacher and language learner myself, I would also like to add that the idea of looking down on others due to the fact that they are language learners (especially in the field of linguistics) seems very alien and inappropriate as we are all improving and refining our language competences all the time and for all languages we use.

5.3 Friend or Foe? Attitudes towards ELF in the European Union

English as a Lingua Franca has been viewed as both blessing and a curse. While some cherish the fact that it can connect people, others fear overwhelming globalization and the leveling of culture and language. Bailey summarizes this by saying that “English involves both positive and negative cultural values: economic development and yet exploitation; political and cultural ideas and institutions (some welcome, some offensive); enrichment of English but deprivation of one’s own language; opportunities to communicate with readers around the world yet at the expense of one’s local audience” (Bailey, 1991, p. 165). Already in 1989, Verschueren pointed out that for some English is “the universal benefactor which will ultimately overcome the curse of Babel by eliminating problems of communication across linguistic and cultural barriers”, while at the same time others might view it as “the universal villain promoted for the sake of western or, more precisely, Anglo-American cultural – if not political – imperialism” (Verschueren, 1989, p. 52).

As is often the case, the truth might lie somewhere in between these two extremes. Bailey notes that “[o]bservations about English are a mirror that commentators hold up to themselves; they reflect prejudice and hope, bigotry and pride, scorn and celebration. They offer insights into the social conditions that produced them” (Bailey, 1991, p. 287). It is worth noticing that both Verschueren and Bailey apparently see English as a monolithic NS entity. Once one starts thinking in ELF terms the situation is different, though, and there is not necessarily a threat.

The very fact that ELF is goal-oriented, flexible and does not necessarily conform to English native speaker norms has consequences for how it is perceived by experts, the general public and, interestingly enough, also ELF users themselves. For the last (and largest) group there seems to be some kind of *doublethink* where, on the one hand, ELF is viewed as a very handy tool for international communication while on the other it is sometimes considered inferior and deficient. Such attitudes could also be observed in my data (see chapter 4.4).

An oft-expressed concern is that proper Standard English is threatened as speakers of ELF do not conform to native speaker rules but rather create their own sets of norms depending on their communication partners and situations (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 94). In doing so, critics say, ELF users undermine good English usage. However plausible this argument might sound initially, it needs to be challenged since there is no such thing as one clear definition of what Standard English is (Seidlhofer, 2011, pp. 28–43), what is understood as *good* language usage and how a native speaker should be defined. Nonetheless, the idea of such a fixed set of norms that can and should be taught, learned and used seems to be a very deep-seated idea and one that was also clearly expressed in my data (see chapter 4). It stems from the general idea that a language is the property of its native speakers and that it is their privilege to create the norms to which other users of that language must subscribe.

Another source of negative attitudes towards ELF, as described by Seidlhofer, relates to the aforementioned fact that ELF by its very nature is not a variety of English. The fact that it cannot be easily categorized and does not correspond to established classifications makes it difficult for many to understand and accept that ELF has legitimacy nonetheless. It does not go along with the concept of a clearly defined speech community or certain distinct linguistic norms (Seidlhofer, 2011, pp. 74–88), although Seidlhofer also points out that the concept of variety is deceptive and arbitrary (Seidlhofer, 2011, pp. 46–47).

While for some scholars the important role of English within the European Union is regarded as a curse of the official EU language policy (Ammon, 2007, p. 32) and as counteracting the linguistic diversity of its citizens, others see it as embodying the most realistic future for a plurilingual European society, as promoting European citizenship and as helping the development towards plurilingualism.

Ammon discusses the possible effects of ELF and concludes that English does not have a direct negative influence on the language diversity of the EU. However, he assumes that in the long run there might be consequences for individual language communities as English might replace other languages in some domains of use

(Ammon, 2007, p. 27). Other scholars do not believe that “ELF poses [a] threat to other European languages, codes or repertoires” (Hülmbauer, Böhringer & Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 29). Brutt-Griffler comes to the same conclusion when she states that a global language does not weaken minority languages but co-exists with other languages in bilingual or multilingual contexts (Brutt-Griffler, 2002, p. 110). Supposed disadvantages stemming from one common foreign language are also regarded as overblown according to Limbach & Gerhards (2012):

The argument most often heard against the promotion of English as a European lingua franca comes from people who feel that the dominance of one language leads to the loss of importance of not only other languages, but also other cultures. This assumption is built on the idea that the hegemony of English is necessarily accompanied by a dominance of Anglo-American world views and values since language and ways of seeing the world are intertwined. One prominent supporter of such an assumption is Phillipson. The idea of a language being a manifestation of culture goes back to Johann Gottfried Herders and Wilhelm von Humboldt. Such an understanding remains common among linguists today. The European Union supports this concept in order to justify their promotion of linguistic diversity, as we saw earlier.

However, the underlying concept for such a view might be challenged. First of all, it needs to be stated that supporting the idea of a common lingua franca for all Europeans does not presuppose attacking or questioning the linguistic sovereignty of national languages within EU countries or those countries’ linguistic diversity. And although it may be true that English encroaches on some domains of use, such as academic enquiry, and thereby diminishes the status of first languages, which are then relegated to less prestigious domains of use, as Ammon and others argue, it seems that the first language of EU citizens are preserved and continue to be the reference point for individuals’ points of identification. The difference is that they are simply supplemented by a promoted foreign language, and as such “there is no immediate threat from the supercentral language” (Swaan, 2000).

Furthermore, it must be stated that the concept that a language influences our thinking and therefore our worldview can only be supported to a limited extent by recent research. It cannot be that a language carries its culture intact everywhere it goes since the very adaptability of the language would mean that it can be dissociated from the culture. It is possible to uncouple language from culture. That is exactly what ELF does. If language and culture are not that intrinsically linked, it follows that the main counter argument against having one common lingua franca for Europe is greatly weakened (Limbach & Gerhards, 2012, p. 6). In addition, one might add that language does not simply spread without any adaptation. Rather, what happens is that when language spreads, it is transformed, adapted, and naturally and inevitably changes in order to suit its surroundings and local constraints (Widdowson, 1997, p. 140).

Still, for the European Commission, the growing importance of English as a Lingua Franca is viewed as a threat to other languages and the linguistic diversity of the Union. “This is why the Commission's Action Plan has set the target of 'mother tongue-plus-two'“ (European Commission, 2004, p. 22). Wright suggests “the issue [is likely to] resolve itself in an unplanned way” (Wright, 2000, p. 121). This attitude is questioned by Seidlhofer, Breitenberger & Pitzl when they point out that

[t]his state of affairs thus looks like an irresolvable dilemma: In order to have a sense of community, a common language is needed, but having a common language is seen as a threat to European multilingualism. How can one promote a common language for the community while supporting equal rights for all community languages at the same time? (Seidlhofer et al., 2006, p. 24).

Wright also supports the idea that policy makers should become active since it

seems sensible that policy-makers should work with what is happening and not try to block it. A lingua franca allows contact and exchange across borders and permits the circulation of knowledge. A single lingua franca does this more effectively than a number of different languages shared by different constellations of groups (Wright, 2009, p. 114)

and she concludes that “[a] lingua franca is of general benefit to Europeans” (Wright, 2009, p. 114). King lines up with Wright and advises the EU to “stop regarding English as the problem. We could instead welcome the emergence of an effective lingua franca which means that all educated, employable people have a first language and a language for international communication” (King, 2011, p. 34). For King the crucial “question then is not 'what should we do about English', but what are the implications of this (for the present) dominant role? How do we encourage real multi/plurilingualism (and how can the ubiquitousness of English assist this process)?” (King, 2011, p. 34). Rindler Schjerve & Vetter also believe that the unsolved questions related to the number of official languages and the role of English as a supranational lingua franca need to be addressed openly (Rindler Schjerve & Vetter, 2012, p. 3).

For many scholars, the increased number of official languages within the EU and an increase in international language contacts render the development of a common contact language more and more important. Such contact languages allow for the development of one common political, economic and cultural area (Ammon, 2007, p. 21). Davis provides a short example:

My story is about a Slovenian who was keen to learn foreign languages. He had a head start with Croatian and Serbian, but then he went on to learn Italian, German, Polish and even Hungarian. When he was told that French was the language of international diplomacy, he went to France to learn and practice the language on the spot. After a while, he decided to cross the Channel. On arriving to England he immediately got lost. When he saw two police officers, he stopped and asked them for directions. Unfortunately he could not speak English. Instead he tried each and every one of the languages he had learned, but to no avail. After he angrily turned around to return to France, one of the police officers remarked that it would perhaps be a good idea to learn a foreign language. Nonsense, replied the other, look at that foreigner, he spoke six languages, and he still could not make himself understood. This story has messages at different levels. [...] [I]t shows that there is no point in speaking many languages if the other person cannot understand you. In other words, it takes two people to be able to talk and understand a language [i]f you want to hold a conversation – let alone a dialogue (Davis, 2007, p. 1).

This example highlights the importance that all the people involved in a conversation be able to use the same language; otherwise, there will be no conversation at all, just as in the story presented. English is the most widely used common language and it therefore makes good sense to support English language acquisition if one wants Europeans to communicate and understand one another. You need to use the same language to communicate. English functions as a lingua franca. Thus, it helps people to communicate across various first languages. This communicative process enables them to enter “into a relationship with other languages” (House & Rehbein, 2004, p. 2) since

ELF [...] provides the possibility of extending the linguistic repertoire to account for this need for *intercultural* communication without compromising the integrity of diverse languages as the means for *intracultural* interaction and the expression of distinct sociocultural identities. From this perspective, ELF does not undermine multilingual diversity but actually helps to sustain it (Hülmbauer et al., 2008, p. 29).

5.4 Mine, Yours or Ours? The Ownership Question

I have already pointed out that most people naturally assume that a language is the property of its native speakers, the people who have been socialized in a certain language and culture. It is commonly accepted that these native speakers are the owners of the language; they are the experts and the ones who decide what is right and wrong and the only ones who can legitimately make changes to the language. It is also clear that generally speaking, the reason why people learn foreign languages is to communicate with their native speakers. You learn Italian to communicate with Italians, Danish to communicate with Danes, and so on. It is their language, their culture and you, insofar as you wish to get in touch with these people, learn to communicate with them and adapt to their concepts of the world.

Given that we have been influenced by these experiences and thoughts, and shaped by years of socialization where this idea is ingrained deeply into our minds, it can be hard to think of the world in terms other than of native and non-native speakers, of owners of the language and those who just borrow it for whatever reasons. In many cases, this understanding might also be true. It is certainly true that there is something about your first language: It is the language of your upbringing, and so it has a kind of primacy, makes you feel a certain affinity for it and it makes you particularly good at communicating with people within your community.

But it does not follow that you therefore communicate well with people *outside* this community. There is actually evidence that suggests that in a lingua franca situation, native speakers are less likely to be understood than non-native speakers. It is essential to realize that for English as a Lingua Franca this ownership concept is not appropriate. For one thing,

[t]he native speaker concept has come under attack from an empirical perspective [...]. On closer inspection, key assumptions regarding expertise, authority and consistency cannot be supported. Any questions about 'the' native speaker's grammatical knowledge or preferences of usage inevitably lead to 'real' native speakers and a heterogeneous display of socioculturally shaped variation. [...] Because of this high degree of abstraction, the native speaker concept is particularly susceptible to prescriptive generalizations presented in the guise of description with little or no hard empirical evidence (Kohn, 2011, p. 75).

Moreover, Böhringer & Hülmbauer point out that we often understand a 'language' as a given entity that is separate and isolated from other languages. However, ELF is not such a closed linguistic system that can be associated with a certain community of native speakers and their socio-cultural identity. English no longer belongs solely to its native speakers (Böhringer & Hülmbauer, 2010, p. 183). Rather, it is owned by all its international users. What might sound harmless and problem-free, of course, comes with some consequences. It is with these consequences that many seem to have problems, for various reasons. Seidlhofer concludes that “[t]raditionally, the notion of a language is so closely

and automatically tied up with its native speakers that it is very difficult to open up 'conceptual space' for EIL [English as an International Language]" (Seidlhofer, 2003, p. 14).

What are these consequences? First, if all ELF users own the language, then native speakers no longer have exclusive right over the English language, i.e., it is not just they who can shape the language and bend it to their needs. Graddol states that "the close relationship that has previously existed between language, territory and cultural identity is being challenged by globalising forces" (Graddol, 1997, p. 6). In addition, Bowers observes that "the more widely [English] is used the less it is restricted to a particular set of purposes for a particular set of people" (Bowers, 1999, p. 221).

Therefore, native speaker norms are no longer the norms of the international community of ELF users, who create their own rules (Böhringer & Hülbauer, 2010). ELF, as we have seen, is defined by its functional use (Hülbauer et al., 2008, pp. 27–28) and it is therefore independent from native speaker norms (Gnutzmann, 2004, p. 358). Widdowson directly indicates this much when he states that native speakers of English "have no say in the matter, no right to intervene or pass judgment. They are irrelevant. The very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it" (Widdowson, 1994, p. 385). This again "inevitably involves a transfer of ownership and with it the natural consequence of variable adaptation" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 67), which is also what Strevens points out: "English belongs to everyone who wants or needs it, and [...] it belongs exclusively to no nation, no community, no individual" (Strevens, 1982, p. 427). Kohn, too, comes to the conclusion that "[n]ative speakers are losing their status as beacons of orientation" (Kohn, 2011, p. 73).

Such a shift in ownership causes feelings of discomfort, loss and insecurity as it challenges the previously discussed world view that many have. Without this beacon, how should users and learners of English find their way? Common knee-jerk responses to the consequences of ELF mentioned above include the oft-stated

fear of a degraded standard of language, of anything-goes or baby-talk and raises questions of whom to turn to for questions of right and wrong English language usage. ELF communication, however, does not depend on imposed native speaker norms and standards for it to ensure mutual understanding. Logically, native speakers standards cannot serve as guidelines because “[a]s soon as you accept that English serves the communicative and communal needs of different communities, it follows logically that it must be diverse. An international language has to be an independent language” (Widdowson, 1994, p. 385). It is a false conclusion to believe that “unless there is a norm that controls the way people speak, things fall apart” (Seidlhofer, 2011, pp. 48–49) since mutual understanding is constantly realized through the cooperation of the communication partners. Research provides examples of how ELF users make good use of various strategies to ensure understanding (Seidlhofer, 2011, Jenkins, 2007, House, 2013). It is essential to not only accept ELF as a reality but also embrace its consequences. As Seidlhofer points out,

it cannot be denied that English functions as a global lingua franca. However, what has so far been denied is that, as a consequence of its international use, English is being shaped at least as much by its non-native speakers as by its native speakers. This has led to a somewhat paradoxical situation: on the one hand, for the majority of its users, English is a foreign language, and the vast majority of verbal exchanges in English do not involve any native speakers of the language at all. On the other hand, there is still a tendency for native speakers to be regarded as custodians over what is acceptable usage (Seidlhofer, 2005, p. 339).

Such an understanding also implies that when “speakers of whatever L1 can appropriate ELF for their own purposes without over-deference to native-speaker norms [...] [t]his counteracts a deficit view of lingua franca English in that it implies equal communicative rights for all its users” (Hülmbauer et al., 2008, p. 27).

Second, one should not underestimate the economic importance of keeping the traditional concept that English is owned by its native speakers alive and well. Those that claim authority over the language and regard it as their property preside over a very influential economic tool (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 67). In this respect, Widdowson criticizes the way in which English is often regarded as a

“franchise language” that is “leased out on a global scale, and controlled by the inventors” (Widdowson, 2003, p. 50). Such “distribution” (Widdowson, 2003, p. 50) is obviously of great commercial importance for a large number of both people and institutions. The British Council (www.britishcouncil.at) can be regarded as one of them. It sees its major task as spreading British culture and British English across the globe, in large part by establishing language schools and offering English courses taught by British native speakers. These offerings use ‘authentic’ teaching and learning materials developed and published in the UK and incorporate examinations based on British English norms. Obviously, the British government, too, understands the great economic profit that comes with the distribution of British English. In 2005, for example, Gordon Brown extolled the virtues of British English on his visit in China and strived to further increase the British share of the foreign language teaching market (Branigan, 2005, <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2005/feb/22/politics.china>).

However, “distribution denies spread” (Widdowson, 1997, p. 140) as Widdowson says. While some try to preserve the control and custody over the English language, for ELF it is clear that its global users do adapt the language to their needs regardless of any attempts to prescribe native speakers norms. Such a process is natural and inevitable for a language to stay alive and fulfill its functions. As Seidlhofer points out:

It is a commonplace to say that language variation and change are inevitable processes intrinsic to the very use of any living language. Given the fact that English is undoubtedly a living language, and given the fact that its global spread is happening, and indeed gathering pace at a quite unprecedented rate, it is quite obvious that it will vary and change. To put it simply, language variation and change will happen wherever a language is used, and since English is used globally, it is also developing globally rather than only within native-speaker communities (Seidlhofer, 2011, pp. 66–67).

What appears to be needed, though, are “new terms and concepts that more adequately address what language users do with and know about language” (Hall, Cheng & Carlson, 2006, p. 231).

5.5 My Precious: Perceptions of Culture and ELF

The issue of the relationship between language and culture and the extent to which one determines the other has a long history. There seems to be a common belief that there is something like *a* culture and that we all belong to *one* such culture. There are basically two opposing ideas: While for some language and culture are intrinsically connected and cannot be separated from each another, others believe that language can exist without any culture attached to it. Probably the most famous representatives of the former viewpoint are Herder and later Humboldt.

Herder argued that if man had no language he had no reason, and if he had no reason he had no language (Herder, 1965, p. 36). Thus, for him, language and culture were intrinsically connected and dependent on each other. Humboldt based his argumentation on Herder's thoughts and was of the opinion that in order for a person to construct a worldview and create a social reality, an inseparable combination of language and reason was required. He even equated a nation's language with its soul (Humboldt & Böhler, 1973, p. 6) and thereby helped establish the idea of a national culture. For him, our experiences of reality only become real and apparent because of language, while language is simultaneously the product of one's thoughts (Humboldt & Böhler, 1973, p. 8).

It can be concluded from this that, for Humboldt, each language produces a distinct view of the world (Humboldt & Böhler, 1973, p. 21) and as such shapes not only an individual's reality but also a social reality as well. Sapir echoes this point of view, writing that "[l]anguage does not exist apart from culture" (Sapir, 1921, p. 221). Whorf also agrees with Humboldt's underlying concept that "every language is a vast pattern-system [...] in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyses nature [...], channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness" (Whorf & Carroll, 1978, p. 252). From this understanding, it follows logically that we will forever remain in our original culture, even when using a foreign language, while at the same time culture cannot be expressed in a language other than one's own mother tongue.

While many scholars and probably also the majority of people agree with this view of culture, others have found it meaningless. Bowers, for example, points out that “both these terms ‘a language’ and ‘a culture’ are indeterminate; and the equation of one with the other is doubly indeterminate” (Bowers, 1999, p. 221). From his point of view, any language can be used to express any culture. The reason for this lies in the various functions a language can assume. Hüllen differentiates between a language of communication and a language of identification and thereby also highlights the different functions any language can have (Hüllen, 1992, pp. 302–305). One might use a certain language to identify with a cultural group, but this might not be the case for a different language, which one might use for communication purposes only (Hüllen, 1992, p. 305). In contrast to the point of view discussed previously, such a concept logically allows every language user to express his culture in various languages and use different languages as cultural expressions. There is a connection between language, culture and society. However, this connection is not fixed but rather fluid. It allows for a very flexible interaction, which in turn leads to constant repetition, transformation, expansion and limitation in its components.

According to Hülmbauer, Böringer & Seidlhofer the lingua franca also strengthens intercultural exchange since “ELF relates to other languages in the sense that it is evolving within a multilingual context. Influences of other languages are a natural and crucial characteristic of ELF at all linguistic levels” (Hülmbauer et al., 2008, p. 29). They go on to note that as ELF is used by plurilingual users, there are plurilingual influences that are natural, important and innovative elements of ELF (Böringer & Hülmbauer, 2010, pp. 182–183). Carmichael also echoes this point of view and concludes that “Europeans often have more than one linguistic identity” (Carmichael, 2000, pp. 286–287) which implies that multilinguals do not halt the growth of a multicultural society within Europe. Considering all this, ELF can actually be beneficial for the coming together of EU citizens. This view is opposed by other scholars such as Byram or Lüdi. Byram sees plurilingualism and ELF as antipodes for Europe. He believes that English as a Lingua Franca would not be politically acceptable due to the impression of linguistic imperialism and adds that the development of ELF as Europe’s lingua franca would not be desirable. A lingua franca, he suggests, might

be appropriate for simply trying to transmit a certain point or piece of information but for real relationships between people and thoughts a lingua franca does not work. He criticizes the “unspoken assumption that if everyone speaks English as a lingua franca, mutual comprehension will ensue”, which he considers “is extremely unlikely to be true” (Byram, 2008, pp. 66–67). It is obvious that, for Byram, ELF is not an option for the future of the European Union. He believes and states clearly that the “cure” is plurilingualism as relationships cannot be accurately expressed through a lingua franca. Furthermore, he feels that people would never accept English as a lingua franca (Byram, 2008, p. 67). Lüdi expresses a similar opinion: ELF is not a language that can be used for identification and therefore not appropriate for intercultural communication as this implies interaction with another culture (Lüdi, 2007, p. 136).

I agree that a language is not and cannot be culture-free as language use is always informed by attitudes, assumptions and beliefs. There are cultural features of a language insofar as these relate to a particular way of life, or a specific community. Hence, it is quite natural that there should be a link between language and culture. Once a community changes, however, and there is variation in use, the culture changes, too. Therefore, like any other use of natural language, ELF is culturally informed. The difference is simply that it is not informed by a particular culture. In other words, the argument here is that there are cultural assumptions within ELF but these are not necessarily the cultural assumptions that are imported from native speaker communities. The fact that a language itself is not tied to one specific culture (whatever that is) does not mean that one cannot access other cultures via this means of communication. As an alternative to ELF, Byram suggests that “[w]ith the potential for mutual understanding through plurilingualism and intercultural competence, there is a possibility of creating a community of communication which is trans-national. [The European Union] can become a community in a trans-national civil society, a community of citizenship and political practice” (Byram, 2008, p. 68). However, it is difficult to see how plurilingualism could be expected to generate a greater level of mutual understanding than would having one common language. Furthermore, the idea

that every EU citizen would turn into the type of competent multilingual individual that Byram envisions seems unrealistic. As Widdowson & Seidlhofer point out:

One such vision [that serves as a strategy for avoiding the inconvenience of coming to terms with actual reality] is that of multilingual diversity within the European Union, with the language of each member nation not only ecologically preserved but fully and equally represented in the EU's proceedings. Such an ideal is, of course, highly desirable, not to say seductive, but it is also highly elusive of any practical realization (Widdowson & Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 207).

