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„Thinking Critically – The Potential of Dystopian Young Adult Novels in the EFL Classroom"

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1. Introduction

This diploma thesis aims at investigating how critical thinking can be encouraged in the Austrian upper secondary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom as well as at exploring how the implementation of dystopian young adult novels can be beneficial in fostering students' critical thinking skills. As the main focus of this thesis is on promoting critical thinking skills in EFL teaching in the Austrian upper secondary AHS (Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule), reference is made to the mention of critical thinking skills in the Austrian AHS curriculum in order to legitimate its incorporation in EFL teaching. Relating to two dystopian young adult novels, namely M. T. Anderson's *Feed* and Cory Doctorow's *Little Brother*, I discuss in how far dystopian young adult novels can be implemented in EFL teaching in order to foster critical thinking skills. The assumptions which motivated composing this diploma thesis are that critical thinking is an important competence to promote at school, that dystopian young adult novels are highly beneficial when stimulating critical thinking in language teaching, and that there are several useful ways of implementing dystopian young adult novels for facilitating critical thinking in EFL classrooms. Based on these assumptions, I compiled the following research questions which I intend to answer in my thesis:

- Why is it important to foster critical thinking?
- In how far can dystopian young adult novels encourage critical thinking?
- How can dystopian young adult novels be implemented in the Austrian EFL classroom in order to promote critical thinking skills?

I chose to write about critical competence in my diploma thesis because I consider being able to critically engage with one's surroundings a central ability to convey to my students. Especially in times of information technology and the Internet providing us with information within seconds, critical reading is a highly important skill. Because everyone can easily google all kinds of information, the importance of studying facts decreases. Critical competence, however, is central, as users of the Internet always have to question what they encounter online and decide which sources to trust. Critical competence is crucial regarding not only online information but also advertisements and other

information in general. Considering the fact that the Internet constantly provides us with information, I started contemplating about what can nowadays be seen as general education. Which facts do we have to know by heart? Where is the border between what we need to know and what we look up on the Internet? I concluded that the accumulation of facts is not as important as the ability to approach a text critically. Thereby, the reader can ponder whether a certain source is trustworthy. It is, for instance, crucial to know how Wikipedia and the Internet work. Students need to realise that everyone has the opportunity to write posts online and must keep that in mind when deciding on whether to believe what they read. Therefore, I argue that the central aim of promoting critical thinking is to educate critical personalities who think autonomously and are able to resist being positioned by the text. I provide a short overview of my work below.

The first section consists of a literature review defining the concepts of ‘reading’, ‘critical reading’, and ‘critical thinking’ and discussing how particular ways of reading can lead to critical thinking. It is explained what kinds of knowledge and skills need to be taught in order to empower students to be critical and autonomous readers and thinkers in a foreign language.

In order to legitimate the fostering of critical thinking, the second section of the thesis aims to locate critical thinking in the Austrian AHS curriculum. Hereby, both the general part of the curriculum and the one for foreign languages are considered.

The third section of this diploma thesis provides a brief history and definition of dystopian novels in general and of dystopian novels for young adults in particular. Moreover, potentials and benefits as well as possible drawbacks and limitations of using dystopian young adult novels in the EFL classroom are presented.

The final section combines the concepts of critical thinking and dystopian young adult novels by presenting various possibilities of incorporating the novels for promoting critical thinking in the EFL classroom. I aim at exploring how two concrete dystopian young adult novels, namely M.T. Anderson’s *Feed* (2002) and Cory Doctorow’s *Little Brother* (2008), can contribute to the development of

students' own autonomous thinking. Therefore, this section evaluates the novels' potential for encouraging critical thinking and proposes several ideas how to incorporate these two novels in the EFL classroom.