They go on to show that the EU's concept and idea as supported by Byram does not work:

even if learners of a particular foreign language [...] do manage to overcome the difficulties imposed upon them and achieve some measure of rapport with the community that speaks it, this will be of little if any help to them in their interactions with members of any other communities they happen to encounter: knowledge of Spanish will be of no great advantage if you need to communicate with speakers of Greek, or vice versa. In actual fact, the likelihood is that if speakers of different L1s do have occasion to communicate, the foreign language they will use will be English. This has become the lingua franca of Europe, and beyond (Widdowson & Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 211).

The reason why such a discussion is important for ELF is that ELF by nature is multilingual and multicultural, since ELF users come from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Questions that arise from this fact are whether or not English as a Lingua Franca can be dissociated from native-English-speaking culture and ELF users' culture; whether ELF is culture-free, culture-neutral or overburdened with several cultures; and whether or not an individual can ever truly express himself or herself using English as a Lingua Franca.

Bentahila and Davies view for ELF as culture-neutral rather than being culture-free since a "language might remain culture-free if its users were also outside any culture; but since it seems unlikely that such a person exists, we can say that in practice a language could be culture-free only if it remained unused, since once it was exploited for communication between people it would inevitably be used in

accordance with one or another set of cultural norms” (Bentahila & Davies, 1989, p. 110). By culture-neutral they understand a language that is used without being related to one specific culture but rather allows the language’s users to express various cultural concepts. In that sense, ELF is culture-neutral. According to Seidlhofer, ELF is not neutral nor do its users “borrow [another] identity” (Seidlhofer, 2003, p. 23). Rather they are multicultural, preserving their own cultural identities (see also Cogo, 2011). Such a perception of culture allows ELF to co-exist peacefully with various languages and cultures (Brutt-Griffler, 2002, p. 110). English as a Lingua Franca allows an individual to fully express himself or herself and implies that cultural exchange happens. It also means that ELF is disconnected from English as it is used as a representation by its native cultures. Instead, it allows its users to bring in any and all cultures as desired and thereby create new cultural spaces in a multilingual and multicultural setting. From this it also becomes clear that ELF neither relies on British or American culture nor does it replace any other cultures.

Adding this notion of multiculturalism to the two opposing concepts, we might even try to bring those concepts closer together: If we understand culture as a fluid, ever-changing and ever-present process in each individual, we might well agree with Herder and Humboldt that reality needs language to become real while at the same time understanding that a lingua franca can bridge one version of reality with another and thereby create something new.

5.6 Native Speakers, Non-Native Speakers and ELF Users

According to Graddol “[g]lobal English has led to a crisis of terminology. The distinctions between ‘native speaker’, ‘second-language speaker’, and ‘foreign-language user’ have become blurred” (Graddol, 2006, p. 110). I doubt that the terms were much clearer before the rise of English as a lingua franca – the inadequacy of the terms may just not have been as clearly visible as they are in today’s globalized world.

‘Native speaker’ is a commonly used term (also in this thesis), in large part due to its convenience. But the term is not well defined and, since the 1990s, has been the subject of critical reflection in a vast body of literature. Upon further study, it becomes quite clear that “there are no such obvious criteria for defining [...] who counts as a native” (Widdowson, 2012, p. 10). One might assume that the term ‘native speaker’ is a neutral description. But as Braine points out:

The term 'native speaker' undoubtedly has positive connotations: it denotes a birthright, fluency, cultural affinity, and sociolinguistic competence. In contrast, the term 'nonnative speaker' carries the burden of the minority, of marginalization and stigmatization, with resulting discrimination (Braine, 2010, p. 9).

Schneider, too, states that the term is a highly ideologically loaded one (Schneider, 2010, p. 222). This “load” might be rooted in the colonial era when the colonized were considered to be incompetent speakers and improper progeny of English (Mufene, 1994, p. 22).

The terms 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' stem from an “intuitive generalization of perceived differences among people with a diversity of expertise and experience as language users” (Moussu & Llurda, 2008, p. 318). However, such a categorization cannot adequately represent reality. Moussu and Llurda therefore conclude that “it would be wise to deal with them with extreme caution” (Moussu & Llurda, 2008, p. 319) since “the abstract concept of the native speaker ceases to be useful as soon as we try to extract descriptive details from it” (Leung, 2005, p. 130).

The native speaker concept has come under attack from an empirical perspective as well. On closer inspection, key assumptions regarding expertise, authority and consistency cannot be supported. Any questions about 'the' native speaker's grammatical knowledge or preferences of usage inevitably lead to 'real' native speakers and a heterogeneous display of socioculturally shaped variation. [...] Because of this high degree of abstraction, the native speaker concept is particularly susceptible to prescriptive generalizations presented in the guise of description with little or no hard empirical evidence (Kohn, 2011, p. 75).

Modiano rightly points out that it is not birth that determines proficiency in English. Rather, it is the capacity to use the language properly – a capacity is shared by some, but not all, speakers. These speakers can be native or non-native speakers of that language (Modiano, 1999). Although the inappropriateness of the native versus non-native dichotomy has become clear over the last few decades in the literature, there has not been a corresponding shift among linguists, policymakers and the general public. Even today, the common perception of native speakers as authorities of a language derives from two assumptions.

The first is that a native speaker has a perfect, flawless command and knowledge of his or her mother tongue. The ubiquity of this mindset was confirmed through my empirical online questionnaire, in which the overwhelming majority of both pupils and university students stated that they believe native speakers to have a perfect command of their language.

The second assumption is that one learns foreign languages to communicate with that language's native speakers. Again, the widespread nature of this idea was confirmed by my empirical data, despite the fact that the participating pupils and students also stated that they learn English because of its international power.

Thus, instead of CEFR achieving what it sets out to do, namely, “promote, encourage and support the efforts of teachers and learners at all levels [...] by basing language teaching and learning on the needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of learners [...] [and] defining worthwhile and realistic objectives as explicitly as possible” (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 3), what it really does is actually work against the needs and motivations of the vast majority of learners by not offering realistic and worthwhile objectives for them.

Another quite problematic interrelation is that of language and culture, which is also manifested in the CEFR. Here, culture is understood as a clear-cut concept that can be taught, learned and applied. As the document spells out, “[l]anguage is not only a major aspect of culture, but also a means of access to cultural manifestations” (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 6). In its section on sociolinguistic competence, for example, the CEFR also points to the importance of “expressions

of folk-wisdom [...] [which] make a significant contribution to popular culture. [...] A knowledge of this accumulated folk wisdom [...] is a significant component of the linguistic aspect of sociocultural competence” (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 119). This is followed by a list of example idioms such as “a sprat to catch a mackerel” (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 120) and expressions of belief such as “[f]ine before seven, rain by eleven” (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 120). Furthermore, there are also descriptors of sociolinguistic appropriateness such as the following: “Has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms with awareness of connotative levels of meaning” (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 122). It scarcely needs pointing out that such expressions are, of course, not fixed but vary tremendously depending on a number of factors. These expressions are used in particular communities of speakers and are useless to all those who do not want or need to behave like these speakers. This set of descriptors clearly shows the fixation on NS norms.

As these various examples have shown, this document promotes the NS as utmost language authority. Although it is based on a NS frame of reference, the CEFR offers no definition of who native speakers are. Such a shortcoming necessarily limits the value of the publication. It is hard to see how descriptors of language proficiency can be used with any degree of reliability when they are so imprecise, or how teaching and learning can be based on something that is not defined. The CEFR claims that it provides “fixed points of common reference [and] offers transparency and coherence” (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 36). But this presupposes that there is an objectively defined common reference on which points can be fixed. Since NS competence is not defined, there is no common reference, and equally no transparency and coherence either. Although the CEFR further claims that it is a tool to facilitate assessment, it lacks reliable assessment criteria. Terms as vague as “regular interaction” (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 24) or “normal speed” (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 67) do not facilitate coherent assessment across the EU but rather open doors to ambiguity.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that English is currently the most important and most widespread global language, functions as a means of international communication and is defined by its functional use. I then portrayed opposing attitudes towards ELF found in Europe and presented two questions that arise from English's being a lingua franca: the ownership and culture issues. Concerning the ownership question, I showed that ELF is not owned by its native speakers but rather all of its users. Regarding the culture issue, we determined that ELF users can obtain their identity and turn into multilinguals that create their own fluid cultural processes. In this case, there is no need – and it is actually impossible – to adopt anyone else's culture when using ELF.

In the following chapters I will focus attention on English as a Foreign Language and evaluate to what extent the reality of English as a Lingua Franca is reflected in this school subject and education of future generations. We need to consider the general context of school education within which any proposals for a change in the way English is taught have to be located. Chapter 6, thus, functions as a transition to a more detailed discussion of EFL in chapter 7.

6 Scholae Et Vitae Discimus: Teaching in School

We have so far looked at the current viewpoint from official language policy (chapter 2) and from the grassroots level (chapter 4) regarding what should be taught at school. At the end of Part I, this led us to the question why students actually learn English and not any other foreign language. In chapter 5 we saw that the answer is related to the fact that English is used by different speakers in different contexts and we discussed what those contexts might be.

English is used, on the one hand, in native speaker contexts in which there are conditions of use that are generally met because it is a convention to do so; on the other, it is used in ELF contexts, which are outside native speaker contexts. I discussed the difference between these two situations and highlighted the fact that, due to globalization, the nature of English usage outside the classroom has changed. With it, the context of actual use has changed. Therefore, one ought to at least consider whether this change does not actually imply the need for a radical change in the way English is taught in school.

However, as we will see in this chapter, the school subject has its own context. The educational context has well-defined roles and the reality for learners is the classroom. Administrative organization of subjects is also very special and specific for schools. We cannot draw a direct line from the way English is used in the outside world to the way English should be taught in school because we need to consider the context of education. This specific context requires all kinds of educational manipulations. So, we have to look at the educational context first before we can then examine the situation of EFL more closely. In fact, our analysis requires us to consider three levels: the nature of education in general, the teaching of foreign languages generally and then English as a foreign language specifically. Throughout this process, we will zoom closer and closer in on EFL.

Our first task is to understand that EFL takes place in a very specific setting and is based on pedagogic considerations. This, as simple as it might appear, is crucial to understand. It is precisely due to the conflation of English as a school subject with English as a language used by its native speakers that causes many of the problems discussed in this dissertation. Thus, the current chapter not only serves as a transition that leads us to the examination of EFL in the subsequent chapter. It also lays the necessary foundation upon which everything argued in the subsequent chapter is based. Only if this foundation is made clear can we actually look into EFL in more detail.

6.1 Introduction

It is indisputable that the role of teachers has changed over time. Already in ancient Greece, people reflected on education. Plato, for example, used his famous Parable of the Cave, to apply his insights into human nature and pass them on to others. At the time of Socrates, the focus was not so much on teaching but rather on enabling the student to consider philosophical questions independently. Therefore, Socrates did not understand himself as a teacher; rather, his desire was to help students develop their individual reasoning and to think further. This approach can still be found to a certain extent in today's educational thinking via the promotion of autonomy and originality through education.

The teaching profession developed when philosophers started to examine the character of humans, and later put their theories into practice. In doing so, philosophers turned into teachers (Lattmann & Metz, 1995, pp. 21–22). In the 19th century, the instructor-as-educator emerges in the literature. Teachers are instructors at all types of schools that hold the qualification and authority to teach. They increasingly take over the role of the educator (Gudemann, 1995, p. 137); instruction is thus regarded as both *Bildung* and *Erziehung* (Herbart & Holstein, 1983, pp. 17–18). Today, it can be observed that teachers are by no means simply instructors, but that they have also – and mainly – become responsible for the education of their pupils.

Although there is a desire and need to evaluate education, education cannot really be measured even though today's economic understanding tends to see education in terms of competences. But education is essentially a subjective process that allows people to get to know new concepts or learn new materials and relate them to their own experiences. Rather than understanding it simply as the ability to recall or apply information, it is preferable to see education as the capacity to reflect and act independently and in ways informed by reason (Schmoll, 2014).

But what is education and how can education be described? For Kant, education is of major importance. “The human being is the only creature that must be educated” reads his opening sentence in *Über Pädagogik* (Kant & Holstein, 1961, my translation). In order to become true humans, i.e., what we are predisposed to be by nature, we depend on the continuous process of each generation’s teaching the next. For Kant, the greatest aspect of teaching lies in its power to enable thinking. Kant says that “humans can only develop into humans through education. Man is nothing except for what education turns him into” (Kant & Holstein, 1961, p. 6, my translation). Rousseau describes the role of education for mankind in similar terms in his publication *Emile* and states that “[p]lants are fashioned by cultivation, men by education” (Rousseau, 1948, p. 6). Dewey, too, states that “the aim of education is to enable individuals to continue their education” (Dewey, 1916, p. 17). This then also automatically leads to the definition of “the objective and reward of learning [which] is continued capacity for growth” (Dewey, 1916, p. 17).

Education serves to promote the individual but at the same time also preserves a community (Brezinka, 1991, p. 25). On the one hand, those responsible for the education of others wish to have a certain effect on them; they wish to create a certain frame of mind and develop a personality by adding certain abilities, competences, knowledge, attitudes, mindsets and convictions (Brezinka, 1978, p. 43). On the other hand, education enables the child to discover and grasp its own state and internal and external developments and find its own individuality through this understanding (Wisskirchen, 1996, p. 71). Such education and teaching is always paired with uncertainties of the outcomes of one’s actions and

of how appropriate one's educational actions are for the future role of the student. In broad terms, education can be defined as "the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge" (Whitehead, 1932, p. 36).

While this section reviewed traditional ways of conceiving of education in principle, the following section goes on to see to what extent these are reflected in the aim of education as formulated officially in Austria.

6.2 The Austrian School System

As might already become clear in Graph 3, which illustrates the educational system in Austria, there is an extensive array of possibilities and educational choices based on students' individual interests, talents and needs³⁸. Compulsory schooling comprises a minimum of nine years and starts with primary school at the age of six. After four years of primary education, students decide between attending an academic secondary school or a regular secondary school for another four years³⁹.

At age 14 and year 9 of compulsory schooling, students either enter the labor market by starting an apprenticeship training or seek higher education. In the latter case, students have several choices: There are various forms of upper level academic secondary schools⁴⁰ which, for example, may have a particular focus on music, natural sciences, mathematics or other subjects. These schools last for another four years and lead to final examinations, called Reifeprüfung, in which students prove that they have obtained a certain level of general education. These examinations are also a requirement for those who wish to continue their

³⁸ The following only discusses some common aspects of the school landscape. For a more detailed explanation, see http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/9043/bw2013_e.pdf.

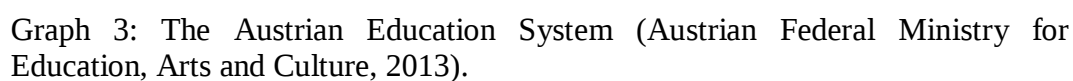
³⁹ Generally speaking, academic secondary schools – at least in urban areas – offer a more detailed education than general secondary schools. Having said that, in rural areas of the country where the number of academic secondary schools is limited, this is not necessarily the case.

⁴⁰ In this paper, these schools are referred to as general high schools.

education at universities. The upper level forms of academic secondary schools do not offer any specific vocational education and therefore do not prepare students for the workforce immediately after finishing school.

While these schools focus on theoretical education, Austria also offers secondary technical, vocational, pedagogical and social education at a more advanced level⁴¹. This is a distinctive characteristic of the Austrian school landscape. These schools last five years and offer both broad theoretical and specialized education in a particular field (such as computer sciences, kindergarten pedagogy, landscape design, business administration, tourism, etc.). Students at such schools have to complete several internships in companies or institutions so as to gain work experience and develop their knowledge and skills in their specialization. After their school education, students also graduate by completing their final Reifeprüfung and Diploma examinations, which also allows them to continue their education at universities and provides them with a certificate to start their own businesses or work in middle or higher level positions in their specialized field. When possible, disabled students are integrated in the regular school system and complete their schooling according to their special needs and possibilities. If due to various reasons integration in the regular school system is not possible, special schools offer a more individualized teaching environment.

⁴¹ In this paper, these VET Colleges are referred to as vocational high schools in order to avoid confusion with the English educational term “college”, which, in the U.S. refers to universities (generally the bachelor-degree-granting entities).



In 2012/13 a total of 1,142,726 students attended Austrian schools (Statistik Austria, 2013b). For vocational high schools the number was 136,392, an increase of 6 percent compared to 2002/03. The upper level of general high schools was attended by 91,539 students, an increase of 18 percent in comparison to 2002/03 (Statistik Austria, 2013b).

The way education is institutionally structured reflects a certain philosophy of what its aims are. These are considered in the following section.

6.3 Verum, Bonum et Bellum⁴²: The School Setting

There has been compulsory education – which is actually the obligation to provide and receive education – in Austria since 1774. §2(1) of the Austrian School Organization Act defines the objectives of Austrian schools.

Schools have to contribute to the development of the personal talents and abilities of the youth according to moral, religious and social standards as well as the values of what is true, good and beautiful by offering education that is appropriate for the developmental stage and educational level of the students. School has to equip youth with the knowledge and abilities necessary for life and their future professions and educate them to acquire qualifications and education independently. Furthermore, youth should learn to be healthy, willing to work, and be faithful and responsible members of society and citizens of the democratic and federal republic of Austria. They should develop their own independent power of judgment and social understanding and be open for the political and ideological thinking of others. They should be enabled to partake in Austria's, Europe's and the world's economic and cultural life and work towards the common objectives of mankind with love for freedom and peace (Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur, 2014, §2(1), my translation).

This official text serves as mission statement for Austrian schools and might appear to be no longer absolutely up to date in its formulation, which might be due to the fact that the School Organization Act itself has been around for quite a

⁴² Latin for: What is true, good and beautiful.

while (since July 25, 1962). It can be understood as espousing officially defined norms, meaning norms that are politically real and an expression of a political intention and social understanding of those who were in power at the time when this act was published. Presumably, since this text has not been officially revised, it still expresses the same educational ideals – that is to say, it postulates norms or objectives about what *should* be. These norms are, can and should be measured against reality: that which *is*.

The Austrian School Organization Act portrays the prevailing concept of society in the 1950s and 60s. In the tradition of the Christian-social middle-class intellectual, it talks about moral, religious and social values. Singling out the values of what is true (truth), good (ethics) and beautiful (aesthetics), it highlights the Western philosophical tradition, which is defined in a Christian way. Youth should be educated as members of society (in German: *Glieder der Gesellschaft*, a term that goes back to aspects of the Catholic social doctrine), which means that school should fashion individuals who will be valuable for the community. From this we can infer that school does not exist for the individual but rather for society.

What is not clear, though, and has changed over time, is the definition of what one has to equip a student with so as to develop him or her into a valuable individual, and what a ‘community’ is. The School Organization Act aims at creating members of society that are healthy, willing to work, faithful and responsible. This image of society might be traced back to the early 1960s when the individual was subordinate to a community, one that was based on Catholicism and the state, including its economy and culture. One might actually understand the legal text as portraying an ideal type of state-, church- and obligation-conscious citizen that can be traced back to Hegel.

Having outlined the school setting at large, the following section points out specific characteristics of a school subject.

6.4 Specific Characteristics of a School Subject

The major difference between any subject matter and its corresponding school subject is that in the school setting it is not only the subject matter as such that is of relevance but also, and mainly so, pedagogical considerations. This might at first glance seem very straight-forward. A school subject has to convey certain aspects of a subject matter to students who at that point are not familiar with the content they are being taught. There have to be pedagogical considerations related to questions of what to teach, in which order and to what extent, how to best prepare and present the information needed, how to ensure that students comprehend the subject matter, learn and practice it and finally apply it independently. These considerations are crucial in order to facilitate and motivate the learning processes of students who at that point are not familiar with the subject matter, its systems and conventions. This also applies to English as a Foreign Language.

School subjects are designed to facilitate the learning processes in students in a clearly defined setting that offers a shortcut to proficiency. With regards to English as a Foreign Language, this holds especially true when comparing the slow and tiring process of learning a foreign language through natural exposure. In that case, learners are surrounded by the foreign language and hopefully learn through trial and error as well as imitation. Providing input in a foreign language does not automatically lead to learning this language. It follows logically that simply providing input in a foreign language does not correspond with the objectives of structured language acquisition in the school setting as it does not provide a pedagogically arranged, controlled learning environment. Therefore, in contrast to natural exposure, the environment at school focuses on aspects that seem relevant and promising to engage the students in their language-learning processes. Widdowson points out that the language needed and used in the school subject is adapted and modified to suit the special needs of the learners (Widdowson, 2003, p. 114).

The school setting is a pedagogically designed learning environment. These pedagogical considerations are the essential foundation and provide distinct characteristics of teaching in schools. Content is presented and worked with based on a structured bottom-up approach that subsequently builds on already acquired skills and knowledge. It is especially qualified personnel, the teachers, who know where the journey of teaching and along with it hopefully also that of learning, as these are not two sides of the same coin, lead. Hirst in that respect states that “[i]t is not the case that teaching necessarily implies learning. What teaching implies is merely the intention to bring about learning” (Hirst, 2009, p. 12). Teachers thus know where the journey of learning and teaching will lead and how to ensure that those who do not yet see this final point get there nonetheless within a given time frame and taking personal differences into consideration.

Such considerations are very specific to a school subject. During the learning processes there are limitations of competence and understanding. Again, this is also true for English as a Foreign Language. Therefore, the English language as used by its native speakers is not and cannot be the same as English as a school subject since at school we are confronted with students who are not yet familiar with the foreign language. Widdowson puts it in a nutshell when he says that “[w]hat is taught is not English as such, but English as a foreign language, and this, by definition, cannot be the English of native speakers” (Widdowson, 2003, p. 114).