2. Reading – Critical Reading – Critical Thinking

As the thesis at hand is engaged intensely in the fields of critical thinking and reading dystopian young adult literature, it is indispensable to initially create a connection between reading and critical thinking. In order to establish this connection the concept of critical reading operates as a metaphorical bridge to join reading and critical thinking. The following section intends to clarify how the concepts of reading, critical reading, and critical thinking are understood and adopted in this thesis. I attempt to firstly define the concepts and secondly explain their significance in an EFL context. Moreover, this section should introduce the underlying assumption of this thesis that there is a possibility of developing critical thinking skills by reading and working with dystopian young adult literature. Wolf et al. (1968) support the assumption that reading and critical thinking are very closely interrelated concepts which are not easily distinguishable. They emphasise the close connection between reading, critical reading, and critical thinking and explain this relationship as follows: "Similar to the idea that critical reading cannot be separated from the total reading process is the concept that it cannot be separated from critical thinking. Critical reading is the use of critical thinking in the evaluation of ideas presented in written form" (440). By defining the concepts and clarifying their relevance to foreign language teaching, I intend to justify that it is beneficial to combine teaching reading with stimulating critical thinking or vice versa.

2.1. Reading

In order to define 'reading' per se it is important to mention that it involves much more than reading a novel, a newspaper article, or an e-mail. People are almost constantly confronted with situations that include or even demand a certain way of reading. The following definitions of reading are predicated on publications by Wallace (1992a, 1992b, 1995, 2003), Hood, Solomon, and Burns (1996), Rivers and Temperley (1978), and Hedge (2000). These scholars engage in the field of foreign language teaching. Wallace (1992b: 5) mentions that, as reading takes

place all the time and is taken for granted, readers frequently do not even notice how often they read. She explains that reading can refer to different behaviours and mentions exemplary situations of people reading although they are actually engaging in completely different activities. Her first example features a man who is asked by an optician to read some words from a certain distance. In this situation reading refers to the man's physical ability to "identify" (4) the words. In the second example a child is instructed to read the word 'here' from a card the teacher holds in front of him or her. The child should "decode" (4) the text, meaning that he or she should read it aloud without ascribing any meaning to the word. Finally, a person who has recently bought a new computer asks a friend to read the instructions in the user manual. This situation represents what is commonly understood as reading, namely the ability to interpret what one reads and, thereby, being able to pursue some kind of action (Wallace 1992b: 3-4). Considering Wallace's explanatory examples, it is obvious that activities like reading traffic signs, timetables, or recipes, checking one's e-mail account, and recognising an advertisement while sitting on the bus are all different kinds of engaging in reading. Hood, Solomon, and Burns (1996) provide a comprehensive definition of reading including all of the abovementioned situations by describing it as being "involved in a process of understanding a message through written text" (3). This thesis does not focus on reading as identifying or decoding words. Rather, the term 'reading' is referred to as the process of gaining information from a text. This is, however, a very basic definition of reading which may be accurate for texts like user manuals. Referring to literature, it is definitely not appropriate. When dealing with literature it needs to be taken into consideration that reading is a social process, as aspects of writer, text, and reader fundamentally shape and influence the process of reading. A reader does not only receive information from a text but, more importantly, constructs meaning from it. I further elaborate on reading as a social process on page 7.

Two major aspects of reading, which need to be mentioned when defining reading, are that reading is characterised as having a certain purpose, and that reading always takes place in a particular context (Wallace 1992b; Hood,

Solomon, and Burns 1996). The following paragraphs summarise how different authors define reading purposes and reading contexts.

While there is general agreement on the fact that reading always serves a purpose, scholars present various ways of how to classify the different purposes of reading. Rivers and Temperley (1978), for instance, list seven common reading purposes. They suggest that reading can serve the purposes of:

- finding out information that interests us
- understanding instructions in order to do something
- being able to play a game or do some other pleasant activity
- staying in contact with other people
- finding out when or where something takes place
- finding out what is happening or has happened in the world
- reading for enjoyment (187-188)

This list of purposes is a rather detailed one, as Rivers and Temperley (1978) differentiate between several ways of obtaining information. Wallace (1992b) offers a more straightforward categorisation including only three broadly defined reading purposes. Firstly, she mentions ‘reading for survival’ which comprises reading in situations which demand reading in order to be able to partake in a society. In situations like reading traffic signs, symbols showing the way to the exit or to the bathrooms, or the nutrition information on a food package reading is an essential tool to survive. Secondly, Wallace lists the purpose of ‘reading for learning’ referring to all instances where reading helps the reader to widen his or her world knowledge. She emphasises that reading with the purpose of learning is not necessarily school-related but can refer to other situations of obtaining information like reading a newspaper article. The third reading purpose is ‘reading for pleasure’. This category includes everything that can be read for enjoyment like novels, comic strips, poems, plays, or magazines (Wallace 1992b: 6-7).

Another way of classifying reading purposes is presented by Hood, Solomon, and Burns (1996) who focus on reading purposes that are typical for students. They write that students read “for pleasure; as part of schooling or further education; to pass an exam; as part of a job search; in the workplace [or] to participate in community activities” (43). Opposed to Wallace (1992b) and Rivers and Temperley (1978), they mainly refer to reading situations in which

people are aware of the fact that they are reading and do not mention what Wallace would call ‘reading for survival’. Like the work of Hood, Solomon, and Burns, this thesis does not bestow particular attention to situations in which reading is needed for survival. As the thesis’ global aim is to make a connection between reading and critical thinking, reading is always considered as having the purpose of enabling the readers to critically engage with impressions they are confronted with in everyday life. This approach is further established when dealing with critical reading and critical thinking in section 2.2.

The second characteristic of reading, which has already been mentioned above, is that it always takes place in a specific context. Reading situations often only make sense in certain contexts like, for instance, the abovementioned example of the optician asking the patient to identify a word from a particular distance would not make any sense without the context of an optician trying to find out the visual abilities of the patient (Wallace 1992b: 4). Reading evidently depends on its context, as it is, for instance, impossible to equate reading a romantic novel while lying on the beach, reading an article within the framework of a reading activity at school, or checking the timetable of a train at the station. So far, only the physical setting of reading has been considered. Wallace (1992b: 4), however, highlights that when talking about ‘context’ she does not only refer to the physical setting a text is situated in but also to other circumstances like who is talking to whom. When describing the reading context, characteristics of the text, the writer, and the reader need to be considered equally. Montgomery et al. (2013) write that how a text is read depends to a large degree on the reader and his or her background. They mention the influence of the place and the time the reader is situated in as well as the reader’s social knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, gender, ethnicity, age, and social class (11). These characteristics of the reader can lead to completely different ways of approaching the same text. Referring to the reader’s background knowledge about language, culture, and society, Hood, Solomon, and Burns (1996) as well as Hedge (2000) argue that these kinds of information help the reader to understand a text. Hedge elaborates further on this and gives a comprehensive categorisation of the readers’ prior knowledge. Firstly, she mentions ‘systemic knowledge’ which includes linguistic skills like ‘syntactic knowledge’ and

‘morphological knowledge’. This method of focussing on the text’s components like words and letters in order to uncover meaning can be called ‘bottom-up processing’. The second category Hedge refers to is ‘schematic knowledge’ including ‘general world knowledge’, ‘sociocultural knowledge’, ‘topic knowledge’, and ‘genre knowledge’. This process of applying one’s prior knowledge when reading is known as ‘top-down processing’. All these aspects of a reader’s prior knowledge interact with each other when a reader engages with a text (189).

The importance of considering the context of reading is supported by the widespread consent on the assumption that reading can be defined as an ‘interactive, social process’ between the reader and the text or the reader and the writer (Widdowson 1980, 1984; Kress 1989; Hood, Solomon, and Burns 1996; Hedge 2000; Wallace 1992a, 2003). Widdowson (1984) as well as Wallace (1992a) consider reading as a social interaction between the reader and the text, rather than between the reader and the writer. Thereby, more power is granted to individual readers who actively construct different meanings from the same text and do not passively absorb what has been written by the author. The readers bring their beliefs and background knowledge to the text, which influences the reading process. Defining reading as an interactive, social process between the reader and the text is highly appropriate in this thesis, as interaction between reader and text is a precondition for critically engaging with a text. Kress (1989), therefore, argues that the individual reader “must be understood primarily as a social agent, located in a network of social relations” (5). Wallace (2003) agrees with Kress and argues that one “needs to consider not just the processes by individuals of text analysis, but should aim to capture the intersubjective interpretative processes within communities” (78). Wallace (1992a: 67) rightly argues that reading is a social process as people do not only read as individuals but also as members of social groups. In a later publication, Wallace (1995) gives three reasoned explanations of why reading should be considered a social process: Firstly, texts are produced in society, and being aware of social situations makes it easier to interpret them. Secondly, particular social groups are addressed by different texts. Finally, Wallace mentions that

texts are interpreted differently depending on the readers' prior social experiences (196).