It is the task of the educated and trained English language teacher to fulfill the task of making the language real for the students and relate to their reality. It is their profession to prepare content so that students can find their way into the foreign language. This highlights the fundamental role of the qualified language teacher for successful foreign language-learning processes in class. Although education and training are both aspects of learning, there are major differences. While training is undertaken to gain specific skills, education wishes to further knowledge and develop a person’s intellect. This means that while teacher training includes aspects such as specific methods of teaching, teacher education

spans a much broader field and aims at a lifelong process of reflection in order to further develop an individual's independent thinking skills. Professional teacher, therefore, need both – a sound education as well as in-depth training.

6.5 Doceo, Ergo Sum⁴³: The Teacher

Although not always recognized by public opinion, pedagogic research makes it clear that high-quality teachers and teaching play a crucial role for the learning outcomes of pupils (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). This is why it seems essential to discuss the crucial role of teachers in more detail.

The professional profile of teachers is characterized by numerous clichés and is confronted with various demands and expectations. Questions of what 'good' teaching implies and which characteristics 'good' teachers have are frequently raised. Finding answers to these questions is difficult, though, since there is not one most appropriate form of 'good' teaching (Kromrey, 1994; Terhart, 1997) that can then be related to 'good' teachers. Different scholars approach this subject matter in different ways.

For some, there are fixed parameters of teaching that can be defined and measured and therefore offer a valid assessment of teaching quality (see, for example, Kromrey, 2001; Greimel-Fuhrmann, 2003). For others, 'good' teachers are not made but born with a certain "pedagogic disposition" (Kerschensteiner, 1955, p. 91), meaning that an essential feature of a teacher lies in his or her wish "to help create the individual" (Kerschensteiner, 1955, p. 57) paired with sensibility and professional know-how (see also Spranger, 1958, p. 15). Research into the systematic relationship between characteristics of teaching and student show that a holistic perspective is most appropriate. The teacher is understood as a "competent expert" or "expert for teaching". What defines a 'good' teacher is

⁴³ Latin for: I teach, therefore I am.

based on occupational and professional knowledge and competences (Helmke, 2012, pp. 49–50). This understanding of the core competences of a teacher is in accordance with the pupils' and university students' view as could be seen in my data (see chapter 4).

As has been the case in previous years, today, too, teachers are often regarded as mentors or advisors, as persons who unselfishly help the young and inexperienced by providing expertise and experience (Fremdling, 2008, p. 25)⁴⁴. There have been attempts to re-define teaching and learning in recent years. This implies that the way teachers are seen (and the way they see themselves) has also undergone changes. Teachers often understand themselves as “broadcasters of knowledge”, “moderators” and “coach” (Wiater, 2002, p. 169). However, as a result of their profession, teachers also have a social position that goes hand in hand with expectations of normative behavior. Teachers have the responsibility to help create a future for a society in which common norms and values exist. Teachers are important as role models, for understanding the value of education and knowledge and the development of the “entire person” (Dalin, 1997, p. 211). However, teachers are embedded in a social setting and cannot succeed in a vacuum. First and foremost, they need students to work with. Furthermore, they find themselves within a clearly defined hierarchical structure and curriculum. Support and cooperation from the outside, be it the parents, the ministry or society at large is necessary in order to provide the best possible education at school⁴⁵.

It can be concluded that teachers play an essential role both for the individual's development and for a functioning social system. The question of how such crucial tasks can be best achieved is discussed in the following sub-section.

⁴⁴ The Greek mythological figure of Mentor, the character in Homer's *The Odyssey*, might also come to mind here. Mentor is Odysseus' friend and provides valuable advice and protection for his son, Telemachos.

⁴⁵ This would also imply the image of the teaching profession in public which currently does not offer a very supportive environment. Ahnen comes to the conclusion that a change in the public and published perception of the teachers and their work along with appreciation and prestige for pedagogic work would help the process of education and society at large (Ahnen, 2004, p. 120).

6.5.1 Quality Teaching and Teachers

What can be understood by quality teaching? When it comes to understanding what comprises quality teaching, it is less a question of how much knowledge a teacher has, which methods are used, which motivational abilities he or she has or which learning situations he or she can create. For Hentig, what counts is the extent to which the teacher can convince students that the subject matter is important and relevant for them (Gribble, 1991, p. 10). Therefore “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (Palmer, p. 10). Quality teaching is thus characterized by a teacher who “succeeds to lead as many students as possible to engage actively in mental work that again adds to their hitherto existing level of understanding and offers an optimal mix of guidance by the teacher and personal involvement in order to reach a higher level of understanding” (Fend, 2001, p. 353, my translation). While teaching is, at its core, the interpretation of facts and opinions (Giesecke, 1987, p. 82) it is at the same time bound to objectivity, as the purpose of teaching is to allow students to acquire an understanding of reality (Giesecke, 1987, p. 83). It is the teacher’s task to explain the world to students and show them their position within this framework (Giesecke, 1987, p. 93).

For others, the focus of teaching lies in the learning process itself. This is why the major tasks for teaching consist in creating a learning environment and learning possibilities for students (Bromme, 1992, p. 76). It is the primary task of teachers to choose content and prepare it in such a way so as to allow every student to experience individual learning processes (Brenn, 1992, p. 67).

Pedagogic professionalism is regarded as a central element for successful education in the school setting. There is broad consensus that teachers need to have professional as well as pedagogic competence (see, for example, Giesecke, 1996; Prange, 1995; Schirlbauer, 1992; Osterloh, 2002). While professional competence in this thesis can be defined as “possessing knowledge of a specific subject matter”, pedagogic competence refers to “knowing how to bring a specific subject matter across”. Such professionalism must be based on extensive education.

Osterloh has developed criteria to define pedagogic professionalism. He provides four categories that define pedagogic professionalism⁴⁶ (Osterloh, 2002, p. 74). A central task of the teacher is explaining a subject matter in its professional complexity. Teachers need to have the tools necessary to do so. For Schirlbauer, these are professional and methodological competences as well as the ability to communicate (Schirlbauer, 1992, pp. 86–87).

Felten discusses the central role of the teacher for education and concludes that good teachers are experts in their profession, have a desire to pass on their knowledge, expect serious efforts and support their students in a sensitive way. They offer targeted encouragement, have clear and obligatory demands and offer their students a reliable orientation (Felten, 1999, p. 121). Further characteristic features of a ‘good’ teacher include his or her appreciation of students, enjoyment of the profession, excellent education and professional commitment (Helmke, 2012, p. 111).

In addition to content-related competence, teachers also need to have a high level of didactic-methodological expertise. This goes beyond the basic understanding of how to present content in an appropriate way but also includes the idea that a teacher can inspire students – for a specific content matter, a subject and learning in general. It is therefore not enough for teachers to know what they teach; teaching as such is not enough. Teachers need to spark enthusiasm and help create interest (Diederich & Tenorth, 1997, p. 229). This means that a teacher needs not only competence at the professional and methodological levels but also knowledge of how to present these competences.

Apart from the characteristics that have been mentioned so far, further relevant competences of good teachers could probably be added in an endless (wish)list. However, some aspects might be especially relevant. Meyer, for example, points to the importance of teachers’ being resilient, tolerant and curious (Meyer, 2005, p. 170). Good teachers serve as role models with regards to commitment, authenticity, interaction and confidence and they can connect the content taught

⁴⁶ These are: 1) expert knowledge (including secure social recognition), 2) authorization to practice (including recognized qualification), 3) autonomy (vis-à-vis clientele and the state), and 4) orientation towards the common good (as an “ideology of the profession”) (Osterloh, 2002, p. 74).

with their students' realities (Brenn, 1992, p. 93). At the same time, teacher also fulfill their mediator role by helping the students develop their own cognitive, emotional and creative potentials (Kleedorfer, 1997, p. 25). Further, a teacher must, at time be willing to be a lone fighter, and possess diagnostic competences, creativity, empathy and charisma. Pedagogic quality may be best characterized by "lively learning" and "identity generating learning processes" (Brenn, 1992, p. 93, my translation). Furthermore, while the ability to connect with other people is a fundamental aspect and basic qualification of anyone who works with other people, this rule holds especially true for teachers as the relationship of the students with the presented content, school subject and learning as such is established via the teacher as a person and his or her professional and pedagogic competence as a teacher (Brenn, 1992, p. 94).

To summarize, the following are commonly recognized core requirements of successful and professional teachers:

- Excellence in mediation
- Expertise in pedagogy and the subject matter
- Professional self-perception
- Authenticity⁴⁷
- Empathy
- Strong leadership skills

These competences set the professional teacher apart from non-professionals. It is a very common misconception to believe that everyone who knows something can automatically also teach. That is not the case. As can be seen, professional teachers possess a great spectrum of competences in order to fulfill their tasks.

⁴⁷ Although commonly described as meaning "real" or "genuine", with regards to authenticity in teaching, Kreber identified several dimensions and concludes that

authenticity in teaching [revealed to be] an intriguing but also complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Authenticity in teaching involves features such as being genuine; becoming more self-aware; being defined by one's self rather than by others' expectations; bringing parts of oneself into interactions with students; and critically reflecting on self, others, relationships and contexts, and so forth. [...] Authenticity is not just something that exclusively rests within myself [...] for authenticity to be meaningful it needs to be sought in relation to issues that *matter crucially* (Kreber, Klampfleitner, McCune, Bayne & Knottenbelt, 2007, pp. 40–41).

The aspects of quality teaching and ‘good’ teachers described here all contribute to a competence portfolio needed by today’s teachers. It can be summarized that there is a wide consensus on the importance of student-teacher relationship, professional qualities of teachers, expert knowledge in the content area as well as in the field of pedagogy, and certain personality traits. All these aspects enable professionalism in pedagogy.

As shown, the teacher plays a major role in achieving the educational objectives defined by the School Organization Act. In the following, I move to discuss the roles teachers are required to play.

6.5.2 The Roles of the Teacher

Teachers embody the institution of the school: They enable people to see, experience and comprehend it. That is why teachers are expected to fulfill all those demands and tasks that are directed at schools (Spanhel & Huber, 1995, p. 8). These demands are highly complex since they take place on various levels: Teachers have to convey subject content, educate, support the development of pupils, motivate, plan, monitor and control projects and group processes (Ulich, 1996, p. 27). Traditionally, the tasks of teachers were quite obvious and they mostly involved passing on social values and general education to future generations. Thanks to educational progressivism and humanistic approaches, the teaching tradition was later redefined and adapted so as to include both *Bildung* – educational elements that relate to cognitive aspects - and *Erziehung*⁴⁸ – educational elements that relate to moral, social and behavioral aspects – as well as character formation (Seitz, 2008, p. 155).

⁴⁸ The following gardening metaphor may help to understanding the concept of *Erziehung*: Although a climber has the disposition to climb, it normally might not find the perfect environment to do so and might end as a creeper rather than as a climber. A gardener sees the dispositions of various plants and will provide stakes to help the plants start the climbing process. Such actions allow the plant to live its full potential. *Erziehung* does the same thing – it provides opportunities for people to tap their full potential.

Today, paragraph 51 of the Austrian School Education Act defines several rights and duties of teachers at Austrian schools. The main task of teachers is educational work, related to both *Bildung* and *Erziehung*, based on § 17 (Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur, 2014, § 51). Furthermore, teachers fulfill both teaching and teaching-related tasks as well as educational and administrative tasks (such as the carrying out of examinations). § 17 of the Austrian School Education Act discusses educational work and defines what a teacher has to do during lessons. It states that the teacher has to fulfill the tasks of Austrian schools (that are defined in §2 of the Austrian School Education Act) in an independent and responsible, educational manner (again in regards to aspects of both *Bildung* and *Erziehung*). In this sense and according to the content of the curriculum of the respective school type as well as the development of students and any external conditions, the content of the respective subject has to be taught according to the current state of scientific knowledge⁴⁹.

In addition, the teacher has to strive for a common education that spans all subjects; teach in a demonstrative, clear way that is rooted in the present, that encourages students' self-action and that leads them towards constructive cooperation in society. Furthermore, teachers have to lead students to achieve their best based on their individual possibilities and predispositions. They must also use appropriate methods to enhance and secure the outcome of the lessons so that these can serve as appropriate foundation for further education. Teachers also have to provide independent and responsible *Erziehung* (Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur, 2014, § 17). These roles of teaching and *Erziehung* are central aspects of teachers and cannot be separated (Diederich & Tenorth, 1997, pp. 240–241).

A trend that has developed over the last two decades understands the role of the teacher as the education counselor whose main job is to only promote the students in their individual learning processes (see, for example, the notion that the teacher should have a feeling for when and how an intervention has to take place, Struck & Würtl, 1999, pp. 12–13; Miller, 1993, p. 146). Former Austrian Minister of

⁴⁹ If § 17 of the Austrian School Education Act were implemented as it is defined in the law, the focus in the EFL classrooms would automatically have to be on the lingua franca aspects rather than the native speakers of English as this is in accordance with the state of art in linguistics.

Education Gehrler supported also this understanding and stated that the tasks of teachers had changed insofar as factual knowledge had become unimportant for school education. Rather, she believed, the main task of teachers lay in their mediation of some basic competences. Everything else, including further, in-depth knowledge, could and should then be learned by students individually.

By contrast, most scholars agree that education in the school context should involve didactically and methodologically sophisticated transmission of knowledge and content (see, for example, Giesecke, 1996, p. 280; Hedge, 2000, pp. 26–29; Felten, 1999, p. 110; Cohen, 1998, pp. 98–102; Wright, 1987; Paris, 1988, p. 307). Teaching key competence alone is not enough. In addition, learning in the school setting is initiated and controlled by the teacher. Education that is mainly geared to cater to students' interests is not sufficient since an essential and positive aspect of teaching lies in the fact that "the narrow-minded immediacy of life" can be overstepped (Giesecke, 1987, p. 80). This means that education that is only oriented towards the current (and not the future) demands of students cannot fulfill the objectives set out for school education. Teachers need to be initiators of learning processes. The students "have the right to have a teacher who is in control and heads for a goal" (Giesecke, 1987, p. 125). This means that the understanding of a teacher's role as sole education counselor is insufficient and unprofessional since a counselor precisely does not control a situation up to certain point but rather only assists in an advisory capacity. With reference to the legal foundations of schools, education cannot only consider students' preferences since schooling also has obligations to society (Gutte, 1994, p. 156).

The professionally trained and educated teacher plays a major role for the learning processes in the school setting. Comprehensive research has shown that the teachers, their competences and knowledge are essential for the learning results of students (Baumert & Kunter, 2006, pp. 480–481; Lipowsky, 2006, pp. 50–51). For example, studies conducted in Switzerland proved the importance of teachers for the learning results of students (Aeberli, 2002). Teachers' behavior and teaching abilities significantly influence the learning success of students. The personal characteristics and various abilities have a marked effect on students. Strong teacher personalities – teachers can stand in front of a class and teach

convincingly – are therefore required (Dubs, 2008, p. 13). The studies of Mayer, Morre and Ralph confirm the findings previously made while also pointing out the importance of a sound academic education for successful instruction (Mayer, Mullens & Moore, 2000). An essential conclusion from the numerous research studies is that “[g]ood teachers do not achieve great things when they have to teach a subject that they are not educated for” (Dubs, 2008, p. 14, my translation). Professionalism, rooted in the combination of a sound education in the subject matter and pedagogy are absolutely crucial for the creation of a successful learning environment at schools.

Another role of the teacher is that of content selector (within the framework of the curriculum). Teachers have to decide on possible content and evaluate what could be best used to showcase an underlying concept so that students can later on develop their own learning and transfer their skills to new challenges. Teachers define basic concepts and competences that are important for further educational steps in students. It is, thus, the teacher’s task to competently select pedagogically relevant aspects. In order to develop this competence it is necessary to have a profound knowledge of the content subject and pedagogic competence. In addition, teachers need to rely on a social consensus of what students should (have to) learn at school in order to proactively participate in (a future) society. Such basic concepts and competences that teachers need to define for their teaching should further develop the students’ thinking and acting and offer alternatives for individual lifestyles and career paths. For this reason, content selection that is only based on immediate usability encounters a basic problem: since we cannot know and define which content individual students will need for their future, school has to offer a broad spectrum of options and competences that allows students to later further sharpen their competences for their individual path in life⁵⁰.

How can the roles of the EFL teacher be characterized? First and foremost, the English language teacher’s main task is that of making a foreign language appropriate for learning. Llurda points out that “[t]eachers are responsible for presenting the multifaceted reality in which the new language is used and for helping the learner express their own identity through this newly acquired voice”

⁵⁰ This is what sets education apart from training, as we have already seen.

(Llurda, 2004, p. 320). I would like to broaden this beyond presenting this reality to also include mediating such a reality, as only then will learners be able to actually express themselves adequately. Teachers – including EFL teachers – therefore are first and foremost mediators. Mediating is done by providing pedagogically designed and modified language input that is poised to trigger learning processes in students and allows for the development of the learners' competences. This means that the main job of a teacher is to illustrate a subject and to lead and accompany students towards knowledge and understanding. For the teacher, this means that, first, his own knowledge and attitude must correspond. A teacher must understand and oversee the content of teaching. His attitudes towards the content taught have to be thoroughly planned. Second, the teacher is required to recognize the individual situation of the student. He has to detect the line between knowing and nescience in his students. Only in this way can the teacher help the student increase his or her knowledge.

At the same time, the teacher has to help develop attitudes in students. It is not his or her task to present ready-made knowledge that hinders students in their interaction and examination with the content but rather to communicate and highlight the path that leads to understanding and to make logical steps comprehensible for the students so that they can walk this path on their own. In order to reach this objective, the teacher steers the learning processes. He or she knows the beginning and end, divides the subject matter, observes the individual developments of students and caters to the students' consistent comprehension⁵¹. For foreign language education, such an understanding also includes the task of helping students gain deeper insights and competencies not only into the particular foreign language being learned but also into how language(s) work in more general terms. This aspect is a fundamental role of the language teacher (Ellis & Sinclair, 1999, p. 10).

⁵¹ For Petzelt, this concept of the teacher's role excludes passivity for students. They cannot lean back and wait for enlightenment to hit them. Quite to the contrary, it lies within every individual student's responsibility to learn. It is important to stress that learning does not happen on its own. This is why it is not valid to only discuss (and mostly criticize) the teachers' responsibility for students' (poor) learning input and outcomes. Such a pedagogic understanding does not correspond with pedagogic concepts of learning.

Since language teaching also always needs content in order to teach the language, English language teachers also provide thematic, social and cultural information, based on the provisions found in the relevant curricula. Therefore, the EFL teacher also functions as informant on various content, some of which is based on first-hand experience, some not. As with every other teacher, English language teachers are also responsible for the broader *Bildung* and *Erziehung* of youth. These aspects also need to be considered as essential for understanding the teacher's role in the classroom. And, finally, again as is the case for all teachers in school settings, EFL teachers have to assess students' achievements based on the curriculum.

It is important that teachers develop a profound professional awareness. This means that teachers understand and see themselves as experts who are aware of their knowledge and competences. They have the ability to analyze and question their actions and are aware of the distinctive features of their profession. They are self-critical while at the same time understand the importance of their profession. The fact of being professionals puts teachers in a position to understand their knowledge and competences and adequately apply these in their daily work. In this way, they can establish a professional self (Schratz et al., 2008, pp. 131–132).

Apart from professional and personal aspects that are highly relevant for high-quality education in the school setting, good learning outcomes in students are also influenced by the relationship between students and their teachers. The following section discusses the importance of this aspect.

6.5.3 Teacher–Student Relationship: What It Is and Why It Matters

According to scholars of holistic education, the teacher-student relationship should be characterized by a dialogue and the willingness for pedagogic understanding (Scarbath, 1992, p. 21). In addition, the teacher should have a feeling for when and how an intervention has to take place (Scarbath, 1992, p. 21). Scarbath claims that a teacher's authority should be shown by starting

something that is important for the others' process of becoming themselves (Scarbath, 1992, p. 160). Based on this understanding, it is important that the teacher cares about students' learning difficulties and developments and shows interest in their lives.

Whether the teacher is authoritarian, undisciplined, competent, incompetent, serious, irresponsible, involved, a lover of people and of life, cold, angry with the world, bureaucratic, excessively rational, or whatever else, he/she will not pass through the classroom without leaving his or her mark on the students (Freire, 1998, Chapter Three).

As Freire points out, the relationship between students and their teachers forms a central element of education. Struck states that this relationship is actually even more important than *Erziehung* itself (Struck, 1996, p. 239).

It seems obvious that teachers and students are not equal. That is true in many respects, such as experience, knowledge and imbalance when it comes to responsibilities (the teacher has a unilateral responsibility for his students). Nevertheless it is important that they establish a relationship that is based on mutual respect and understanding (Struck, 1994, p. 96). Teachers and students do not work together voluntarily (at least not until students complete their compulsory education). Their relationship is based on a specific reason: Teacher educate (*bilden* and *erziehen*) certain, more or less pre-defined aspects and the student learns those. In the learning context the teacher holds a position of superiority that is based on a specific purpose. This asymmetry, however, does not hold true for other aspects such as, for example, the teacher's being a morally better person than the student (Giesecke, 1997, p. 264). The relationship between teachers and their students is not a partnership. They do not strive for the same goals, as students do not pursue educational objectives since they are no educators themselves. Their intentions are within the horizon of their own lives and aspirations (Schirlbauer, 1992, p. 92). A further reason for the unequal relationship between teachers and students is that the teachers have to ensure that the students meet their obligations (Gutte, 1994, p. 148). Apart from these factors, there are also power differences since it is the teacher who grades the students and thereby might have a major influence on further personal and professional developments.

Another dimension of this special relationship is that it is realized in a pedagogic relationship that is rather distanced and culturally formed and takes place outside the family. The main purpose of this relationship is to “enable learning” (Giesecke, 1987, p. 116). In addition, from the first moment onwards, the teacher-student relationship is aiming at its termination (Giesecke, 1987, p. 122). All these aspects add to the very specific characteristics of a school setting and a positive student-teacher relationship.

It can be concluded that teacher-student relationships are very complex and change in their nature in the course of a student’s path through schooling. There is a prevailing opinion, particularly as regards the high-school level, that students do not care about their relationships with their teachers but are focused on student-student relationships instead. The findings in my data showed a different reality. Pupils have and want to have a good relationship with their teachers (see chapter 4). It is regarded as a foundation for their learning as well as well-being in the school setting.

6.6 Assisto, Quid Sum?⁵² The Foreign Language Assistant

The previous discussion was concerned with identifying features essential to the professional role of language teachers. What is the situation for FLAs in that respect?