2.2. Critical Reading – Critical Thinking

The following subsection intends to define the concepts of critical reading and critical thinking and aims at clarifying how they relate to each other. As has been mentioned above, the close relation of critical reading to both reading and critical thinking justifies my intention to use critical reading as a metaphorical bridge to connect reading and critical thinking. The subsequent paragraphs comprise a list of definitions of critical reading and critical thinking which originate from the domains of tertiary education, secondary education, and foreign language pedagogy. By reviewing different definitions of critical reading and critical thinking and positioning them in an EFL context (in section 2.3), I attempt to illustrate the suitability of teaching reading in order to mediate critical thinking skills.

Goatly (2000), who wrote a book on critical reading and writing which is targeted at university students, provides a valuable definition of what it means to critically engage with what one does, sees, hears, or reads. He proposes three definitions of what it means to be able to approach one's surroundings with a critical eye. The first one is a rather narrow definition, the second one is wider, and the third one manages to embrace a great part of what can be associated with critical engagement. In a narrow view, Goatly defines critical competence as the "ability to see logical flaws in arguments or to weigh up the evidence for explicit claims" (1). From a slightly wider point of view, he defines it as "resisting the assumptions on which 'rational arguments' are based, by explaining and questioning how common-sense 'logic' establishes its categories in the first place" (1). Finally, taking another step back, Goatly presents the following comprehensive definition of criticality as "explaining how the world and our relationships within it and to it are constructed through reading and writing" (1).

Cottrell (2011), whose book also belongs to the field of tertiary education, provides definitions of both critical reading and critical thinking. She describes her notion of critical reading as a very detailed and precise way of approaching

a text. She explains that when engaging in critical reading one concentrates on analysing a particular part of a text in detail, which results in slower reading (147). Moreover, she mentions the issue of finding the appropriate amount of accuracy in critical reading, meaning that the reader needs to figure out the right balance between "the big picture and the fine detail, a consideration of the exact words and unstated implications and assumptions" (152). Cottrell (2011) refers to critical thinking as a mental process, defining it as "a cognitive activity, associated with using the mind. Learning to think in critical analytical and evaluative ways means using mental processes such as attention, categorisation, selection, and judgement" (1). As Cottrell's (2011) book is mainly concerned with critical thinking skills she defines critical thinking as a process involving several skills. The most important ones are listed below:

- identifying other people's positions, arguments and conclusions
- weighing up opposing arguments and evidence fairly
- being able to read between the lines, seeing behind surfaces, and identifying false or unfair assumptions
- recognising techniques used to make certain positions more appealing than others, such as false logic and persuasive devices
- critically evaluating our own beliefs and actions (2-3)

Hughes and Lavery (2008), who also come from a tertiary education background, agree with Goatly and Cottrell that the focus of critical thinking skills is to find out if arguments are valid, meaning that they have "true premises and logical strengths" (22). In order to do so, one needs to have "interpretative skills, verification skills, and reasoning skills" (23), which they consider the most important critical thinking skills. Hughes and Lavery, moreover, mention four reasons why it is highly important to possess critical thinking skills. Firstly, critical thinking skills are crucial in order to be able to deal with the mass of information people are nowadays confronted with. Secondly, critical thinking is essential when analysing utterances of politicians or advertisers who go to great lengths to persuade citizens and customers to believe what they want them to believe. Thirdly, Hughes and Lavery highlight that by being able to think critically we are not "in danger of becoming slaves to the ideas and values of others due to our own ignorance" (23). Fourthly, a critical thinker is enabled to influence other people's opinions (23). The importance of critical thinking skills

is further elaborated in section 2.2.1 where I discuss aims of critical engagement.

Willingham (2008), Hooks (2010), and Patching et al. (1983) consider critical thinking in secondary education. Willingham (2008) has a very different understanding of critical thinking from Cottrell and Hughes and Lavery. He argues that there is no set of critical thinking skills but certain "metacognitive strategies that, once learned, make critical thinking more likely". Moreover, he explains that critical thinking always depends on the context or domain it is applied in (26). Hooks (2010) presents a definition that is more readily accessible and can easily be related to practice. She explains that "critical thinking involves first discovering the who, what, when, where, and how of things […] and then utilizing that knowledge in a manner that enables you to determine what matters most" (9). Moreover, Hooks defines critical thinking as "a way of approaching ideas that aims to understand core, underlying truths, not simply that superficial truth that may be most obviously visible" (9). Patching et al. (1983), who highlight the close relationship between critical reading and critical thinking (407), define critical reading ability as being able "to analyse and evaluate certain types of arguments presented in text" (407) and to "correctly identify valid (versus invalid) instances of argument, reasoning, or presentation of evidence in written materials" (408). In a study analysing different teaching approaches to critical reading instruction they compare the students' "ability to detect instances of (a) faulty generalization, (b) false causality, and (c) invalid testimonial" (406). What is striking about the three skills Patching et al. consider most important when defining critical ability, is that, unlike their definition of critical reading ability, they are formulated in an extremely negative way. I do not agree that the main purpose of critical reading is to discover mistakes in a text. Rather, it is crucial to know how to analyse a text by identifying both its valid and invalid instances.

Hedge (2000) and Wallace (1992a, 2003) approach critical reading and thinking from the perspective of foreign language pedagogy. Hedge considers critical reading as an important competence to encourage in language education in order to teach students how a text is able to position and to influence its readers. She further proposes that reading critically means to understand the

underlying ideology of a text by paying close attention to how the author makes use of language (197). This is often referred to as ‘reading between the lines’ (Wallace 1992a: 59; Morgan 1997: 39; Cottrell 2011: 2). Wallace (2003) relates to critical reading by defining critical reading skills in a very broad sense as an “overall stance or position” (22) which helps the reader to deal with texts in a critical way. She sees critical reading as an overall ability that takes into account a person’s social and cultural background (21-22). Her notion of critical reading does not only refer to responding to a text but also “involves a critical awareness in a broader sense, of what reading itself is, which, in turn, involves a consideration of cross-cultural aspects regarding who reads what and why in what situations” (Wallace 1992a: 61). She proposes in a later publication (2003) that

> being critically literate involves not just awareness of the micro-interactions between readers, writers and texts in immediate, specific social settings, but more macro-understandings of what it means to be a reader in the contemporary world, in particular knowledge of cross-cultural similarities and differences in literacy practices. (35)

Wallace’s notion of critical reading indicates a close relationship between critical reading and critical thinking. Referring to a broader sense of critical ability implies that this is not restricted to a reading context but an ability that is used whenever one engages critically with one’s environment. Critical ability is useful not only in a textual context but also when watching a movie, listening to a lecture, or witnessing an incident. It enables critical persons to question what they see, read, hear, or do. Moreover, the understanding of underlying truths, ideas, or assumptions, which has been mentioned in the above definitions, is a central issue of both critical reading and critical thinking, which again establishes a link between those two concepts. I suggest that there is an obvious relationship between critical reading and critical thinking as critical reading enables people to think critically. In addition, it needs to be considered in equal measure that critical thinking also facilitates critical reading. I elaborate on this relationship in detail on page 14.