The CEFR regards native speakers as critical for language proficiency. This understanding supports the current policy of employing English native speakers as foreign language assistants who are non-professional in teaching but join regular English language teachers in class. They are intended to serve as role models for students and teachers alike and are regarded as guarantors of so-called authentic

⁵² Latin for: I assist, what am I?

communication and information on language and culture-related issues. One such native speaker program is carried out by the Fulbright Austrian-American Educational Commission and places these speakers within Austrian classrooms.

6.6.1 The Fulbright Foreign Language Assistantship Program⁵³

In this program, FLAs are native English speakers from the United States of America. Typically, they are in their early twenties and have just finished their bachelor's degree in their home country. The sole requirements to work as an FLA are a bachelor's degree (with no particular subject requirements) and a letter of recommendation from a faculty member at their home institution. The selection process is conducted by the Fulbright Austrian-American Association and concentrates mainly on the evaluation of a motivation letter. Teaching experience is not necessary for being an FLA nor is any such experience necessarily taken into consideration during the selection process. Furthermore, in order to be accepted into this program FLAs are not required to have any knowledge or education in the fields of pedagogy, teaching or the English language⁵⁴.

Most foreign language assistants stay for the duration of one year, while some prolong to the maximum duration of two years before returning to their home country. Immediately prior to beginning their work in Austrian schools and universities, they receive a one-week crash course in teaching techniques (for example, how to introduce themselves to the class and how to plan a (or part of a) lesson).

⁵³ In this thesis, the FLAs to whom I refer are U.S.-American Foreign Language Assistants who participate in the exchange program offered by the Fulbright Austrian-American Educational Commission.

⁵⁴ Actually, FLAs are not even necessarily (native) speakers of English. The requirement profile states that participants in the Fulbright program must be U.S. citizens 29 years of age or younger. It does not explicitly state, however, that they need to be users of the language. This formal requirement for a specific citizenship rather than a first language takes the original idea of an FLA *ad absurdum*, of course. Indeed, it highlights the underlying conceptualization of an innate connection between a country and a language. It is obviously assumed that all U.S. citizens are automatically native speakers of English or have the same command of the language as a literal "native speaker". There is no need to explicitly state that this assumption is, of course, incorrect.

These native speakers work at general and vocational high schools as well as at teacher training institutions (Douba, 2010, p. 11) from the beginning of October until the end of May, during which time they join 13 EFL lessons per week. The vast majority of these FLAs do not intend to take up a teaching career in the future but rather see their time as FLAs as a possibility to be abroad, travel and enjoy Europe. Although they do not have any teaching qualification, FLAs are members of the teaching staff (Douba, 2010, p. 22). However, they do not have the same legal status as professionally trained teachers.

The Ministry of Education regulates what these native speakers are and are not allowed to do in class. Like every teacher, FLAs are required to fulfill their tasks with care and preparation and respect the headmaster's orders and regulations valid at school. They are bound to confidentiality and are expected to cooperate with teachers. It is commonly assumed by English language teachers, FLAs and students alike that it is the FLA's task to motivate students by using exclusively English during lessons, by providing so-called authentic communication situations and by relating personal experience. Interestingly, though, there are no officially stated tasks or objectives for FLAs and their work in class. Indeed, only tasks that FLAs are not allowed to do are explicitly mentioned. These include teaching without supervision by a regular teacher as well as grading and correcting tests and homework assignments. Supervising students during breaks and examinations is forbidden as is administrative work. Furthermore, the native speakers are not allowed to teach new units of grammar. Moreover, it is forbidden to have them teach without preparation and substitute other teachers. Nevertheless, such situations do happen in reality and are also tolerated by the Ministry of Education.

At least in Austria, no official job description for these assistants exists. However, the official guidelines for FLAs state that the reason for their employment is to offer a realistic impression of authentic conversation and communication in English (Douba, 2010, p. 34) and "to engage the students, to lower their apprehension about using a foreign language and to get them to talk" (Fulbright Austrian-American Educational Commission, 2010, p. 31). For the Fulbright Austrian-American Educational Commission it is evident that "[...] U.S. teaching assistants make a considerable contribution to the promotion of mutual

understanding” (Fulbright Austrian-American Educational Commission, 2010, p. 6) and that FLAs make “a difference by providing students with a real example” (Fulbright Austrian-American Educational Commission, 2010, p. 31).

In general, these FLAs “are representatives of America. This is an important aspect of the program” (Fulbright Austrian-American Educational Commission, 2010, p. 30) and part of an FLA’s job is “to try and explain [the USA] to [the] students” (Fulbright Austrian-American Educational Commission, 2010, pp. 30–31). The Austrian Federal Ministry for Education claims that personal contact with native speakers offers the highest possible level of language authenticity and that such contact is provided through the FLAs (Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2004a, p. 3). For the Fulbright Austrian-American Educational Commission “[t]he mutually beneficial nature of this program is obvious. It contributes substantially to the quality of foreign language instruction in Austria, for teachers and students alike. [...] U.S. teaching assistants [...] serve as linguistic and cultural ambassadors in the Austrian classroom” (Fulbright Austrian-American Educational Commission, 2010, p. 6).

While the benefits of the FLAs may seem obvious to the Fulbright Austrian-American Educational Commission, there are, in fact, no studies providing scientific support for these statements. It is striking that no such studies into the outcomes of the FLAs program have been conducted so far. Therefore, no empirical information on the effects of this program can be provided. What can be seen in my data is that all parties, including the Austrian Ministry of Education, involved strongly *believe* that there are positive effects on students’ motivation and language competences (see chapter 4).

Austrian curriculum states that “the highest possible level of authenticity can be achieved by native speakers of the foreign language” (Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2004a, p. 3). When asked about the reason for the implementation of native speakers as FLAs in class, the Austrian Ministry of Education stated that

native speakers serve as huge enrichment for foreign language education. Their implementation offers the advantage that language and the ability to express oneself orally are promoted. Apart from the native speaker competence, the Foreign Language Assistant also brings his intercultural and sociolinguistic competence to class. Consequently, it is not only the students that profit from this co-operation but also the teachers (Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, personal communication, 2010).

In its guidelines for assistants, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education points out that a major reason why Foreign Language Assistants work at school is to give a realistic impression of a conversation in their mother tongue and states that students will appreciate the authentic communication with them (Douba, 2010, p. 34).

If the FLAs play such a crucial part in EFL education, what precisely is their role in this setting?

6.6.2 The Role of the Foreign Language Assistant

The Fulbright Commission points out the ambassador function of native speakers when it states in its handbook that FLAs “are representatives of America” and that “this is an important aspect of the program” (Fulbright Austrian-American Educational Commission, 2010, p. 1). Even if the Fulbright Commission’s motivation is to make friends and influence people, the effect of this is that these FLAs can serve as informants on how English is used in relation to the United States. It is therefore a byproduct of this program that the FLAs can be used as informants. Hence, the Fulbright Commission postulates that it is the FLAs job “to try and explain [the USA] to your students” (Fulbright Austrian-American Educational Commission, 2010, pp. 30–31). As FLAs serve as incidental informants in class they, just as the regular teachers, can provide some first-hand information while other information will be from second-hand sources related to their home country.

Now, however true it might be for other languages that these are intrinsically tied to culture, as Llurda points out when stating that “foreign languages are often associated with national states perceived as homeland of the tongue” (Llurda, 2005, p. 27), in the case of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) there is no such immanent connection even though this is exactly what is postulated in numerous relevant sources (see, for example, various Austrian language curricula, such as Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2006, p. 7; Council of Europe, 2007, pp. 118–122). Nevertheless, as Risager (1998, p. 242) states, despite an on-going movement toward unification in the EU, foreign language teaching is still heavily influenced by national culture. This, though, undermines the process of EU unity and contradicts the idea of globalization. In addition, it does not reflect ELF reality. Considering the importance of English in a globalized world, the FLA as informant on social and cultural issues in national native speaking communities has little role to play.

6.7 Comparison of the Roles of the Teacher and the Foreign Language Assistant

While officially both the regular English language teacher and the FLAs belong to the teaching staff, the name FLAs already hints that the latter are to be considered assistants to the regular teacher. The English language teacher’s major task, as we have already seen, is that of a mediator, i.e., to make the foreign language appropriate for learning by offering pedagogically designed and modified language input that is adequate to trigger the development of the learners’ competences. In addition, the English language teacher also offers social and cultural information – which may or may not be first-hand information. By contrast, the FLA has the role of informant, which is considered to be an essential role for foreign language education insofar as language and culture are regarded as intrinsically connected. It is also implicitly assumed that the FLA offers first-hand information on virtually all aspects related to the English language, which, of course, is an illusion.

Another major difference has crystallized in this chapter. The teacher, in opposition to the FLA, is a professional in his or her field. Students, parents and society at large rely (and have the right to do so) on the fact that teachers are professionals. FLAs are, by definition, non-professionals. In most aspects relevant to the teaching that takes place in the school setting these assistant teachers are learners themselves. However, when you cannot differentiate between the learner and the teacher, it is not clear why one learner gets money paid for doing so (Schirlbauer, 1998, p. 56).

There is a gap between the knowledge, skills, or state of mind of the learner and what he is to learn, which it seems to me any teaching activity must seek to bridge if it is to deserve that label. Teaching activities must therefore take place at a level where the pupil can take on what it is intended he should learn (Hirst, 2009, p. 37).

It is the professional teacher who has learned to adapt language to the students' needs and thereby enable learning. The FLA can simply provide input that is not prepared and adjusted to suit the special needs of language learners in their current situation.

This chapter also revealed that the numerous pedagogic aspects of professional teachers are of utmost importance for their work, relationship with their students and ultimately the learning success of students. While professionally educated teachers know about these aspects, non-professional FLAs may only have an impressionistic approach.

It is important here to point out an apparent disparity related to language and content teachers. While content teachers are generally recognized as experts in their field who possess a certain content expertise that others do not have, this seems not to be the case for language teachers. There has always existed the mistaken belief that when you know a language you can also teach it. One would certainly not expect that the experience of the physical world makes you a physicist, yet it is precisely this type of correlation that is perceived to be true for language teaching, and especially for English language teachers due to the omnipresence of English in our lives. The assumption here is that the experience of English qualifies you to be an English teacher. It becomes clear that English

teachers are too often confused with English users. As a consequence, professional English teachers face the particular difficulty of dealing with content that is considered common knowledge, knowledge which other people have, too. In this sense, life is more difficult for EFL teachers than for other teachers as their qualifications are questioned and the misconception is perpetuated that an English teacher has no particular expertise but is solely a competent user of the language. Such a misunderstanding of the role of the professional English teacher is, of course, also the reason why native speakers advise teachers and teacher trainers without having any specialized qualification for doing so. Their “qualification” so to speak is being British or American – a fact that is of course, extensively exploited by many British and American individuals and institutions, among them the Fulbright Commission with its FLA program.

6.8 Conclusion

It can be concluded that it is the combination of expertise in content itself and making this content appropriate for learning that distinguishes educated and trained teachers from non-professionals such as FLAs. Unanimously pupils also rated these aspects as the two most important qualities of good English teachers in the online questionnaire.

People might have the perception that one of the advantages of the FLAs is that they are closer to students in age and status and therefore share similar attitudes as the students. This, then, could allow the FLAs to become students’ confidantes or friends and thereby establish a rapport with students that regular English teachers can never have as – so the common idea might go - regular English teachers are old and disconnected from their students while FLAs are young, fresh and still have a vivid idea of what life as a pupil is like. This, however, is something that I wish to challenge. In order to be close to students, you need to understand what their life is like. Good teachers are interested in their students; they know what is going on in their pupils’ lives and once underwent similar experiences. To be sure,

FLAs were teenagers themselves not too long ago but they generally have no real idea of what the life of a student in an Austrian school setting is like as they themselves experienced a quite different youth than Austrian teenagers.

In my data, we could see that the student-teacher relationship is of great importance for creating a positive learning environment while the student-FLA relationship was rated as far less important. It is this personal relationship between pupils and their regular teachers that helps or hinders the learning and teaching processes that should take place in the school setting. It is impressive that both pupils and university students also understand this important role that the consistent presence of a teacher can and should play for their personal and professional development (see chapter 4).

What seems to be very clear for pupils and university students is that there are very distinct concepts of the roles that regular English language teachers and foreign language assistants fulfill in class. These roles are based on very stereotypical and conservative conceptualizations under which the regular language teacher provides the grammatical and written input that helps students pass the formal requirements at school, while the foreign language assistant's main role is to be an authentic language provider who offers language input and strengthens oral competences in students.

However, we have also seen that it is the teacher that can offer professional language input while the foreign language assistant only fulfills the role of the informant for language and culture-related aspects – a role that seems highly questionable considering what has already been said about the relevance of English as a *Lingua Franca* for students' future perspectives.

As we have seen in this chapter, the definition of a subject relates to an educational context. We also concluded that FLAs have familiarity of the context of use but do not have any familiarity with the context of learning. The point I made earlier about the regular language teacher is that it is professionally required, even if this requirement is not always satisfied, that teachers should be able to define the language in relation to the context of instruction. That means

identifying what is learnable, understanding what makes the learners tick and how their own language relates to English as well as other aspects that have to do with organizing the language as a subject in ways that make it effective for learning. This process is not language management but rather management of English to make it effective for learners so that they can learn *from* it. It is also precisely where, as we have seen, professional language teachers come in. They are the ones who understand the language as it is learned and what the conditions for learning are and who recognize the significance of the reality of the learners' context. Therefore, we can conclude for now that professionalism is of major importance for teaching. Yet, the FLA's role is not founded on professionalism. Furthermore, there is no empirical evidence that actually supports the idea that foreign language assistants help the students in their learning. What we do see and what was proven in a series of empirical studies, however, is the important role of the regular teacher for learning in students.

Once we understand this fact and see it as the foundation of pedagogic action in ELT we have to raise some basic questions: How can FLAs be regarded as role models and promoted as the best possible source to learn English from (Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2004a, p. 3) if they do not meet the demands of professional teaching in the school context? FLAs do not have education and training in either pedagogy or the English language. They lack the two most essential qualities, namely professionalism and teaching competence, necessary to ensure the basic standards of teaching. What does this then mean for the teaching of the subject EFL at school?

The following chapter will critically discuss the influence of language policy measures on English as a Foreign Language and EFL's current realization as a school subject and investigate how the FLA fits into this picture.

7 Of Square Pegs and Round Holes: English as a Foreign Language

In the last chapter we discussed the educational context. There we established that we are actually confronted with three levels: the nature of education in general, foreign language subjects and English as a foreign language. All subjects are subject to various educational constraints. Since they are all subjects, they are all educational constructs. The foreign language subject is more specific – and English as a foreign language is even more specific. In the previous chapter we progressed from general education to foreign language education and will now, in chapter 7, focus on EFL as a school subject. We have seen that all foreign languages are not the same and that foreign languages often appear to be closely linked to particular communities. In this chapter we will now look at EFL, which is specific in its international function, as discussed in chapter 5. English is a lingua franca and therefore is employed globally in all sorts of interactions and this is not the same for other languages. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect schooling to take account of this difference, which is what we will examine more closely now.

7.1 Introduction

Obviously, what sets the school subject English as a Foreign Language apart from the language as it is used by its native speakers is the fact that in the school setting the language learned is foreign. Dealing with this foreignness naturally leads students to draw upon resources in those languages that they are already familiar with and use them as their rich capital and foundation for their foreign language learning. In simple terms, the learning process means approaching the foreign language. This requires the language encounters to be adapted and modified. The language used in the classroom situation fulfills its own, specific purposes, namely those of approaching this foreignness, and has to be pedagogically appropriate for the students. I already hinted in the last chapter at the implied

pedagogical considerations that are so unique to school subjects. Understanding this, though, also implies that native language usage cannot be imported directly into the classroom learning environment as the language is controlled and determined by a qualified language teacher and “[w]hat is taught is not English as such, but English as a foreign language, and this, by definition, cannot be the English of native speakers” (Widdowson, 2003, p. 114).

Yet, this viewpoint has not always been shared. The following section describes the history of foreign language learning and teaching in general and that of EFL in particular. Through this description, one can see how the assumption of the primacy of the native speaker has always been present – even when going back to ancient times. We might ask ourselves what it meant for people to learn a foreign language. The following section tries to provide answers to this question.

7.2 Conceiving Foreign Languages as School Subjects

People have always learned foreign languages, and they have done so for one or several particular purposes, be these economic, social or other. If the other language was spoken by a particular, well-defined community, learning a foreign language always also meant imitating the behavior of this community. In this case, the language was interrelated with a clearly defined lingua-cultural community that one tried to imitate when learning this community’s language. This, for example, was the case in the ancient world, where in around 3000 BC, the Sumerians had bilingual dictionaries. Some Egyptians learned two languages spoken by subordinated peoples. Later, Old Greek was also learned and used by intellectuals from Egypt, the Near East and Asia Minor. Along with Latin, Greek was the most commonly used foreign language. In the Roman Empire, children of wealthy families were also often educated bilingually in Greek and Latin. Schoolbooks were used and contained content quite similar to that of today, including texts, useful phrases and vocabulary adapted to the needs and level of the students (Marrou, 1977, p. 384). The ability to communicate in Greek was a symbol of wealth, education and trendiness (Marrou, 1977, p. 379). According to

Marrou, it was also the Romans who were first in understanding the importance and potential of systematic foreign language acquisition and use (Marrou, 1977, p. 374). Translating from and into Greek was not only used for learning purposes, but also served as training for critically reflecting on one's first language. The classic Grammar-Translation-Method stems from this concept. Interestingly, it seems that Greeks, in contrast to Romans, generally refused to learn and use foreign languages, which, according to Marrou, were considered barbarian and not worth learning (Marrou, 1977, p. 273).

While for some the prime motives for foreign language acquisition were closely related to a clearly defined lingua-cultural community, for others the language functioned as a lingua franca as we have just seen. In this case, the focus shifted away from the native speakers towards functional use of the language, which mainly served as a vehicle for international interaction. Latin and Greek were the two commonly used lingua francas of antiquity and served this functional purpose.

In the Middle Ages, education in foreign languages was of equal importance as training in dance, swordplay, music and horseback riding for nobility and at knight academies (Düwell, 2003, pp. 166–167). So-called language masters, native speakers of the language, trained their students in oral communication and introduced them to cultural aspects. Latin developed into the institutional foreign language at convent schools and was mainly regarded as a tool for developing students' thinking and classic educational values (Gehring, 2004, p. 8). For this social class, foreign languages generally did not serve as a means of communication, but rather as an integral element of general education – an aspect of education that every nobleman had to undergo even if it did not serve a particular purpose for his life. It is this same focus on the native speaker as a member of a clearly defined and definable community that is being imitated today.

In parts of northern and eastern Germany, foreign language learning was related to economic relevance. For example, learning English as a foreign language can be traced back to the tenth century, when trade with Great Britain was important and

the ability to use the language of the trade partners had positive effects on income. Therefore, wealthy trading families sent their sons abroad for a period of time or paid a language master, who was no longer necessarily a native speaker (Gehring, 2004, p. 9). Still the focus was on one particular, fixed lingua-cultural community with which the user of the foreign language would interact.

When, towards the end of the Middle Ages, France developed into a leading cultural, economic and political power, French started to replace Latin as the language of the educated, wealthy and important. However, the classic languages Latin and Greek were still prestigious and, together with mathematics, formed the basis of higher education (Felberbauer & Seebauer, 1994, p. 8). The reason for learning French thus derived from its international power and status and once again was uniquely associated with a particular foreign community. Towards the end of the 17th century English was partly taught at schools for aristocrats. Still, it was French that remained the language of the court and nobility due to its power and social status within large parts of Europe (Düwell, 2003, p. 167). Contrary to today's use of English as a lingua franca, French was regarded (however, not necessarily also used) as a prestigious language for a few, clearly defined domains (such as high diplomacy) and professions.

According to Howatt, the first evidence of teaching English as a foreign language in a school setting can be traced back to as early as 1700, when it was learned in Great Britain's neighboring countries (Howatt, 1984, p. 61). As Great Britain's importance as a leading figure in trade, finance and colonial expansion rose in the 18th century, so did the prestige of its language. The rise of the United States of America, paired with the loss of political influence and importance of France, further contributed to making English a more and more useful and used tool for international communication. It started to find its way into some countries' school curricula. Like French, it became increasingly learned and taught due to its international power. As the influence of first the British Empire and later the USA grew, so did the status of English and its importance for wider communication in the areas of commerce and diplomacy. Consequently, English was given primacy as a foreign language.

In Austria, foreign language education was not a mandatory part of school curricula until the end of the 19th century. When languages were taught, they were either French or a national language of the Austrian Empire. In around 1848, foreign language education was officially introduced in Austrian secondary schools (Hauptschulen). Some high schools (Gymnasien) also taught living foreign languages – however, this was only done on demand and was highly dependent on the financial situation of the respective school. The school subject English as a foreign language was not particularly successful in the beginning since other national languages were considered to be of greater importance (Pazelt, 1994, pp. 136–138). While modern foreign languages were not a big hit in regular schools, they rose to some importance for newly developed schools that focused on economy and trade and vocational high schools for business administration (Handelsakademien). Here, English was considered important (Pazelt, 1994, pp. 150–153). It is logical that it was especially these schools that were the first ones to introduce English as a school subject. Due to the economic and global importance of the USA, it seemed desirable to learn and teach this foreign language. Still, the underlying idea was the interaction with the native speakers of this language in order to participate in their economic success and global political importance.

After World War II, English became more and more important and so did the school subject English as a foreign language, which was gradually implemented at schools. Since 1991, foreign language education has been obligatory for students at part-time vocational schools (Berufsschulen). In 1998, foreign language education was implemented in primary schools (Volksschulen) – in most cases the language taught is English (90 percent in 1999). Today, foreign language teaching is an integral part of the Austrian school education system. Every student undergoes foreign language education and becomes acquainted with at least one foreign language⁵⁵. General high schools, serving students aged 14 to 18 (years 9 to 12), offer at least two foreign languages.

⁵⁵ This does not necessarily hold true for students in special education institutions.

Over time, English has turned into the world's most important lingua franca and the focus has therefore shifted from interaction with its native speakers and imitating the behavior of this community towards international communication. This is also the reason why English was implemented in more and more types of school. It was regarded as so important that even those who only aim at receiving the lowest degree of education in the Austrian school system (these are students at special needs institutions and part-time vocational schools who have the shortest period of education in Austria) now had to learn the foreign language. For the same reason the subject was introduced from the beginning of formal school education onwards – primary school (and in many cases already in kindergarten). The subject became prominent in the Austrian school curricula because of educational policy that saw the language's international usefulness. This usefulness, however, was no longer related to one fixed lingua-cultural community any more. Although the language changed its role and status, the assumption still was that one learns the language of its native speakers. The spread and function of the foreign language were not taken into consideration.

Today, in Austria, English as a Foreign Language is normally taught from primary school onwards⁵⁶. The number of EFL lessons varies according to the school type, individual school profiles and specialization but normally consists of two to three lessons of 50 minutes each per week and approximately 40 weeks of actual school education. According to Statistik Austria, in the school year 2011/12, 97.8 percent of all Austrian students learned English as a Foreign Language at school, in comparison to the second most common foreign language, French, which was acquired by only 10 percent of all students (Statistik Austria, 2013a, p. 1). Table 20 shows the figures for English and French as foreign languages learned at the most common school types in Austria.

⁵⁶ It is already introduced as a foreign language in many kindergartens classes nowadays.

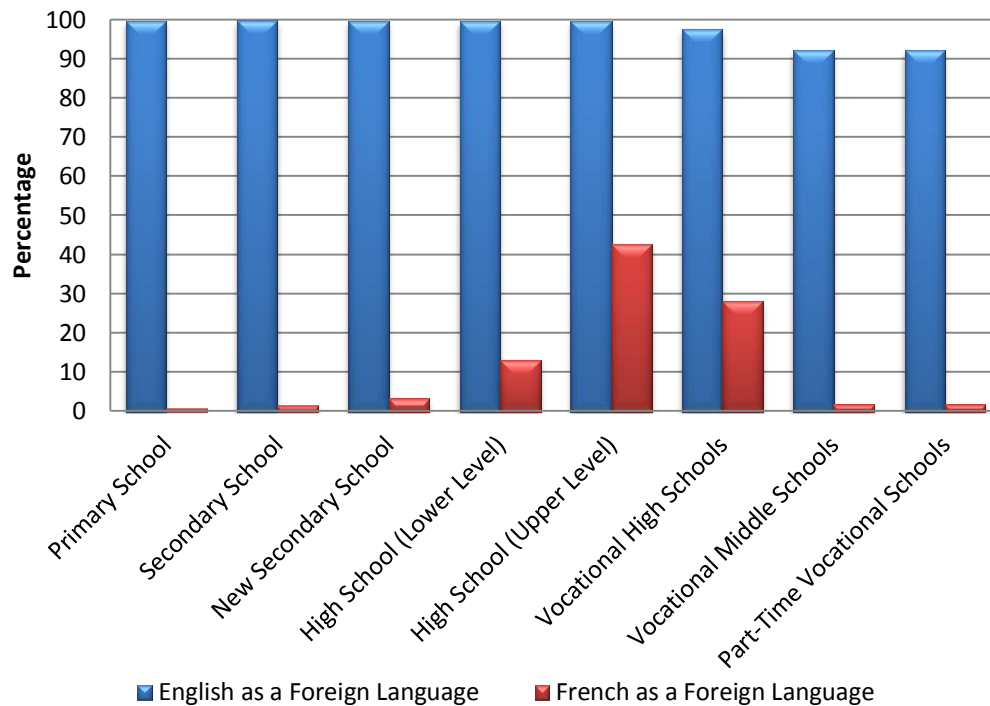


Table 20: Comparison of the numbers for English and French learned as foreign languages at the most common school types in Austria (Statistik Austria, 2013a, p. 1).

According to the European commission, the numbers for English are even higher in Austria, with 99 percent of all students acquiring English as a Foreign Language at school (European Commission, 2012c). What is very clear from this illustration is the overwhelming dominance of English as a foreign language across all major school types. The figures for most other European countries are very similar to the ones found in Austria, as can be seen in Table 21, which shows data from 2010. From this table, it is very clear that in almost all EU member states, English is learned by at or above 90 percent of students and, with only one exception, it is by far the most popular foreign language.

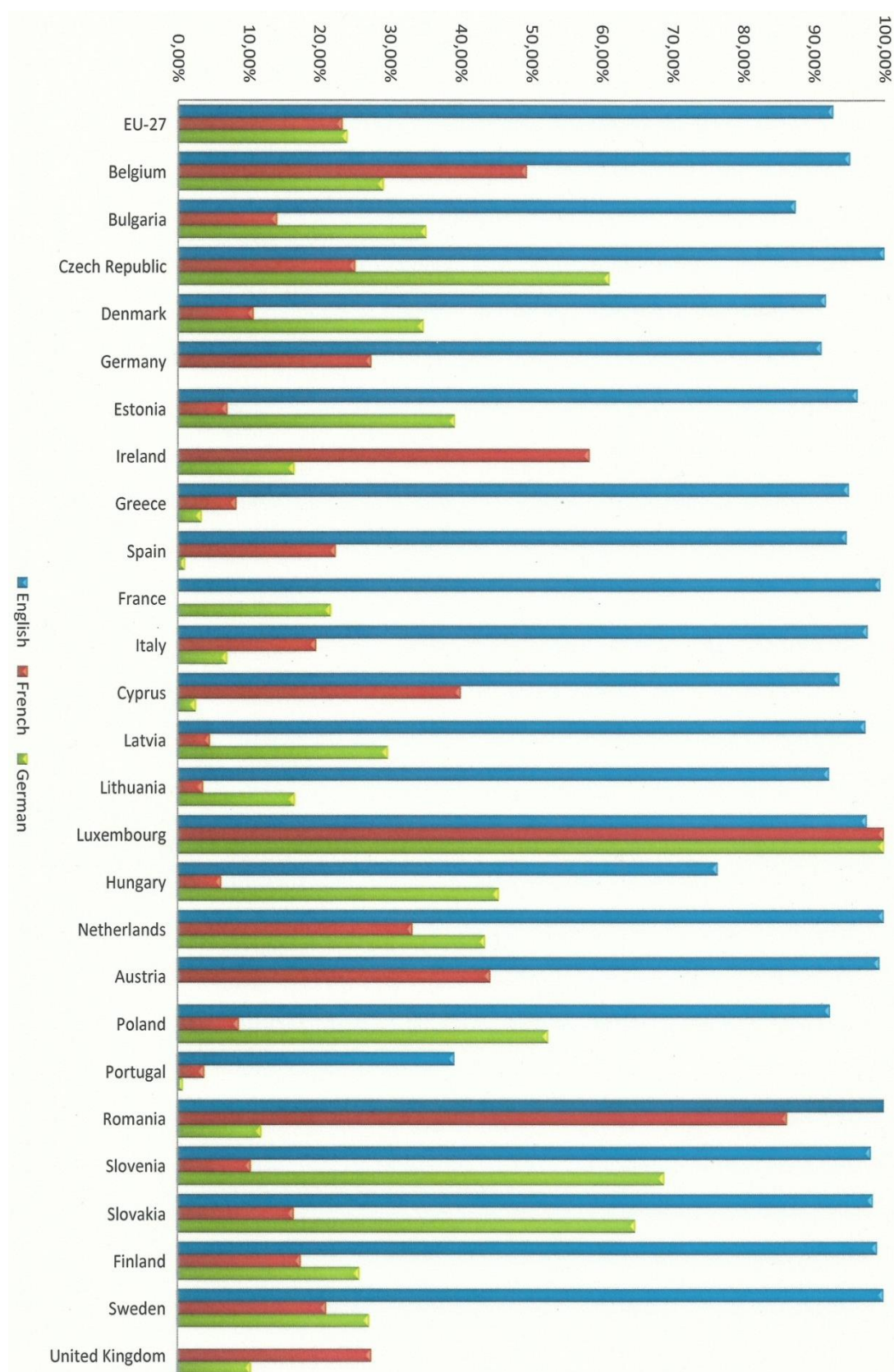


Table 21: Comparison of European pupils learning English, French and German in upper secondary education (European Commission, 2012c).

The fact that English is so prominent and of so much greater importance than any other foreign language within the European Union shows that English is regarded as a language of wider communication. This then, in turn, might explain the desire to standardize the various levels of foreign language learning in the CEFR⁵⁷. One might compare this need for standardization with the need to establish fixed exchange rates between a common currency and national currencies. Just as such fixed rates allow for smooth financial conversions, the standards in the CEFR are thought to facilitate comparisons among languages.

It can be seen that the history of English language teaching is based on the assumption that native speaker competence and native speaker usage are what learners of the language ought to strive for. The traditional view of language teaching supports the notion of English as taught in the school subject EFL as being the English of the native speaker. This, in turn, supports the idea of having a foreign language assistant in EFL classrooms to serve as an appropriate model of usage for students.

How one approaches the teaching of a foreign language depends on how the foreign language is defined. This then raises the question of the nature of the foreignness of a language and whether or not all languages are foreign in the same way. As already seen in this section, the role that a foreign language has in education is related to the changing foreignness of the language. Historically speaking, the attitude changes towards a language affect and change the foreignness of the language, which again influences curricula design. Such considerations about the foreignness of a language would then affect how the school subject EFL is defined in terms of its objectives. Is and should the main purpose of learning and teaching English as a foreign language in the school setting be to imitate native speakers? To what extent is the distinctly different degree of foreignness visible in these objectives? The following section discusses these questions.

⁵⁷ The idea is that the wider spread a language has, the more you need some means of ensuring that certain standards are met. This is a phenomenon that can also be seen on a more general level such as with communities that need an increased amount of legislation the more they grow.

7.3 Great Expectations: Objectives of the School Subject EFL

As we have seen when examining the history of English language teaching, the primacy of the native speaker has always been assumed. This is consistent with the idea that a foreign language is learned in order to communicate with a clearly defined lingua-cultural community. However, English has changed in its role and status and it is no longer tenable to think of English as simply belonging to its native speakers. Has this change been taken into consideration in the subject's objectives?

In order to answer this question, we need to understand that there are various degrees of foreignness of languages. While some languages are very foreign to us, others are closer to our realities and may stand in immediate relation to our daily lives. It is therefore not the case that all languages are foreign in the same way. For example, a very likely reason for someone to learn Japanese is to communicate with the Japanese. The language is used by a relatively clearly defined lingua-cultural community. So, teaching and learning Japanese with Japanese models – native speakers of the language – seems to be a very logical and most appropriate thing to do. However, this same conclusion does not apply to English, a language that fulfills different functions and is used in different ways than Japanese, as I have argued earlier. The nature of the language determines its use and how it is best learned and taught. If the nature of English is appropriated globally as we have seen in chapter 5, one would not expect it to be taught or tested in the same way as Japanese.

Some languages stand in closer connection to a person's first language, such as a second language, while a foreign language is more remote and abstract. Widdowson and Seidlhofer identify the second language as "the L2 that has a local presence as an L1, and so has a domestic or institutional role to play within a particular community and is learned by outsiders as part of the process of social adaptation, or secondary socialization" (Widdowson & Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 209). A foreign language, by contrast, is foreign in-so-far as it does not have local importance or relevance and therefore implies no straight-forward need or

motivation for a learner to acquire it (Widdowson & Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 211). Foreign languages are not part of the learner's normal life as such, while a second language stands in an immediate relation with the L1. In this case, there is a clear motivation and/or need to learn this language in order to communicate successfully on a daily basis (Widdowson & Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 209) while the same cannot be said for a foreign language. Since English is used so intensively as a lingua franca within the European Union and in the global context, one can easily see the different degree of foreignness compared to other foreign languages. What can be seen is that

obviously the blurring [between ELF and other foreign languages in the EU] increases the more the language is used in networks of interaction which extend beyond the boundaries of primary communities. In this case, the concept of community itself can no longer simply apply to tightly knit socio-cultural groups in fact to face contact. We need to recognize the existence of communities defined in other ways than by primary socialization. These we might call second order communities [...] whose members share common concerns, values, ways of thinking beyond those that hold primary communities together. And of course if the expression 'European community' is to have any meaning at all, it must similarly presuppose some commonality of concerns, some sharing of socio-cultural values or economic interests. Any language that is used as an L2 by such second order communities as a means of communication obviously loses some of its foreignness and takes on something of the character of a second language. English, of course, is such a language: its widespread use as a lingua franca within the European community and indeed globally within the international community, makes it a second rather than a foreign language (Widdowson & Seidlhofer, 2008, pp. 211–212).

Such a difference in the degree of foreignness should also be reflected in school curricula and in the CEFR. These instruments must respond to a reality in which students face constant interaction with English as a Lingua Franca and in which students need and are motivated to use ELF for their own purposes, be they personal or professional. Indeed, for very many students, these needs and motivations are not based on future prospects, but on their present lives: international internships, private communication via social media and popular culture are just three examples of real and current aspects. However, at present this difference and variation in the degree of foreignness is not taken into consideration as, for example, can be seen in the language curricula of the upper

level of general high school, where there is only one curriculum for all living foreign languages taught at this school type (Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2004a). There is also a discrepancy between the name of the school subject – English as a Foreign Language – and the obvious reason for learning and teaching English at school, if one keeps in mind that

[a] foreign language is one which is not your own, which represents the identity of an 'other'. One of the prime functions of learning a foreign language is to communicate with native speakers, and to learn about their culture. The model of correctness is naturally that of the native speaker (Graddol, 2001, p. 51).

Obviously, this does not correspond with what we have discussed in chapter 5. How is the school subject actually defined? What do Austrian language curricula state as their objectives?

In what follows, I would like to concentrate on the subject English as a Foreign Language in general and vocational high schools (students aged 14-18/19, year 9 to 12/13). For general high schools, there is only one common curriculum that is in use for the first as well as second foreign language learned. As Austrian language curricula are based on the CEFR, they do not distinguish among different foreign languages or the various purposes and reasons why foreign languages are learned and taught at schools. This curriculum also offers only very general guidelines, since the first foreign language that it addresses has already been learned for at least five years (and normally eight years) while the second foreign language has either been learned for only two years before or is introduced as a new subject and language altogether.

The objective that is provided for in foreign language education in the high school setting states that students should be

enabled to fulfill the basic communicative requirements of social life and to acquire competences in the areas of listening, reading, speaking and writing in a broad range of private, vocational and public situations in order to behave appropriately language-wise and culturally. In addition, foreign language education has the objective to offer an essential contribution for the development of dynamic skills

(professional qualification, social competence, personal competence, methodic competence, etc.). Special attention has to be paid to social competences in multicultural environments (http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/11854/lp_ahs_os_lebende_fs.pdf, my translation).

In addition, foreign language education has to allow for the European dimension and the increasing demand for mobility of its citizens (Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2004a, p. 1). As can be seen, these objectives are formulated in very general terms and as such do not depend on adopting a native speaker model. Such vague and general aims allow for a new interpretation. The above mentioned “communicative requirements of social life” have changed dramatically over the last years and have become international (through increased travel, social media, etc.) as has the “broad range of private, vocational and public situations”, which nowadays often include multinational and intercultural settings and situations. The required “dynamic skills” needed for professional and private interactions are lingua franca skills. This is already the case today and will be of even greater importance in the future. Multicultural environments are also explicitly mentioned in the objectives and again point towards the international use of English. Thus, it can be concluded that the objectives are favorable to an ELF perspective.

I have so far tried to point out the fact that English serves as a global lingua franca and that this is the reason for why students across the EU acquire EFL. We might now ask ourselves which consequences this has for the school subject. As I already pointed out earlier, English is mainly used for international communication between non-native speakers of English. This understanding, one might presume, should then also be reflected in and serve as a foundation for EFL as it is taught in schools. Such a foundation would necessarily include three aspects: first, a focus on international communication and multilingual communication partner; second, a recognition that ELF is defined by its functional

use (Hülmbauer et al., 2008, pp. 27–28; Seidlhofer, 2011) and is therefore independent from native speaker norms⁵⁸; and third, a focus on one’s own cultural and linguistic background(s)⁵⁹.

In chapter 5, I showed that English fulfills different functions than other languages. As Widdowson and Seidlhofer note, because English is used so much as a lingua franca within the European Union, its degree of foreignness is completely different to that of other foreign languages (Widdowson & Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 211).

As we saw in chapter 2, language policy within the EU is not confined to general goals for its members but also (indirectly) plays a role in national language curricula. Although the EU does not have the legal authority to impose a language regime on its member states, its pronouncements and policies have an almost mandatory effect on its member states. One prominent example of how the EU influences national language learning and teaching is the CEFR. This document has “evolved into [one of] the most influential instruments in European language education policy” (Rindler Schjerve & Vetter, 2012, p. 2). Liddicoat points out that “language-in-education policy documents represent a particular understanding of the nature of and value given to language” (Liddicoat, 2013, p. 13). For the CEFR, this understanding includes the NS as language authority and main communication partner (as has been pointed out and criticized, see, for example, Seidlhofer, 2011). Such a NS-centered approach, though, does not apply to English, which, as we have already discussed, is today’s most important and widespread lingua franca, within the EU as well as outside of it. This particular status of English is not recognized in EU language policy in general and in the CEFR in particular. The distinct functions and degree of foreignness of English are disregarded in the document, which treats English in just the same way as it does any other European language. In doing so, the EU follows its principle of the equality of all EU languages but simultaneously turns a blind eye to reality.

⁵⁸ Widdowson also directly highlights this fact when pointing out that the NSs of English “are irrelevant. The very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it” (Widdowson, 1994, p. 385).

⁵⁹ This aspect is interrelated with the key aspects of ELF mentioned in chapter 5 since “[w]hen used as a lingua franca, English is no longer founded on the linguistic and sociocultural norms of native English speakers and their respective countries and cultures” (Gnutzmann, 2004, p. 358).

The credo seems to be that the NS is the master of the language and that all language learners should strive to imitate his or her usage. This can be seen in the following measures of attainment that the CEFR prescribes:

Pronunciation of a very limited repertoire of learnt words and phrases can be understood with some effort by native speakers (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 117).

Pronunciation is generally clear enough to be understood despite a noticeable foreign accent (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 117).

Can keep up with an animated conversation between native speakers (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 66).

Can sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 76).

I can write so well that native speakers need not check my texts (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 232).

Can understand what is said clearly, slowly and directly to him/her in simple everyday conversation; can be made to understand, if the [native⁶⁰] speaker can take the trouble (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 75).

In this context it therefore seems implausible that the CEFR also states that “the aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve ‘mastery’ of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the ‘ideal native speaker’ as the ultimate model” (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 5).

How does this correspond with the attainments quoted before? To what extent has the aim of language education then changed if the language user is explicitly compared to the ideal native speaker of the language? In addition, as we have already seen in chapter 5, there seems to be no satisfactory answer on who counts as a native speaker after all.

⁶⁰ This can-do statement can be found in the category “Understanding a native speaker interlocutor”. As is the case with other such categories, it is not clear why this category only focuses on native speakers and to what extent the descriptors would have to be different if they also existed for non-native speakers.

7.4 Shortcomings

The shortcomings of the CEFR as a highly influential policy document for foreign language teaching and learning, which we have discussed in the previous subsection and also highlighted in chapter 5, have huge consequences for the subject EFL. It is noteworthy that “the CEFR is an ‘instrument’ of policy [...] it ‘serves the overall aim of the Council of Europe’” (Byram & Parmenter, 2012, p. 3). As such, this document is of political and not just educational significance. This difference is crucial: although education and its objectives are to some degree defined by political decisions, political documents cannot be directly transferred and applied in schools. They need to be interpreted as locally appropriate. However, currently this is not the case with the CEFR.

A further critical aspect should not go unmentioned: Kurtz’s criticism in relation to the CEFR is that it led and inspired a development to set up and implement standards, fixed curricula and assessment strategies. Such a development led to the neglect of aspects that are difficult to teach and test (Kurtz, 2008, p. 88). He pleads for time and patience in education and foreign language teaching in schools rather than a fast-forward way of teaching what can be tested. “It should [...] be remembered that holistic foreign language and intercultural pedagogy in terms of *Bildung* and *Erziehung* takes time and that patience is virtue in education” (Kurtz, 2008, p. 97). Doff agrees and states that

[t]he obligation to compare learning outcomes between schools, regions or even countries may, in many respects, be helpful, but it narrows the teaching in schools to conveying such knowledge as can be described in practical terms. This is particularly true for foreign language teaching. As a consequence, general goals of *Bildung*, self-formation and the acquisition of cultural knowledge are neglected or even by-passed intentionally. Obviously, we are forgetting the sound pedagogical principle that knowledge is not merely acquired in order to be used later, but because this knowledge helps young people mature and develop into autonomous citizens, able to act responsibly in a modern society (Doff, Hüllen & Klippel, 2008, p. 5).

The CEFR document, however, is incorporated into national language curricula without adaptations or pedagogical considerations and serves as the basis for EFL teaching reality all across Europe today. This can also be seen in Austrian foreign language curricula, where it is stated as a goal that “students are able at least [...] to communicate spontaneously and fluently so that a normal conversation with a native speaker is possible with relatively little effort from both parties” (Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2004b, p. 38). One objective is that “[t]he teaching should ensure that the students [...] know the economic, political, ecological, social and cultural realities of English-speaking countries, as far as this is necessary for adequate social behaviour and communication at home and abroad” (Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2006, p. 7). Furthermore, students should learn about the “[e]conomy and politics of the English-speaking world” (Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2006, p. 8) whereby “British English and American English are to be seen as equally relevant” (Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2006, p. 9). In order to provide the required input, “[a]uthentic materials [...], projects such as language study weeks abroad [...] as well as the assistance of native speakers allow teachers to illustrate the content of teaching and to motivate the students” (Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2006, p. 9). This, according to Austrian curricula, is the case since “the highest possible level of authenticity can be achieved by native speakers of the foreign language” (Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2004a, p. 3).

While there are many references to NS-like language as being a desired learning outcome and the incorporation of NSs for authentic teaching and learning situations, it is quite remarkable that, for example, in the entire EFL curriculum section of Austrian Colleges for Tourism there is not a single reference to English being used for international communication – something that might come as a surprise considering the emphasis of this school type and the expected importance of English for international tourism (within Austria as well as outside of it).

As we have seen, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education claims that the highest possible level of authenticity is promoted by direct personal contact with NSs of the language taught and that FLAs offer such encounters (Austrian Federal

Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2004a, p. 3). Its endorsement of NS authority logically justifies the current policy of employing English NSs as FLAs to join regular English language teachers to class and serve as role models for both students and teachers as well as function as guarantors of authentic communication and information on language and culture-related issues. It has already been pointed out that these FLAs are seen as beneficial for foreign language instruction by all so-called stakeholders (EU, Ministry of Education, teachers, pupils and university students as well as, of course, the Fulbright Austrian-American Educational Commission and FLAs themselves).