In several publications originating from tertiary education, secondary education, and foreign language pedagogy, scholars differentiate between weak-sense critical thinking and strong-sense critical thinking (Browne and Keeley 1994;

Wallace 2003; Scheibe and Rogow 2012). Wallace (2003) explains that the weak-sense critical thinker has “the ability to critique the logic of text [and] to note inconsistencies and lack of clarity” (27). However, Browne and Keeley (1994) mention that weak-sense critical thinkers resist all opinions and utterances which are against their own beliefs (8). They always aim at defending their own existing beliefs (Scheibe and Rogow 2012: 23) and tend to presume everything to be true, as long as a respected person, like their favourite professor, claims it (22). Cottrell (2011) explains possible reasons for this behaviour like, for instance, a reader’s overestimation of his or her abilities in critical thinking. Another barrier for critical thinking can be constituted by people’s uneasiness when criticising people who are more experienced in a certain field. Moreover, people often tend to engage in weak-sense critical thinking because of affective reasons like not being able to challenge their own beliefs and assumptions (10-11). In contrast, strong-sense critical thinkers question their own attitudes critically. This does not mean that their initial positions have to be given up. They can even be strengthened because strong-sense critical thinking helps us to understand an issue from all different perspectives (Browne and Keeley 1994: 8). Scheibe and Rogow (2012) write that strong-sense critical thinking “includes being aware of our own biases and perspectives, examining them rather than being blinded by them, and altering them in light of new evidence or compelling arguments” (23). Wallace (2003) mentions another characteristic of strong-sense critical thinkers who are able to “critique not just micro features of specific texts but attend to wider implications which relate to the circulation of dominant discourses within texts and so ultimately to the power bases of society” (27). Strong-sense critical thinkers are able to question utterances they initially agreed with and can change their attitude towards them when they find some aspects of it they do not support (Scheibe and Rogow 2012: 22). Wallace (2003) writes that this ‘metacritical awareness’, which she defines as the ability to “become aware not just of features of texts and literacy and language behaviour but of our own responses to these” (48), is a key feature of critical literacy. It is important to be open-minded enough to be able to change one’s beliefs according to what new information one receives when critically engaging with the world. In order to develop a better understanding of what it means to be a strong-sense critical

thinker, the following five character traits that facilitate critical thinking listed by Scheibe and Rogow (2012) can be considered. They mention these aspects because of their importance in teaching secondary students in media literacy, but they can also serve to deepen one's understanding of critical thinking as such:

- Curiosity and the desire to question
- Ongoing engagement in the process of inquiry (throughout the life)
- Inherent scepticism
- Valuing good reasoning (find out what is a logic argument and what is just an opinion)
- Flexibility and open-mindedness (25)

Cottrell (2011) proposes that critical thinking can be useful in any context but also notes that it is mostly applied when engaging with written text (147). This has already been explained by Wolf et al. (1968), according to whom it is especially tempting to assume that what is written down is always true. They argue that in order to become a critical thinker one needs to specifically practice questioning what one reads (441). Agreeing with Wolf et al., I argue that this is another justification for making a connection between reading and critical thinking.

Summarising the abovementioned conceptions of critical thinking skills, I compiled a list of five skills that I consider to be most important in order to be able to critically engage with one's surroundings. In order to be a motivated critical thinker one needs to be able to (1) find out other people's attitudes and intentions, (2) ponder opposing arguments, (3) infer unexpressed meaning from texts or utterances, (4) recognise persuasive techniques, and (5) question one's own actions and attitudes.

Many scholars like Walllace (1992b), Hood, Solomon, and Burns (1996), and Hedge (2000), who come from the context of foreign language pedagogy, as well as Montgomery et al. (2013), whose text originates from a tertiary education background, refer to critical reading as one of the different possible ways of reading. The following paragraphs examine whether this classification is meaningful.

Wallace (2003: 44) raises the issue of whether critical reading can be classified as a form of reading. She mentions two reasons why this categorisation might not be appropriate. Firstly, she remarks that critical reading cannot be assigned to any of the practices which are understood as reading. Neither reading for information, nor reading for survival, or reading for pleasure are appropriate categories to include critical reading. Secondly, Wallace mentions that reading critically could be interpreted to break Grice's (1975: 45) 'Cooperative Principle' and thereupon contemplates on whether critical reading might even be seen as an unnatural act. Grice's 'Cooperative Principle' is a set of rules to be considered in conversations, which reads as follows: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice 1975: 45). Wallace (2003: 44) suggests that this principle, which consists of several maxims of acting in a cooperative way when engaging in conversation, can also be applied to written interaction. Following Grice's principle, the listener or reader should always be able to expect honesty, relevance, and clarity from the speaker or writer (45). Taking up a highly critical and sceptical stance when reading critically is, according to Wallace (2003: 44) "perversely unco-operative". She, therefore, suggests deviating from seeing critical reading as part of what is commonly understood as 'reading'. Rather, critical reading should be referred to, adopting Eco's concept, as "using a text" (1992 qtd. in Wallace 44). However, Wallace further explains that being a critical reader means that one can change perspectives between 'reading a text' in order to gain information or pleasure and 'using a text' for critical engagement. She, thereby, sets her doubts aside and legitimates placing critical reading alongside the conventional understanding of reading (45).