It is noteworthy and provides a meaningful insight into the current language political understanding of what education and teaching are all about that terms such as *shareholders* are used as these are business and not education terms. However, as is the case with many other such terms borrowed from business (such as the teaching *industry*, for example) this usage reveals a central underlying problem, namely, that education and teaching are subordinate to or mistaken for business. Although the reason for learning English in today's globalized world might be an economic one that is based on the feeling of being better off knowing the language, describing educational processes using economic terms harbors the danger that economic mindsets are implicitly transferred into education. Education, though, needs to be separate and independent from economics. The reason for this is that the objectives of economics and education are very different. While economics to a large extent is about economizing or being efficient, the aim of education is learning and, in the end, the provision of opportunity by developing the self.

Like this word choice, the idea of the FLAs' beneficial effect for EFL instruction also needs to be questioned. As I already showed in chapter 4, the majority of FLAs as well as English language teachers, pupils and university students in my studies believe in this positive aspect of the implementation of NSs. There seems to be an apparent assumption of the positive role of the English NS in the English classroom. In this context, it seems surprising, to say the least, that it is also English language teachers that willingly belittle their own language competence and boost the idea of the superior position of the FLAs in the language classroom.

They also seem to be ready to denigrate their professional teaching and characterize it as capable of transmitting only inferior, deficient, unauthentic and *only* School English (see chapter 4). Given the global use of EFL there seems to be no justification for not recognizing that English language teachers are also authentic users of the language. Such a recognition is in urgent need not only because it is sadly contradictory that teachers should be meek supporters of a system that degrades their professional importance and value; but also because teachers are multipliers who pass their attitudes on to generations of students and by that arbitrate the understanding of why English is actually learned at school.

Such contradictions are not limited to English teachers, though. In my questionnaire, pupils as well as university students unanimously stated that they believe the reason for learning English at school to be the global lingua franca aspect of English and that they will mainly communicate with other non-native speakers of English. At the same time, however, they refer to the NS as their point of reference and language model that they believe they would best learn from. When presented with audio files of English native and non-native speakers the majority of pupils and students could not correctly classify those recordings and rated the non-native, who most of them believed to be an English native speaker, as their favorite role model to learn English from. Such a contradiction shows that there is still a long way ahead of us in terms of bringing about a better understanding of what ELF implies for its users and EFL learners. Along the same line, NSs are often regarded as the better teachers and role models to learn from as can be seen in my data:

- (1) Our FLA can teach us better because his English is real and realistic. That makes him better to learn from than our regular teacher.
- (2) The FLA has more knowledge, more information, more vocabulary and a greater range of expressions to learn from.
- (3) She makes us talk more. We should learn English from her because she can teach us in a different, better way simply because she is a native. You can learn better from natives than from a normal English teacher.

- (4) She is in our class because we should learn from her how to use English correctly. That includes sayings and typical things which you can best learn from a native.
- (5) He is there so that our English teacher can ask when she does not know something.
- (6) You can learn more from a native speaker because it is his language!
- (7) Why we have a native speaker? Hello? What a question! Who else should you learn proper English from?
- (8) A native speaker is much better than a normal teacher because normal teachers only learned the language but it is the native speaker's language. So, of course they are the better teachers.⁶¹

Again, such an attitude can be found throughout my data. It is almost unanimously supported by FLAs, English language teachers, pupils and university students. Interestingly enough, both pupils and university students agree with the statements that

- (9) Knowing your mother tongue does not mean that you can also teach it to someone else

and

- (10) I find it important that someone who teaches English at school (or university) was trained to do so.

Here, respondents highlight the professional aspects of the teaching business. At the same time, however, they opt for answers such as

- (11) A native speaker of English (for example, an FLA) is generally better to learn English from than a trained English teacher.
- (12) A native speaker of English (for example, an FLA) is better at bringing English across. He can teach me more than a trained English teacher.
- (13) An FLA has perfect skills in English as this is his mother tongue.

⁶¹ All examples taken from the pupils' responses in the online questionnaire, my translations.

Both groups also stated that

- (14) It is/would be important for me to be taught English by someone who is a native speaker of English but not a professional teacher.

rather than choosing

- (15) It is /would be important for me to be taught English by someone who has learned English as a foreign language and is a professional teacher.

Such answers show the contradiction between, on the one hand, the prevailing idea of the flawlessness and superiority of the NS both as English language user and teacher; and, on the other, the wish for professionalism in the teaching business and the claim that a professional education is essential for teaching EFL. In my data, this inconsistency reaches its apex in respondents' inability to correctly differentiate between native and non-native speakers of English and in their choosing the non-native as the learning role model despite their having stated that one learns best from a native speaker.

While scholars such as Medgyes (1994) dwell on the question who might be the better teacher – non-native or native speakers of English – my point here is clearly of a different kind as I strongly believe in professionalism in teaching. I am thus convinced that the question as to whether qualified native or non-native English teachers do a better job is simply irrelevant and misses the point. The point, rather, is that whether or not someone is a good English language teacher has nothing to do with one's first language. There is, however, a strong connection between being a good teacher and having proper education and training and thus in-depth knowledge and expertise in the fields of pedagogy and the English language (amongst other important qualities that good teachers should possess and that are discussed in chapter 6). My intention, therefore, is not to compare qualities of native and non-native English teachers, but rather those qualified English teachers that happen to be non-natives of English and unqualified FLAs that happen to have English as their mother tongue.

In connection with what I have said about the roles of teachers and FLAs in this chapter and in chapter 6, it can be concluded that it is the combination of expertise in the fields of the language itself and making this language appropriate for learning that distinguishes educated and trained teachers from non-professionals such as FLAs. Unanimously, pupils and students also rated both these aspects as the two most important qualities of good English teachers in the online questionnaire.

7.5 Reconsidering the Foreign Language Assistant's Role in Class

For which aspects of English learning in school can the FLA be regarded as a model then? By definition, FLAs are non-professional instructors and therefore lack some essential qualities that I wish to discuss.

First, because they are not required to have any qualifications in language pedagogy, FLAs are not familiar with the ways in which a teacher must adapt and modify a foreign language to match students' needs. NSs may possess implicit knowledge, but this will not put them in a position to be able to explain the workings of their language and transmit that knowledge explicitly to students. Professional English teachers understand the nature of language, communication and what it means to use language appropriately. They understand the reason why a student may make unsuccessful use of a particular expression (e.g., the expression is not sufficiently appropriate, or it presupposes the interlocutors know something that they actually do not know, or it does not give enough linguistic signals as to what the intention of the user is, etc.) and can therefore advise and guide students into being more effective in using the linguistic resource. The reason that professional English language teachers can do so is their understanding of how the language works. It is the task of the teacher to lead students to understand what makes for appropriate language. NSs do not necessarily have this understanding of the nature of language and communication. In addition, as far as communicative competence is concerned, NSs do not have a

superior capacity to communicate effectively and intelligibly per se. Even if they can be considered to be more capable in communicating with other NSs, this, of course, does not mean that they can be equally effective communicating with non-NS learners.

Second, FLAs have never experienced the foreignness of the English language and, as a consequence, lack the perspective as to what makes English special to the students and regular English language teachers. “[O]nly non-NESTs [non-native English speaking teachers] can be set as proper learner models, since they *learned* English after they acquired their native language, unlike NESTs who *acquired* English as their native language - two completely different processes” (Medgyes, 2001, p. 436)⁶². FLAs therefore cannot relate to learning English as a foreign language.

Third, when students acquire EFL they undergo the process of changing from monolinguals to multilinguals. Consequently, it should be clear that the profile for educating multilinguals requires multilingual English teachers rather than monolingual NSs of English. Also Llurda discusses the power of multilingualism in learners of English:

English learners will become speakers of EIL [English as an International Language], through which they will express their own selves in a multilingual world that uses English as the means of expression and as the instrument for interaction among people from disparate cultures. Non-native-speaker teachers are the ones who are inherently endowed with better expertise in guiding this process (Llurda, 2004, p. 318).

Most FLAs only have very limited experience of learning any foreign language. Thus, they cannot truly relate to the situation of students at Austrian high school and vocational high school level (where FLAs are usually implemented), who are already very experienced foreign language learners with years of learning experience of at least one, but often more, foreign language(s). The FLAs’ foreign language experience in comparison is way more limited and therefore inadequate if they are supposed to serve as a role model.

⁶² This does not mean, however, that native speakers of English cannot be good, successful and appropriate teachers of English as a Foreign Language.

Fourth, the FLA's postulated role as informant on social and cultural issues in national native speaking communities has little importance if it is the international function of ELF that needs to be highlighted. With ELF there is no connection to one specific culture, as has already been pointed out. It might therefore seem more promising to engage students in becoming aware of their own cultural background(s) as well as international and intercultural sensitivity rather than promoting stereotypical images of NS countries as is the case at the moment.

Graddol argues that in a world that uses ELF, "native speakers may increasingly be identified as a part of the problem rather than the source of solution. They may be seen as bringing with them cultural baggage in which learners wanting to use English primarily as an international language are not interested" (Graddol, 2006, p. 114).

Fifth, if EFL is designed to shorten the process of foreign language acquisition, as we have already pointed out, FLAs seem rather inadequate to offer a valuable contribution to such a progression as they can only offer natural exposure rather than a guided bottom-up approach into the foreign language. Such an approach to foreign language learning and teaching seems inefficient for EFL learning environments. Using FLAs in class seems to derive from the idea that if you provide a lot of exposure, students eventually will pick what is important for them, as seems to be the case in first-language acquisition. This, however, does not work for foreign languages. For foreign language learning, it is vital to create certain conditions that prepare the mind to process the exposure. Teaching makes learners receptive to information. This is done in the school environment, where teachers create conditions in the learners' minds to make best use of their resources. The implementation of FLAs therefore actually contradicts the idea of learning in schools.

Once we understand these facts and focus on pedagogic action in ELT we have to raise some basic questions: How can FLAs be regarded as role models and promoted as best possible source to learn English from (as postulated, for example, by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2004a, p. 3) if they do not meet the demands of professional teaching in the

school context? FLAs do not have education and training in either pedagogy or the English language. They lack the two most essential qualities, namely professional and teaching competence, necessary to ensure the basic standards of teaching. It also should make us think that those responsible – on all levels, from institutions such as the EU, the Ministry of Education, down to the grassroots level of professional teachers and learners, their parents and the general public – do not seem to see the extent of this problematic situation.

For that very reason, it is important to highlight this lack of awareness. We are currently educating future generations under false assumptions and based on outdated concepts that do not correspond with reality. We are bound by honor (and in our own interest considering that it is the next generations that should provide for us at some point in the future) to not educate our pupils on false grounds and perpetuate obsolete conceptions just because that is the way we have always done things or because it appears more convenient. Apart from the fact that we betray the pupils' trust, we also create frustration and the feeling of deficiency in students – who are urged to have role models that they cannot and do not have to emulate. But teachers, too, suffer in that they are pressured to compare themselves to NSs of English and made to understand on a daily basis that they are not good enough despite their years of education and training. EFL teachers find themselves in a situation in which they are constantly compared to supposedly superior communicators and language facilitators although the latter do not and cannot fulfill the professional criteria that regular English language teachers must.

As such, teachers are subject to a constant clash of realities, knowing that they, of course, are more competent to teach EFL (it would be tragic if this were not the case) while at the same time being told that they should look up to and learn from non-professionals on how to be a better language user and teacher⁶³. It seems quite natural that such a conflicting situation leaves a mark on teachers and leads to the aforementioned finding that teachers belittle their professional competence,

⁶³ It can be assumed that this is actually a widespread problem considering that around 80 percent of all English language teachers worldwide are considered to be non-native speakers of English according to Canagarajah (2008).

consider their role for society as unimportant and end up thinking and living that they only teach *school* English rather than *real* English⁶⁴. Such a development is sad and counterproductive as it neglects reality and does not offer a role model for students for using the language with confidence.

Such a lack in self-confidence can actually be observed in practice. For years now, I personally have been puzzled by university students who have proven to be competent ELF users but consider their English skills to be insufficient. Almost half (47.62 percent) of respondents stated in the online questionnaire that they believe their English skills to be “not good enough”. How could one expect the situation to be different though? These students have probably never experienced another, more positive attitude from their teachers. Such an environment does not help empower individuals to actively participate in a European and global society. We need a kind of

[g]lobal learning [that] seeks to enable people to actively participate in shaping a global society in a competent and responsible manner. It is based on learning and thinking that allows for local situations to be transferred and connected to global contexts. This enables people to bring together local acting and global needs (Seitz, 2002, p. 50).

In order to attain such, it is necessary that reality find its way into English language curricula and be based on the fact that English is a means for global communication and that ELF communication makes up the largest part of contact situations within the EU as well as outside of it (Ammon, 2007, p. 20; Berns et al., 2007). In addition, students need different role models, namely those corresponding to the requirements that the future most likely holds in store for them, and they need a school setting that shapes strong personalities who can make use of English in both a conscious and self-conscious way.

⁶⁴ To point out two publications that deal with the ‘impostor’ syndrome see Bernat, 2009 and Suarez, 2000.

7.6 Conclusion

From what we have discussed so far it can be summarized that the CEFR spells out the EU's vision of foreign language learning and that the focus clearly lies on the NSs as language authority. They are seen as the owners of the language and communication with those NSs is the assumed reason for learning a foreign language, including EFL. This is why cultural aspects are intrinsically intertwined with the language and are regarded as fundamental element of foreign language acquisition.

However, we also saw that the international dominance and importance of English is the real reason for learning and teaching EFL at school. As such, ELF is not connected to British and/or American culture(s) but serves as a contact language between users of different first languages and therefore stands in relation to the cultural background(s) that these language users bring into their conversations. Furthermore, the school subject EFL offers a shortcut to proficiency in the foreign language. This stands in clear opposition to learning a foreign language through natural exposure. In order to allow for successful foreign language learning processes in the classroom we need competent and well educated and trained English language teachers. It is their pedagogic as well as content-related expertise that allows for the creation of the most meaningful learning environment and appropriate delivery of content and authentic language input.

Due to the important social and individual role that school education plays, it is necessary to strengthen rather than weaken professionalism in teaching. Bringing people into a classroom setting who are non-professionals on all levels relevant to teaching and presenting them as a role model – for the students and the teachers alike – does not help the students or teachers involved and it counteracts basic concepts of pedagogy. Yet, this implementation of NS assistants is symptomatic of the current situation in ELT.

From what we discussed in this chapter, we can conclude that at present ELF is not but should be represented in EFL curricula all across Europe as this would allow for a more realistic and authentic learning environment for its students. Brumfit concludes that

[w]e have the strange paradox that in mother-tongue teaching we emphasize the clarity of the child's ability to express himself, while in the foreign language we demand that he express a culture of which he has scarcely any experience. Is it surprising that many students find it difficult to feel fully involved as they imitate what they are not?" (Brumfit, 1980)

As we saw in this chapter, the school subject is defined in terms of its objectives, which again are defined in terms of native speaker norms. This corresponds with EU language policy attitudes, as exemplified by the CEFR, as well as with the attitudes of teachers, students, FLAs and the general public. The reason for this widespread conception lies in the idea that is deeply ingrained that if there is a language, there must also be a community that has some sense of property rights over this language. We might now ask ourselves if there are any reasons to question these objectives and the current nature of the school subject English as a Foreign Language.

In chapter 5 we saw that this situation has now changed and we have to question the current models for language learning and teaching. Due to this altered landscape we cannot assume that the school subject is the same as it was 50 years ago. Thus, we have to reformulate the objectives of the school subject. As I have argued earlier, the objectives should, at heart, not be based on accumulating knowledge of a language or patterns of behavior but rather on developing a strategic competence of how to use a language generally and how to use in particular the resources of the language English. Thus, we have to shift towards a more strategic notion of how the subject is to be defined. The objectives need not be defined in terms of conformity to native speaker norms. These norms have lost their relevance since the objectives of English learning are no longer consistent with what we have discussed in chapter 5. If one learns a foreign language that is the property of a particular community, such objectives are appropriate.

However, since the status of English has changed dramatically, the foreignness of English is no longer the same. Therefore, we need to change the objectives. The last part of this thesis suggests one way in which this might be done.

PART III:
HEADING FOR NEW SHORES

8 Heading for New Shores

To reach the port, we must sail
sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it,
- but we must sail, and not drift, nor lie at anchor.
Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.

8.1 Introduction

At the first conference that I gave a paper at, I overheard another participant remark that with all these ideas of English as a Lingua Franca “a storm is coming in on us” and that professional language teachers need to take a firm stand to prevent the concepts of *proper* ELT from being turned into *baby talk*. Yet, despite abiding, massive resistance (or simply ignorance) on all fronts – from politicians, teaching professionals and the public – there is still the possibility for change.

In Part I of this dissertation I discussed the prevailing idea about what kind of English should be taught in schools, as seen from the language political and grassroots level. We could see that the institutionally promoted view of ELT corresponds with that of those actively involved in English language teaching – professional language teachers as well as their foreign language assistants – and that the same views are held by pupils and university students. The concluding question of Part I was to what extent these assumptions about the teaching and learning of English are still educationally valid.

Part II addressed this question by first recognizing the reality of English’s being today’s most important global lingua franca and noting that this reality constitutes the actual reason for learning and teaching EFL at schools all over Austria, Europe and the world. This fact should, we argued, also impact curricula and de facto teaching and learning of the school subject EFL. When closer examining the school setting and the specific school subject, however, we realized that this is not the case. Since school education serves to prepare students for their future roles in

society, we can conclude that ELF is not but should be represented in EFL curricula. In reviewing how people thought and taught in the past, we realized that EFL is still essentially fixated on the so-called native speaker assumption and the objectives of the 1970s. However, we have now reached a point where we need to change the objectives English teaching. With this call for renewal comes the need for a change in classroom practice. This updated understanding of the role of English calls into question the current subject design and with it the assumed value and validity of focusing on the native speaker as role model, language and teaching authority as well as cultural ambassador in the classrooms. From what we have seen it seems that native speakers are not necessarily the best option in supporting the students for their language learning processes.

This thesis was prompted by my skepticism about the role of the foreign language assistant. The assumption underlying the provision of such assistants is that they necessarily make a valuable pedagogic contribution simply by virtue of the fact that they are native speakers. But this presupposes that NS English is necessarily the appropriate objective and this, I have argued, is no longer the case. So if the assistance of FLAs is not relevant, what kind of assistant would be? What support is needed in the language classroom? The following chapter indicates what such a needed change in the classroom might involve and offers an alternative program that implements real and relevant role models and is based on a concept that highlights pedagogic considerations, professionalization in the teaching profession and ELF reality.

8.2 Visions of – and for – a New World of ELT

As we saw in chapter 5, the global situation and the role of English in the world have changed. However, in chapter 7 we pointed out that these new functions of English have not had an effect on how English as a Foreign Language is taught in schools today. Seidlhofer and Schendl (2011, pp. 71–72) are confident that the fact that English serves as an international lingua franca will in the medium term also have consequences for the school subject English as a Foreign Language. As

most learners of English will need the language for international communication rather than for interactions with native speakers, the educational objectives will have to differ from those of other, “real” foreign languages. English as a *lingua franca* will not be used as a vehicle to learn about Anglo-American cultural aspects or idiomatic expressions. Learning to sound as British or American as possible will be of less importance than learning to exchange ideas and opinions and develop relationships with other non-native speakers of English. Such goals will also have to be reflected in the education of future English language teachers (Seidlhofer & Schendl, 2011, pp. 71–72). How can such goals be realized? What would this change mean for the teaching of English at school?

Given that English’s role in the world has undergone a dramatic shift, it should follow that EFL cannot be taught in the same way today. Nevertheless, there remains a widespread lack of awareness of the need to transform the way that English is taught in schools (as made evident in Part I). This lack, together with problems of implementation, constitutes the principal hurdle to change.

Change is a difficult thing. This is certainly also true for English language teaching, and perhaps even more so than for other aspects of life thanks to the very long and, therefore, engrained historic and traditional concepts of language teaching – as discussed in chapter 7 – and the ever-present focus on native speaker competence as the main (and only) objective. Amid such deep-seated prevailing concepts, it is clear that the actual changing of attitudes and the way of looking at English language teaching has to compete with the concepts and attitudes described in Part I. Still, based on what was discussed in chapters 5 and 7, it is obvious that we have to reconsider the school subject EFL to appropriate it to the needs of today’s and tomorrow’s students and English language users. How, one might ask, can change come about? How can ELF inform EFL and lead to more realistic and relevant English language learning in school settings?

It seems that, first and foremost, the objective needs to be made more realistic and relevant for the majority of English language learners. This means moving away from native speaker competence as the ultimate learning and teaching objective and highlighting other aspects that seem more promising and worthwhile.

Students might, for example, be encouraged to focus on the communicative functions of the language and use these as effectively as possible. This would automatically lead to a learner-centered pedagogic approach. Such a shift could and should highlight the learner-specific environments that they find themselves in, their specific (and therefore also local) situations. This, for example, would lead to a focus on multilingualism as a resource for English language learning.

Further languages are, by definition, always learned bi- or multilingually, as all learning always happens in relation to what the learner already knows. We only learn a foreign language in reference to our own. Trying to suppress the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom can never work as our mother tongue will always be there. A fixation on the foreign language and its NSs in isolation does not suffice for a successful learning process. The language an English NS uses in class and what the language learners take from this and learn from it are two different things. The students cannot replicate what an English NS does simply because they already have a language of their own. The students will learn English by reference to their own language(s) and this is bound to influence the way in which they learn English. Thus, trying to avoid mother language interference can only be in vain. Yet, if students are encouraged to make use of their linguistic repertoire, this also means that they will be drawn away from the currently preferred model of the NS.

With a focus on multilingualism comes the importance of highlighting the value of various languages and mother tongues (that includes one's own as well as those of others). Furthermore, students could be encouraged to reflect about language and communication as such. Referring particularly to English, students could learn to see themselves as "highly skilled communicators who make use of their multilingual resources in ways not available to monolingual NSEs [NSEs meaning native speakers]" (Jenkins et al., 2011, p. 284) and who make use of "a crucial bilingual pragmatic resource" (Jenkins et al., 2011, p. 284).

Another way in which ELF could be made more appropriate for learners is to shift the focus away from NS culture towards intercultural competence. To this day,

[t]eachers [and even more explicitly FLAs] had to be the ambassadors of the 'English culture' in the classroom; that is, they had to teach the language and, side by side, introduce the social conventions, ideologies, and cultural expectations of the English-speaking community. Not much thought was given in such accounts to what the 'English-speaking community' was, or whether such a homogeneous community had ever existed (Llurda, 2004, p. 319) .

Such an emphasis on intercultural competence could allow students to become aware of their own cultural background(s) as well as those of other language users. In a European setting, such a change could be realized by highlighting European cultural aspects, literature or popular culture and especially by improving cross-cultural communication skills in students.

Together with the focus on one's own as well as other's languages, students could be encouraged to strengthen their own identities as both persons and English language users and highlight diversity. This, at the same time, would require a concentration on functional need, that is "how people make the language work for themselves" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 199), which again would call for a deepened language awareness among participants, a focus on fluency over accuracy (Widdowson, 2003, pp. 22–23), and for increased attention on interaction strategies such as clarification, rapport, reading for information and active listening (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 205). Schneider adds accommodation, negotiation and simplification strategies to this list of highly desirable competences (Schneider, 2012, p. 87). In broader terms, "[t]eachers and their learners [...] need to learn not (a variety of) English, but about Englishes, their similarities and differences, issues involved in intelligibility, the strong link between language and identity" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 173) and concentrate on the "communicative function" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 197) of English. Rather than learning a language, they need to learn to language, as Seidlhofer put it (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 197). This, she elaborates, "involves [...] the strategic exploitation of the linguistic resources of the virtual language that characterizes the use of ELF" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 198). Thus, the overall objective of the subject moves from specific competences towards "a general capability for use" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 200).

To summarize, what is essential is a shift from teaching goals towards learning goals, from outcome to process. The traditional focus has been on teaching following the school's mission of delivering instruction. Now, there is a clear case for shifting emphasis away from teaching objectives and the delivery of instruction and toward generating learning in students. Under this altered emphasis, focus is placed on students and their individual needs, and the view of input changes from asserting that knowledge exists and is delivered by the teachers towards understanding that knowledge exists in people's minds and is shaped and re-shaped through experiences. This greatly impacts the teaching and learning of content as it means that teachers provide quality instruction and choose those approaches that best help trigger relevant learning in their students.

At the same time, students must also take responsibility for their own, active learning. In such a setting the teacher designs appropriate learning methods and helps create productive learning environments. Although such a shift makes the student the center of attention, the teacher's professional expertise is actually highlighted, since the creation of meaningful conditions and environments that allow students to learn requires expert knowledge. This shift not only influences the roles within the classroom but also demands a reorientation of the school subject and general concepts of education. Such a change of orientation that challenged established thinking would obviously be difficult to bring about. One possible way forward takes us back to the very beginning of this thesis and to the question of what assistance FLAs might provide, which had prompted me to embark on this thesis in the first place.

8.3 Setting the Sails

In general, the idea of having a language assistant that joins the regular English teacher in class is a positive one as it allows for a more personal contact and increased interaction among the students and teachers, which in turn has positive

effects on language learning. This idea is also supported by the EU (European Commission, 2003, p. 8). However, the current FLA program is deficient, as we have seen. If we keep in mind what has been said about NSs we can see that the focus in the EFL classroom needs to be on teaching competence. This is why there is the need for a change.

In principle (though not reflected in practice), the Austrian Ministry of Education highlights the global role of foreign language education when it states that the European dimension as well as EU citizens' growing demand for mobility have to be taken into pedagogic consideration (Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, 2004a, p. 1). I propose that multilinguals who have experience as users of ELF and a professional interest in teaching this language should work as English language assistants. These could be pre-service teachers in their final stage of university education as well as in-service teachers who are new to the profession. I base this recommended program on two fundamental factors: first, the reality of internationalization and global cooperation, and second, the need for appropriate pedagogic competence in English language teachers. In what follows I would like to suggest how such a program could be realized and why it is a more desirable option than the current FLA program.

In this proposed program, assistants would be more likely to provide a realistic and relevant perspective for students and can also serve as real role models whom the students can actually emulate. Indeed, the assistants in this case would embody precisely that which EFL learners are in the process of becoming: successful, proficient ELF users and multilinguals. Since I have emphasized that professionalization is an essential aspect of successful teaching in the school setting, the assistants should be pre- or in-service teachers of English from different lingua-cultural backgrounds.

In this proposed program, international assistants participate in EFL lessons held at schools in order to become acquainted with day-to-day school life in an EU member state and to gain experience in lesson preparation, teaching and follow-up work under the supervision of host teachers at school. Such guided experiences

serve as a foundation for future professional activity. They also promote professional and intercultural exchange and awareness of European teaching realities at school.

The current situation of teacher education at university level focuses mainly on local aspects of English language teaching, which does not allow for European issues to be integrated in teacher education, nor for an inter-European transfer and exchange of ideas of principles and practices of English language teaching. However, these aspects need attention, as the European dimension is an integral part of our lives and an essential feature of education in general. The university education of prospective teachers also tends to focus mainly on theoretical input and only allows for little practical teaching experience. More importantly, there seems to be a lack of effort to develop a mutual understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.

Therefore, this proposed program sets out to highlight and strengthen participants' understanding in this respect. In doing so, it highlights the importance of university education for teachers-in-training as well as of lifelong learning. The intensive co-operation between European assistants and their EFL host teachers would allow all participants to not only understand and recognize European diversity but also seek shared ideas and commonalities that unify the pedagogic attitudes of these future teachers and their host teachers. In this sense, the program would allow EFL teachers that go far beyond the currently prevailing concept of training teachers for particular local situations. One innovative quality of this proposed program is that it offers the freedom necessary for developing a professional perception of participants and at the same time provides guidance for reflective processes essential to developing the notion of the reflected practitioner. One of the major objectives of this proposed program is to help participants understand themselves as part of a global community of practice without – at the same time – compromising their individual diversity found in their particular local settings.

This program would have a different rationale than the FLA program currently in place. While today's FLA program is designed as a one-way road, with the FLA passing on language and culture-related information to learners, this proposed program would provide conditions for the exchange of ideas about teaching and the rethinking thereof as well as the changing role of English in the world. It would also be mutually supportive: The suggested program is designed as a two-way road that allows both the host teacher and the assistant teacher to collaborate in devising methods and exploring and applying new ideas and concepts. Thus, it helps provide conditions for the reconceptualization of the school subject EFL.

This suggested alternative is based on the idea of English's being the most important vehicle for an international society that recognizes a shift toward pedagogic competence. Such a program could therefore serve several purposes.

First and foremost, it would provide the students with a second authentic role model for successfully acquiring EFL. These new role models, together with the regular English language teacher, prove that it is possible to attain a high level of English without having been born into the language. In doing so, they act as powerful and realistic role models for their students. Although it might seem that the goal of English language teaching is to acquire skills in that language only, actually the subject implies far more, namely the creation of plurilingual individuals. Therefore, a more adequate, realistic and appropriate language model is required: "Adopting a lingua franca approach to English language teaching naturally has implications for the type of teacher who might be most suitable. In any multilingual society, one might assume that the trained multilingual would be the ideal language teacher" (Kirkpatrick, 2012, pp. 132–133).

This then also allows one to shift the focus away from native-speaker centered concepts and towards the realities of the broad-based uses of English in the world. In addition, having a second contact person during lessons increases the language contact in the classroom, which again allows for more student-centered activities and personal interaction between students and teachers. Since the second contact

person, the assistant, is also a professional, both teachers can provide more pedagogically driven input than is the case currently with one professional mediator and an additional, non-professional informant-only.

Second, the proposed program strengthens the global role of English and helps endow students with an understanding of why they really learn English – for international communication, not to imitate NSs – and what they can actually do with this language – e.g., communicating with a wide variety of people coming from different (European) countries with whom contact would not otherwise be possible. In what seems like a knee-jerk reaction, in the empirical research all pupils unanimously stated that the reason that they learn EFL at school lies in the international role of English. However, as seen in the same questionnaire, underlying beliefs are not affected by this understanding and continue to rest on false assumptions. In a post-questionnaire discussion, one pupil remarked:

It is interesting that I preferred the second talk although none of them [the two speakers] was a native English speaker. So, maybe it is really better to have a teacher who learned this language and is not a native speaker. It is maybe helpful because if he has the same mother tongue like me he also experienced the foreign language in the same way like me and maybe knows better what I need. And after all, I have never spoken to a native speaker except for our FLA but I have already used English during my holidays. And those people also learned English – they are also like me. That really makes me think.

Such insights in students are an important step towards becoming aware of the powerful tool pupils acquire when investing time and effort into learning English. This awareness may serve as a motivation boost. It can also promote self-confidence in students since they are confronted with learning objectives – that is, international communication – that are realistic and relevant for their future and probably also their present. The proposed program allows teachers to be “responsible for presenting the multifaceted reality in which the new language is used and for helping the learner express their own identity through this newly acquired voice” (Llurda, 2004, p. 320).

Third, the suggested program supports the understanding of plurilingualism and promotes an active interest in (foreign) languages. It is for this same reason that the European Commission states that “all secondary schools should be encouraged to host staff from other language communities, such as language assistants or guest teachers” (European Commission, 2003, p. 8). Such an exchange program encourages plurilingualism in individuals through personal contact with users of various European languages that might trigger interest in acquiring competences in the mother tongue of the assistants since it becomes evident that languages bridge the gap between people (“Lehren und Lernen - auf dem Weg zur kognitiven Gesellschaft”, 1996, p. 72). Therein, the program also promotes the basic concept of education, which is “to enable individuals to continue their education” (Dewey, 1916, p. 17) in broader terms and underscores the personal benefit of learning in general, and foreign language competence in particular. It needs to be kept in mind that “we are pretending when we tell our students that a monolingual environment filled with monolingual speakers is authentic, according to any real-life norms” (Chavez, 2003, p. 194). Rather, the idea of foreign language education is to produce plurilinguals. Thus, the proposed program would also have a positive effect on personal plurilingualism as well as the desired multilingual European society as a whole. In addition, more attention can also be given to intercultural aspects, knowledge of which can be regarded as an essential quality of a global citizen. This intercultural aspect includes increased reflection about not only foreign languages and cultural perceptions but also the students’ own individual identities and languages. The sense of common European citizenship could thereby be stimulated in students.

Fourth, it is not only students who profit from this program. For teachers, the proposed program would be beneficial in several ways. Working together with young colleagues who are new to the profession offers the chance to stay in touch with current trends in teacher education and allows for an opportunity to reflect on one’s teaching approaches. Just as is the case with students, teachers and assistants can also profit from increased intercultural exchange through collaborated teaching, which can in turn be passed on to their students. The main advantage for regular English teachers lies in the fact that having a professional assistant means basically gaining a partner in crime, one who is competent when it

comes to lesson planning and actual teaching. This reduces the burden in class and allows for more productive teaching since the assistants are more likely to show higher levels of motivation to engage in teaching than is currently the case with most FLAs. In addition, the proposed program would facilitate a shift away from the focus on the NS and towards ELF. This

would have beneficial effects for the 'non-native teachers', i.e. the majority of teachers in Europe, especially in the public sector. Once an alternative description of English is available and accepted, one which is not tied to its native speakers, 'non-native' speaker teachers will no longer need to think of themselves as something they are not. Rather, they will have a positive means of asserting their professional roles as competent and authoritative speakers and instructors of EIL [English as an International Language], not with a borrowed identity but with an identity of their own as international users of an international language (Seidlhofer, 2003, p. 23),

which in turn might lead to more overall satisfaction and a healthier sense of one's self.

The main benefit for assistants is the gaining of valuable teaching practice under the guidance of an experienced English language teacher. Closely working with and learning from colleagues can be a personal and professional treasure. The language assistant can work shoulder-to-shoulder with an "old hand", a professional with years of teaching experience and – since the program works on a voluntary basis – it can be assumed that the host teacher has a desire to pass his or her expert knowledge on to a young novice colleague, who in turn is interested in learning and growing as a professional. Apart from acquiring valuable classroom experience, the language assistants can also gain insights into assessment, preparation and follow-up work, working with parents or handling problematic situations at school, just to name a few aspects related to a teacher's fields of work. The assistants could develop an understanding and awareness of the various conditions in which the school subject EFL is taught within the EU today. These contexts, as diverse as they seem at first glance, actually have a lot in common.

As such, the suggested program allows prospective English language teachers to grow into their profession, knowing that they are not left alone but can rely on an experienced partner, the host teacher. These novice teachers learn what it means

to become an expert in their field. This includes the essential understanding that expertise is neither fixed nor innate but learned. Participants in this program can undergo these valuable learning processes and at the same time cherish the exchange of expert knowledge and perhaps even challenge that knowledge.

Fifth, international exchange opens mental horizons for all parties involved. It might inspire language assistants to learn a local language, while probably also creating an interest among pupils and host teachers to get in touch with the language of the assistant. Such a process would promote the idea of a common European citizenship. As the European Commission points out “[l]anguage assistantships [...] can improve the skills of young language teachers whilst at the same time helping to revitalize language lessons and have an impact upon the whole school” (European Commission, 2003, p. 8). In other words, language assistants play an important part in the school setting while at the same time profiting from the very same experience.

Sixth, shadowing other teachers and co- and lead-teaching under supervision have all long been recognized as valuable tools for professional advancement. Nevertheless, there is usually too little room for such activities in regular teacher education programs and hardly any possibility once teacher education is completed. Furthermore, international experience will most certainly help the assistants in their future career as mediators of the global lingua franca.

The proposed program provides assistants, regular EFL teachers and pupils with the opportunity to experience a multitude of cultural backgrounds, thereby stimulating a lively exchange of experiences, ideas, ideals and cultural realizations of one European Union. This is beneficial for students as it helps them develop a secure identity that is rooted in their own cultural frame while simultaneously nurturing interest in as well as respect for other cultures and languages. This eventually helps promote “cultural disalienation” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 193) among the students.

Assistants and their host teachers would also be confronted with challenges concerning current practices and underlying principles of pedagogy. Exchanging international viewpoints on such matters would help to promote professional self-awareness and a concept of professionalism in both the regular and future EFL teacher. It could help establish unifying communalities across diverse local ideas and practices so as to expand the horizon of all participants and incorporate a European dimension in their ways of thinking and their pedagogic practices. The proposed program aims not to increase the volume of mobility for its own sake but rather to promote closer collaboration among EFL teachers. As both the regular EFL teachers and their international assistants are multipliers at schools (now and/or in the near future), experiences made and insights gained during the assistant's time at a particular school can be passed on to generations of students. Thereby, regular teachers and assistants can positively influence the mindsets of a great number of people. In this way, the proposed program might also lead to enhanced motivation for pupil and university student mobility and has the potential to stimulate further integration in European language teacher education on a much larger scale.

It is also in the nature of the proposed program that prospective EFL teachers will encounter ideas and practices that are different from their own, and new to them. The practical teaching and discussions with the host teachers provide an opportunity for the assistants to try out innovative teaching and learning procedures in class and evaluate their potential under the professional guidance of their host teachers who in turn may profit from new input. The important point to note is that such innovations are not, as has often been the case, transferred uncritically from other contexts under the influence of fashion, but will rather emerge from a collaborative exchange of ideas and be regulated and modified by practical experience. In this way, the relationship between principle and technique, theory and practice, so often seen as being in conflict, can be realized as complementary – a realization that is essential for professional EFL teachers.

8.4 Conclusion

Currently the political situation within the European Union leaves very little room for hope that a shift in the mindset of language political leaders might happen at any time soon. The same, it must be said, can be said about the protagonists at the grassroots level. Teachers, students, parents and the general public all seem to be comfortable with the current situation and do not show any sign of a desire for change. This proposed program might therefore remain an idea that seems valid in principle but awaits a wind of change in order to be implemented. However,

[t]he fact that English serves as an international lingua franca will in the medium term also have consequences for the school subject English as a Foreign Language. [...] As most learners of English will rather need the language for international communication than for interactions with native speakers the educational objectives will have to differ from those of other, “real” foreign languages. English as a lingua franca will not be used as a vehicle to learn about Anglo-American cultural aspects or idiomatic expressions. Learning to sound as British / American as possible will be of less importance than learning to exchange contents and develop relationships with other non-native speakers of English. Such goals will also have to be reflected in the education of future English language teachers (Seidlhofer & Schendl, 2011, pp. 71–72).

The proposal I have outlined could help turn this vision for a future of ELT into reality as it shifts the focus from competence of the language towards pedagogic competence. It is based on the realistic and relevant concept of English as a tool for international communication and helps create an understanding for European and global citizenship.

Although such a proposal has special meaning for Europe, the shift towards considering the importance of English as a Lingua Franca for teaching and learning is not just a European, but a global issue.

To summarize, Part II was about taking action. It involved redefining the notion of the FLA program and making it pedagogically relevant. In Part III, I have now proposed an alternative to the current assistantship program that foresees a much more rational and relevant way of approaching the idea of lending support to the

classroom teacher. The proposed program also emphasizes that this support has to be professionally informed and has to be concerned with the pedagogy and teaching rather than simply taking the role of an informant (who is often not an informant anyway). However, any innovation or any attempt to reform ways of thinking has a long history of encountering difficulties. In the following, and final, chapter I would like to address problems of implementation.

CONCLUSION

9 Conclusion

In this thesis I have described conditions that are unfavorable for the change that I am proposing. Actually, most (if not all) the policy and grassroots attitudes are not supportive of the proposal I presented in Part III. They are still inclined to follow a traditional way of thinking. At the beginning of my thesis, I noted that one has to start in the local context. No proposal for change can achieve success unless one recognizes what the existing context is. It is precisely this context that I sketched in detail in Part I. We began by examining the official thinking about English, as well as language policies and the view of learners and teachers on English language teaching. We discussed their attitudes and points of view. I then challenged these views by asking questions about the role of English in the world. Considering how the status of English has changed, I argued that we must adopt a new way of approaching English teaching. Nevertheless, neither officials nor teachers and learners have done so. They are, it seems, stuck in their traditional views. In any case, given that we need to redefine the school subject English, it follows logically that we must redefine the concept of language assistantship as well. Part II was concerned with these considerations. In Part III I presented a case for rethinking. It must not be forgotten, however, that local mindsets need to be considered as well. Others need to be stimulated to rethink and need to be brought on board as well. There is a clear disparity between what ought to be done and the unfavorable contexts and conditions of actual implementation.

9.1 Sailing Close to the Wind

The pessimist complains about the wind;
the optimist expects it to change;
the realist adjusts the sails.
William Arthur Ward

This whole thesis has been about taking a new look at how English is taught and what contribution the assistant can make to the process. I would like to acknowledge that such a change is never straight forward. As strong as I believe

the case for my proposal is, as with any innovation or attempt to reform people's mindset, there are difficulties and local problems of implementation. When one has an idea that seems valid in principle, this idea then has to be implemented in the context of reality itself and thereby one can either think of this context as constraint or that the proposal itself is bound to be related to the conditions of its implementation.

However valuable this proposed program is from a pedagogic standpoint, problems of implementation should not remain unaddressed since "this requirement for change may be perceived as too overwhelming, particularly when it affects the very core of the subject that English teachers teach, the language itself" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 15).

What has been said here about the entrenched positions regarding ELT is crucial since they set the conditions that will influence the room for change. What change, and to what extent, can be brought about against these traditional forces? Which obstacles might teachers face? Which constraints on the implementation exist? No matter how pedagogically sophisticated an idea is, to a certain extent it must also fit the conditions. These conditions, described in Part I, consist in the entrenched ideas that are in many ways based on historical developments. It is also understandable that teachers may feel threatened by new ideas of an ELF-informed school subject EFL. Their aversion might be informed by their partially conflicting roles: On the one hand, they are responsible for individuals' immediate learning needs; on the other hand, they must balance these needs with normative responsibilities, such as curricula requirements and testing (Dewey, 2012, p. 167). Furthermore, the adjustment

is bound to be constrained by factors beyond the control of practicing teachers - like the reference books and teaching material that they have to work with, the persuasive authority of teacher-trainers, especially those who are native speakers of English, and, above all, the exigencies of assessment. All of these conditioning circumstances are themselves unlikely in the near future to adjust to the changing role of English in the world and its pedagogic implications (Widdowson, 2012, p. 24).

So, although many questions related to the implementation of an ELF-driven curriculum remain open, other aspects might be easier to change. However, this alone will not be enough for their realization within the European Union since policy makers may not – and in fact do not – prioritize educational but other considerations. No matter how reasonable this proposal is, two issues remain: First, can it be generalized easily across the European Union? Second, can entrenched positions be changed to allow implementation?

As far as the former question is concerned, the proposed program is simple enough to be realized within the current operational framework of the European Union. The EU has experienced agencies at its disposal that have gained valuable experience and expertise in the field of exchange programs and *Erasmus+* aims at supporting measures to increase professional (further) education and international exchange for students as well as professionals⁶⁵. It should, therefore, not pose a challenge to include my proposed program in the already existing portfolio of *Erasmus+*. Moreover, the EU program *Comenius* promotes a program called “Comenius Assistantships⁶⁶”, which is targeted at prospective teachers and works similar to the FLA program. The major difference, though, is that *Comenius* assistants are meant to strengthen their language skills in the language(s) of the host country, not a third language such as English. It should be easy to modify this existing program to include EFL assistantships.

As far as the latter question is concerned, a solution might be much more difficult to find. Established ideas and conservatism are very deeply rooted. It is surprisingly difficult to get people to actually rethink their beliefs and attitudes towards a certain matter which, one has to admit, is also quite understandable: People want to feel secure and have made themselves a comfortable home in their established ideas. While it is difficult to make people aware that there is an alternative worth being considered, it seems to be even more problematic to persuade them to actually put that awareness into practice. Changing mindsets might therefore be the most difficult hurdle to implementing my proposed program. This difficulty is rooted in the fact that the current situation seems to

⁶⁵ See, for example, Austrian Agency for Lifelong Learning: <http://www.bildung.erasmusplus.at/>.

⁶⁶ See, for example, Austrian Agency for Lifelong Learning: <http://www.lebenslanges-lernen.at/index.php?id=672&L=0>.

provide authority and security since there exist supposedly clear guidelines that help teachers define for themselves what and how to teach their subject. It needs to be said though that this security is only an illusion, of course, yet an admittedly comfortable one. Indeed, we have seen that once we start to question one aspect of how EFL is currently taught, we start understanding that things might be more complex than they appear at first sight.