Wallace's doubts about how to define critical reading are mentioned here because they strengthen the thought that critical reading is probably not so much about reading as it is about thinking. On the one hand, it has been mentioned above that being able to read critically also enables the reader to think critically in other domains of life. On the other hand, one could argue that a certain critical thinking ability is required in order to have the possibility of engaging in critical reading. This discussion does not aim at a conflict based on

a chicken-and-egg question. Rather it should highlight the very close interrelatedness between critical reading and critical thinking showing that one of these skills cannot be adopted without the other. Due to the connection between critical reading and critical thinking these two concepts are referred to as one which is called ‘critical ability’ when discussing aims and methods in the rest of this subsection.

2.2.1. Aims

The aims of critical reading and critical thinking are illustrated referring to Morgan’s (1997) list of four characteristics of a text which should illustrate the importance of being able to approach it critically. Cottrell (2011) emphasises the importance of critical ability, mentioning that being able to read and think critically is a natural everyday act. People, for instance, engage in critical thinking when trying to figure out whether somebody tells the truth or not. One can think critically about what one does, sees, hears, or reads (viii). Morgan discusses critical ability in a general educational context. In the following paragraphs, I depict how scholars of the fields of tertiary education, foreign language pedagogy and general education conceive her list.

> 1. Any text is made in a particular society at a particular time. This influences the form it takes and the ideas it represents.
>
> 2. Any text gives you a particular version (or part of) a story: it emphasises certain things; and it has gaps and is silent about certain things.
>
> 3. Texts don’t contain one fixed, definite meaning put there by the author. Different kinds of readers in different societies and times can produce different meanings for the same text because of what they bring to it.
>
> 4. Any text offers you a way of seeing and valuing things and invites you to accept its version as the truth, the way things are meant to be. What comes to be accepted as the truth, as knowledge, comes to serve someone’s interests. (Morgan 1997: 39-42)

The following elaboration on the aims of critical competence are predicated, as has already been mentioned above, on Morgan’s list. Referring to the first point it is important to consider Wallace’s (2003) statement that texts are always “historically situated and embody the ideology of their day. They, therefore, repay critical analysis” (3). One aim of critical ability is, therefore, to find out the historical and cultural background of a text, which may also influence the text’s

genre. Hedge (2000: 198) and Wallace (2003: 1), who both write about foreign language pedagogy, mention that the genre has an impact on whether one engages critically with a text. Some genres tend to position their readers more strictly than others (Wallace 1992b: 46-7). A critically competent person must be aware that a genre poses limits to the texts' possibilities of positioning the readers. The concept of 'reader positioning' is explained in the following paragraph.

The second point is particularly important as the nature of a text always depends on what the text wants the readers to believe. Writers often use techniques like emphasising certain things and omitting others in order to influence or persuade their readers. Kress (1989) explains from a sociolinguistic perspective that a reader who encounters a certain kind of text for the first time does not necessarily fulfil the characteristics that would make him or her an ideal reader of the text. He proposes that "the text constructs its ideal reader by providing a certain 'reading position' from where the text seems unproblematic and 'natural'" (36). This technique is commonly referred to as 'reader positioning' (Wallace 1995; Hood, Solomon, and Burns 1996; Goatly 2000; Hedge 2000). Hood, Solomon, and Burns (1996) define reader positioning as "the way the writer is attempting to persuade us as readers" (5). When reading critically we think about whether we want to accept this positioning or not. Therefore, reading is obviously more than just decoding letters and words, but involves agreeing and disagreeing (4-5). In order to agree or disagree with the text it is essential to uncover its attitudes and positions. It is crucial to find out the text's perspective on the topic discussed and the intentions it pursues. Hood, Solomon, and Burns (1996) explain that the writer's position in a text can either be shown explicitly, meaning that the writer openly states his or her positions, or it can be conveyed implicitly. When trying to detect an implicitly stated position, the reader can focus, for example, on the language or analyse whether particular parts of information are omitted (4).