Nevertheless, it also needs to be kept in mind that today's English language teachers have been educated and socialized in the very same entrenched system. What they have been teaching on a daily basis for all their professional lives is now what they are supposed to help change because they are being told it is not valid. Asking for such change is, of course, problematic as it undermines the teachers' professional belief in their work. However, Widdowson points out that "there will be some room for manoeuvre. The first step is to raise the awareness of teachers that there is an alternative way of thinking about the subject they teach, based on an understanding of English as a lingua franca" (Widdowson, 2012, p. 24). My proposed program can be a first sound step in this direction.

9.2 Concluding Remarks

Faith does not, in fact, move mountains. Belief is no reliable basis for rational behaviour. Yet much of what is said about language and education seems to be based on unfounded faith, motivated by vision with little regard to circumstances or consequences in the real world. One might indeed suspect that the invocation of a vision often serves as a strategy for avoiding the inconvenience of coming to terms with actual reality (Widdowson & Seidlhofer, 2008, p. 207).

As I showed in my dissertation, some objectives of the school subject English as a Foreign Language are based on deeply rooted myths of flawless native speaker competence rather than on the reality of English's being the most important lingua franca in today's globalized world. In this dissertation I examined some of these

myths and compared them to the needs of ELT reality. I then proposed a program that could help focus on realistic and relevant elements of EFL necessary for communication in a globalized society.

In ELT we are confronted with a variety of unproven or false beliefs that have become part and parcel of how the school subject EFL is understood and taught. Many of these concepts have been around for such a long time that they are no longer questioned or considered problematic. They have been perpetuated by institutions such as the European Union as well as by people coming from a variety of different fields, such as language teaching, linguistics, but also by the general public. Questioning these deeply engrained assumptions leads to widespread irritation and resistance. However, globalization and the role that English plays therein lead to an urgent need to reconsider the nature of ELT, as I have shown in my dissertation. Dewey points out that

[a]lthough there are, and have previously been, other international languages, the case of English is different in fundamental ways: for the extent of its diffusion geographically; for the enormous cultural diversity of the speakers who use it; and for the infinitely varied domains in which it is found and purposes it serves (Dewey, 2007, p. 333).

One of these deeply engrained ideas served as starting point for my dissertation project. In the EFL classroom we are confronted with the concept of the privileged status of the native speaker as the ultimate authority and owner of the language (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 41). The current program that employs FLAs – non-professional native speakers of English – as role models for teachers and students in EFL classes is symptomatic of the type of thinking described above. This dissertation considered the need to implement an altered perspective associated with the emergence of English as a Lingua Franca in the school subject English as a Foreign Language, with particular reference to the FLA program.

In Part I we discussed one version of reality – that of “upstairs” EU language politics as well as findings from empirical research highlighting the views prevailing at the “downstairs” or grassroots level. In doing so, we concluded that

the attitudes towards the teaching of EFL are in agreement with the prescribed institutional views and are founded upon the idea of the authority of native speakers.

Part II challenged this established view on English language teaching by showing that the real reason for English's being the most widely taught foreign language is its international power. We then questioned how this reassessment necessarily affects the school subject, its objectives and role models. Thus, we looked into the specific characteristics of school subjects in general and English as a Foreign Language in particular. We concluded that the school subject is defined in terms of native speaker norms, which corresponds with EU language policy and attitudes found at grassroots levels as seen in Part I. However, we also saw that based on what was discussed in Part II, the official objectives were no longer accurate due to the changed situation of English as a Lingua Franca.

Subsequently, we asked whether there could be a better alternative to the current Foreign Language Assistantship program. Such a program was proposed in Part III. It foresees having experienced users of English as a Lingua Franca function as language assistants in class. These ELF users should be pre- or in-service teachers of English as a Foreign Language, a requirement that would emphasize pedagogic competence. In addition, my proposed program is based on the concept of English as a Lingua Franca and thus provides a more realistic and relevant concept of English as a tool for international communication. Furthermore, my proposal strengthens EU citizenship and promotes using English as a means of international communication.

9.3 Looking Ahead

In this thesis I have looked at the educational context. My proposal is consistent in general with this educational context but there are still local conditions of education that have to be taken into account if there is to be any change. These local conditions are a fundamental issue in raising awareness – teacher awareness

as well as general awareness. Raising awareness, of course, is not an easy endeavor but rather a challenging task for the future. Such a task cannot be foisted on to teachers if one does not want to doom it to failure; it seems first and foremost be a task for teacher education. In addition, teachers need to be brought on board and be convinced that being flexible in one's thinking is part of being a professional.

We can conclude that the problematic aspects are mainly rooted in deeply ingrained concepts of the native speaker as the ultimate language authority. This is also where further work needs to be done. What is most essential at this point is to help develop an awareness of the changed nature of English among all parties involved – from those at the “upstairs” language political level to those involved in the “downstairs” realization in the classrooms, from those studying linguistics to the general public. This can and should be done by providing even more research in English as a Lingua Franca and also – and mainly so – by communicating these results to both those actively involved in teaching and teacher education, and to the general public so as to start an awareness-raising process.

In the longer term, it would be desirable to have the opportunity to actually implement ELF-informed objectives into EFL curricula. A test-run and evaluation of the program proposed in the last chapter in real day-to-day school life could help serve as an appropriate starting point at a low threshold to start processes of re-conceptualizing the school subject EFL.

At the same time, it is essential to highlight the importance of pedagogic competence and professionalization in teachers. This importance may seem obvious, but my thesis has shown a different reality. It is high time to reconsider the importance of the teaching profession for individual students and society at large.

Teachers should realise that their actions, reflecting their attitudes and abilities, are a most important part of the environment for language learning/acquisition. They present role-models which students may follow in their future use of the language and their practice as future teachers (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 144).

It is precisely this important role that teachers hold that requires action. Students deserve an education that equips them to face and shape their part of the world. It is the responsibility of our school system to provide it. The proposed program offers a feasible way of helping to change the focus, concentrating on the important aspects of ELT that are founded on the reality of a global society. In so doing, we reconsider why we teach English, whom we teach English to and what we teach English for.

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Appendix A: Pupil Data Sheet

Percentage rates for pupils for “When I communicate with someone in English, it is important for me personally that ...” and “When someone else communicates with me in English, it is important for me personally that ...” (abbreviations used: I = important, QI = quite important, QU = quite unimportant, U = unimportant):

I				The other person
use correct vocabulary.	56.38 %	I	29.79 %	uses correct vocabulary.
	37.23 %	QI	20.21 %	
	5.32 %	QU	40.43 %	
	1.06 %	U	9.57 %	
speak as fluently as possible.	63.83 %	I	23.40 %	speaks as fluently as possible.
	28.72 %	QI	21.28 %	
	5.32 %	QU	29.79 %	
	2.13 %	U	25.53 %	
do not make mistakes.	47.87 %	I	6.38 %	does not make mistakes.
	26.60 %	QI	21.28 %	
	17.02 %	QU	42.55 %	
	8.51 %	U	29.79 %	
have a nice pronunciation.	56.38 %	I	21.28 %	has a nice pronunciation.
	36.60 %	QI	25.53 %	
	13.83 %	QU	21.28 %	
	3.19 %	U	31.91 %	
use correct grammar.	31.91 %	I	9.57 %	uses correct grammar.
	47.87 %	QI	29.79 %	
	19.15 %	QU	45.74 %	
	1.06 %	U	14.89 %	
Others understand what I say.	95.74 %	I	96.81 %	I understand what the other person wants to say.
	4.26 %	QI	2.13 %	
	0.00 %	QU	1.06 %	
	0.00 %	U	0.00 %	
What I say makes sense.	90.43 %	I	79.79 %	What the other person says makes sense.
	6.38 %	QI	18.09 %	
	3.19 %	QU	0.00 %	
	0.00 %	U	2.13 %	

Appendix B: University Student Data Sheet

Percentage rates for university students for “When I communicate with someone in English, it is important for me personally that ...” and “When someone else communicates with me in English, it is important for me personally that ...” (abbreviations used: I = important, QI = quite important, QU = quite unimportant, U = unimportant):

I				The other person
use correct vocabulary.	45.61 %	I	21.05 %	uses correct vocabulary.
	42.11 %	QI	50.88 %	
	10.53 %	QU	21.05 %	
	1.75 %	U	7.02 %	
speak as fluently as possible.	57.89 %	I	21.05 %	speaks as fluently as possible.
	31.58 %	QI	42.11 %	
	10.53 %	QU	28.07 %	
	0.00 %	U	8.77 %	
do not make mistakes.	19.30 %	I	7.02 %	does not make mistakes.
	35.09 %	QI	15.79 %	
	35.09 %	QU	49.12 %	
	10.53 %	U	28.07 %	
have a nice pronunciation.	38.60 %	I	19.30 %	has a nice pronunciation.
	47.37 %	QI	29.82 %	
	14.04 %	QU	42.11 %	
	0.00 %	U	8.77 %	
use correct grammar.	15.79 %	I	8.77 %	uses correct grammar.
	63.16 %	QI	17.54 %	
	21.05 %	QU	49.12 %	
	0.00 %	U	28.07 %	
Others understand what I say.	100.00 %	I	91.23 %	I understand what the other person wants to say.
	0.00 %	QI	8.77 %	
	0.00 %	QU	0.00 %	
	0.00 %	U	0.00 %	
What I say makes sense.	87.72 %	I	78.95 %	What the other person says makes sense.
	12.28 %	QI	19.30 %	
	0.00 %	QU	1.75 %	
	0.00 %	U	0.00 %	

Appendix C: Table of Figures and Graphs

TABLE 1: EUROPEAN WORLD LANGUAGES: NUMBER OF USERS IN EUROPE (HAARMANN, 2002, P. 33).....	29
TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF L1 SPEAKERS WITHIN THE EU (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2012A, PP. 10–11).....	37
TABLE 3: COMPARISON OF EU CITIZENS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMPETENCES 2005 AND 2012 (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2012A, P. 19).....	38
TABLE 4: NUMBER OF USED FOREIGN LANGUAGES PER EU CITIZEN (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2012A, P. 15).	38
TABLE 5: WAY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN PERCENTAGES (INRA EUROPEAN COORDINATION OFFICE S.A., 2001, P. 29).	40
TABLE 6: STATEMENTS ON LANGUAGE QUESTIONS (INRA EUROPEAN COORDINATION OFFICE S.A., 2001).	42
TABLE 7: EU OFFICIAL LANGUAGES TIMELINE (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2013A).....	56
TABLE 8: FREQUENCY OF FLA PARTICIPATION.	91
TABLE 9: DISTRIBUTION OF ANSWERS FOR THE QUESTION: "HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ENGLISH TEACHER?" (FOR PUPILS) AND "HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR LAST ENGLISH TEACHER AT SCHOOL?" (FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS).....	99
TABLE 10: HOW IMPORTANT IS IT (OR WOULD IT BE) TO HAVE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS YOUR CURRENT ENGLISH TEACHER?	100
TABLE 11: COMPARISON OF PUPILS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR EFL TEACHERS AND FLAS.	101
TABLE 12: COMPARISON OF PUPILS' ANSWERS RATED "IMPORTANT" FOR THEIR OWN VERSUS SOMEONE ELSE'S LANGUAGE PRODUCTION IN ENGLISH'	102
TABLE 13: COMPARISON OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ANSWERS RATED "IMPORTANT" FOR THEIR OWN VERSUS SOMEONE ELSE'S LANGUAGE PRODUCTION IN ENGLISH'	103
TABLE 14: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUPILS' OPINION ON TEACHING ONE'S MOTHER TONGUE AND THE EFFECTS OF A NS VERSUS REGULAR ENGLISH TEACHER FOR LEARNING ENGLISH.	105
TABLE 15: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUPILS' OPINION ON TEACHING ONE'S MOTHER TONGUE AND HAVING A NS AS TEACHER.	106
TABLE 16: COMPARISON OF THE PUPILS' AND STUDENTS' ANSWERS OF CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD ENGLISH TEACHER LABELED AS "IMPORTANT".	108
TABLE 17: COMPARISON OF PUPILS' AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' OPINION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING COMPETENCE.	109

TABLE 18: COMPARISON OF PUPILS' AND STUDENTS' TOP THREE ANSWERS OF THE ASPECTS THEY CONSIDER TO BE MOST IMPORTANT FOR THEM.	110
TABLE 19: DISTRIBUTION OF PUPILS' OPINION ON WHO THEY BELIEVE CAN HELP THEM MORE BECOME COMPETENT IN VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.....	111
TABLE 20: COMPARISON OF THE NUMBERS FOR ENGLISH AND FRENCH LEARNED AS FOREIGN LANGUAGES AT THE MOST COMMON SCHOOL TYPES IN AUSTRIA (STATISTIK AUSTRIA, 2013A, P. 1).....	183
TABLE 21: COMPARISON OF EUROPEAN PUPILS LEARNING ENGLISH, FRENCH AND GERMAN IN UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2012C).....	184
GRAPH 1: EU MEMBER STATES AS OF 2013 (EUROCONTROL, 2013).	36
GRAPH 2: QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN PROCESS.....	83
GRAPH 3: THE AUSTRIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM (AUSTRIAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE, 2013).....	150

Abstracts

English Abstract

In English as a Foreign Language classrooms all around the globe we find the situation today that the English native speaker is regarded as the ultimate authority of the language. For this reason, native speaking assistants are recruited into classrooms to serve as role models of real language use and as guarantors of authentic culture-related information.

Prompted by thoughts about what the actual pedagogic role of these native speaking assistants might be, the thesis explores both the language policy and grassroots level concepts of what English teaching should be about. These attitudes are then compared to the changed role of English as a global lingua franca in today's world. The comparison reveals a disparity between established ideas about how English as a school subject is to be defined and the changed demands for the language as it is used in the world today.

The thesis explores this fundamental disparity between people's attitudes and the apparent need for the kind of English that education should serve and tries to reconcile this disparity by arguing that experienced users of English as a lingua franca are more likely to support the teaching and learning of English in class. Accordingly, it proposes that the current assistant program be replaced by an exchange of pre- or in-service teachers of English from different lingua-cultural backgrounds in order to highlight the importance of appropriate pedagogical competence in English language teaching. It is suggested that the English as a lingua franca perspective of such an exchange program would be favorable to a more realistic and relevant approach for the teaching of the language and would enhance the

motivation of learners. Furthermore, it is argued, this program would promote in learners the idea of plurilingualism as a basic feature of common European – and ultimately global – citizenship.

German Abstract

Im Englischunterricht sind wir heute weltweit mit der Situation konfrontiert, dass der englische Muttersprachler als einzig wahre Autorität für Sprache und Kultur gesehen wird. Diese Einstellung stammt von der Annahme, jede Sprache gehöre ihren Muttersprachlern. Dies erklärt auch, warum amerikanische Native Speaker als Fremdsprachenassistenten in österreichischen Klassenzimmern arbeiten um hier sowohl für Schüler als auch reguläre Englischlehrer Vorbild für richtigen Sprachgebrauch zu sein und authentische Landes- und Kulturkunde zu vermitteln.

Ausgehend von Überlegungen, was diese Fremdsprachenassistenten im Unterricht tun sollen, untersucht diese Dissertation sowohl die sprachenpolitischen Konzepte als auch die Einstellungen bei Lehrern, Fremdsprachenassistenten und Schülern in Hinblick auf die Frage, was Englischunterricht vermitteln soll. Diese Einstellungen werden dann mit der heutigen Rolle von Englisch als weltweite Lingua Franca verglichen. Ausgehend von der Annahme, dass der Unterrichtsgegenstand Englisch auf der tatsächlichen Verwendung der Sprache basieren soll, zeigt sich hier ein Missverhältnis.

Die vorliegende Dissertation erforscht dieses fundamentale Missverhältnis zwischen den vorherrschenden Einstellungen und den offensichtlichen Erfordernissen für den Englischunterricht und versucht diese Disparität beizulegen. Es wird argumentiert, dass es für die Lehr- und Lerntätigkeit im Englischunterricht förderlicher wäre, würden erfahrene plurilinguale Sprecher mit Erfahrung in Englisch als Lingua Franca als Assistenten arbeiten. Daher wird vorgeschlagen, das derzeitig praktizierte

Assistenzprogramm durch eines zu ersetzen, bei dem angehende oder bereits aktive professionelle Englischlehrer von unterschiedlichen sprachlichen und kulturellen Hintergründen als Assistenten arbeiten sollten. Dies würde einerseits die Bedeutung von pädagogischer Kompetenz und Professionalität im Lehrerberuf steigern und andererseits könnte so ein realistischerer und für Schüler relevanterer Zugang zum Unterrichtsgegenstand Englisch als Fremdsprache gefunden werden. Dadurch ließe sich sowohl die Motivation der Schüler steigern als auch die Relevanz des zu Lernenden für die Zukunft herausstreichen. Außerdem würde das in dieser Dissertation vorgeschlagene Programm die Idee der Mehrsprachigkeit als Grundkompetenz aller EU- und Weltbürger betonen.

Résumé

Education

- Currently **Ph.D. Program English and American Studies**
University of Vienna
Ph.D. thesis (Linguistics): Lessons in English: English as Lingua Franca and School Subject
- 2015 **Further Education Program ‘University Didactics and Academic Instruction’**
University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
- 2013 **University Program ‘English for Specific Purposes, Best Practices for Course and Materials Development’**
University of Oregon
E-Teacher Scholarship by the U.S. Department of State
- 2005 – 2007 **M.A. Program English and American Studies**
University of Vienna
Diploma thesis (English Linguistics): English Across the Curriculum. A Qualitative Study on the Outcomes in an Austrian Secondary School
- 1999 – 2005 **M.A. Program Philosophy, Psychology and Pedagogy (Teaching Certificate)**
M.A. Program English and American Studies (Teaching Certificate)
University of Vienna
Diploma thesis (Vocational Education Studies): Problems of Implementing English for Specific Purposes at Part-Time Vocational Schools

Professional Experience

- Since 2015 Senior Lecturer for English for Specific Purposes
Focus on English for Viticulture
University Training Course ‘Enology Diploma’
University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
- Since 2015 Coach for University Didactics and Academic Instruction
University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
- Since 2014 Coach for Academic Instruction Using English for Specific Purposes
University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna

- Since 2005 Senior Lecturer for English Language Teaching and English for Specific Purposes
Focus on English for Academic Agricultural Purposes
University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
- Since 2005 Teacher for English as a Foreign Language and English for Specific Purposes
Focus on English for Horticulture and Landscape Design
College for Horticulture and Landscape Design, Vienna
- 2005 - 2013 Dorm Supervisor / Educator
College for Horticulture and Landscape Design, Vienna
- 2008 Senior Lecturer for English Language Teaching and English for Specific Purposes
Focus on English for Logistics, Negotiations and Presentation Techniques, Business English
University of Applied Sciences BFI, Vienna
- 04 / 2007 Exchange Teacher
Center for Technology, Essex, Vermont
- 2002 - 2007 Teacher for English as a Foreign Language, English for Specific Purposes, Accountings and Business Administration, Political Education and German
Focus on English for Electrical Engineering
Part-Time Vocational School for Electrical Engineering I, Vienna
- 2002 - 2003 Teacher for English as a Foreign Language and English for Specific Purposes
Focus on English for Sanitary and Heating Engineering
Part-Time Vocational School for Sanitary and Heating Engineering, Vienna

Awards

- 2014 **BOKU Teaching Award 1st Prize**
University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
- 2014, 2007 **Austrian Representation at NASA's International Space Camp**
Huntsville
- 2013 **University Program Completion with Distinction (100 percent)**
University of Oregon
- 2007 **M.A. Program Graduation with Distinction**
University of Vienna
- 1999 **Vocational High School Graduation with Distinction**
Among top 50 graduates in Lower Austria

International Teaching Experience

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 12 / 2010 | Erasmus Teaching Agreement
Student Workshop Development and Implementation
AgroParisTech, Paris |
| 08 / 2010 | Erasmus Teaching Agreement
Student Workshop Development and Implementation
LIFE University, Copenhagen |
| 06 / 2010 | Erasmus Teaching Agreement
Student Workshop Development and Implementation
Humboldt University, Berlin |
| 04 / 2007 | Teacher Exchange Program
Lesson Development and Implementation
Center for Technology, Essex, Vermont |

Certificates

- **Certificate for Teaching English for Specific Purposes**
University of Vienna
- **Cambridge Certificates in English for International Business and Trade**
University of Cambridge

Publications

- Weber, Elisabeth. 2015. The Importance of Demystifying English Language Teaching In *Globalisation – Myth or Reality*. Universitätsverlag Winter Heidelberg. In print.
- Weber, Elisabeth. 2015. English as a Lingua Franca and Appropriate Teacher Competence In Y. Bayyurt & S. Akcan (Eds.), *Current Perspectives on Pedagogy for English as a Lingua Franca* (171-190). Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Weber, Elisabeth. 2014. Interactions in and with English as a Lingua Franca: The Case of the School Subject English as a Foreign Language In B. Sonnenhauser (Ed.), *Diskussionsforum Linguistik in Bayern/Bavarian Working Papers in Linguistics 3: Interaktionen*: 107-127.
- Weber, Elisabeth. 2013. English as a Lingua Franca and Appropriate Teacher Competence In I. Headlandová & M. Nemec (Eds.), *English as the Lingua Franca of the Modern World: New Challenges for Academia* (133-142). Brno: Masaryk University.

Conference Presentations

- 2013 5th AILA Europe Junior Researcher Conference, Dublin
- 2013 58th Annual Conference of the International Linguistic Association, New York
- 2013 3. Diskussionsforum Linguistik in Bayern, Bamberg
- 2012 Emerging Researcher Conference der ÖFEB, Linz
- 2012 5th Annual Language and Linguistics Student Conference, Oklahoma City
- 2012 5th Brno Conference on Linguistics Studies in English 2012. English as the Lingua Franca of the Modern World: New Challenges for Academia, Brno
- 2012 5th International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca, Istanbul
- 2012 Sprachendidaktik: Der wissenschaftliche Nachwuchs im Dialog (4). 7. Tagung der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Sprachendidaktik, Linz
- 2012 International Conference: Language Policy and Language Teaching: Multilingualism in Society, the World of Work, and Politics. New Challenges for Teaching at Institutes of Higher Education / Universities, Freiburg
- 2011 4th International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca, Hong Kong
- 2011 Sprachendidaktik: Der wissenschaftliche Nachwuchs im Dialog (3). 6. Tagung der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Sprachendidaktik, Vienna
- 2010 1st Freiburg Language Policy and Language Teaching Conference, Freiburg