Reader positioning is also an important topic in tertiary education texts on critical competence. Goatly (2000), for instance, mentions the position of the "ideal reader" as part of subject positioning, which happens to both writers and readers and can change throughout a text (147). Montgomery et al. (2013)

mention that when trying to uncover the writer's position it is important to consider the concept of the 'implied author'. It is a common mistake to equate the 'implied author' with the actual author of the text, forgetting that it is only a concept the author can apply when writing the text (182). They, moreover, allude to the "implied reader" (187) as the type of reader the text is aimed at and mention "dominant readings" (190), illustrating the preferred, obvious reading of a text.

In the third point Morgan highlights the importance of the active role of the reader who is responsible for constructing meaning from texts. Wallace (1995), likewise, emphasises the reader's significance and mentions that the reader's attitude towards a text is always influenced by his or her personality and social identity (195). It is, therefore, an important part of critical ability to reflect on the role of the reader in the critical process. Widdowson (1984) explains in a context of foreign language pedagogy that the reader can choose, according to his or her purpose of reading, to take either a submissive or an assertive position to the text. The submissive reader is, thereby, likely to take up a reading that is intended by the writer, while the assertive reader brings his or her own interpretations to the text (223). Widdowson warns both of being too submissive and too assertive a reader. Being too submissive can lead to not integrating the new information into one's existing knowledge. Being too assertive, the reader could "distort the writer's intentions and deny access to new knowledge and experience" (226). When dealing with text it is, therefore, important for readers to be aware of the different possible ways of approaching it. Critical readers and thinkers must be familiar with their roles when engaging critically with a text. On the one hand, the reader's social and cultural background as well as experiences influence his or her way of approaching different texts. On the other hand, reading critically is only possible if the reader takes an active role in the reading process by asking critical questions and trying to resist what has been defined as 'reader positioning', 'ideal reader', 'implied reader' or 'dominant readings'. Wallace (1995) emphasises the importance of resisting reader positioning when reading critically: "Critical Reading is posited on the inevitability, albeit to varying degrees, of reader positioning and the consequent necessity of resistance. Resistance – a

preparedness to challenge – is indeed the *raison d'être* of Critical Reading" (195).

Goatly (2000) explains the process of resisting reader positioning referring to a simple example describing the most obvious form of it. If the information in a newspaper article reporting on an incident the reader has witnessed does not match with what the reader has seen, the person is very likely to resist the dominant reading of the article (156). This drastic example shows how much power a writer can possess, if the reader is ready to accept reader positioning and does not critically question a text. Even though it is unlikely to encounter a text which is as obviously wrong as the one in the abovementioned example a critical reader has to "resist the text's ideological categorisations and the construction of reality" (Goatly 2000: 156). Goatly (2000) stresses the importance of resisting the seemingly natural way of reading texts and believing what they claim without questioning it (156). He summarises that "[r]esisting reading positions entails resisting subject positions and challenging the beliefs, assumptions and authority figures of one's community" (159). Montgomery et al. (2013) similarly define the critical reader as a "reader who does not accept the assumptions and kinds of knowledge that the text presents in the dominant reading, but instead resists them in order to construct an oppositional reading" (192). They, furthermore, give a valuable explanation of the role of the critical reader:

> By adopting a critical approach to assumptions concealed in a text's mode of address, the reader can first trace and describe the dominant reading of the text, then refuse that position in order to focus on other elements that the text may also suggest, often in its margins. A reader who resists the text in this way assumes power and responsibility in relation to the determination of the text's meaning. In contrast with a traditional view of the reader as a passive recipient of information, in this view the reader is enabled to construct meaning for him- or herself. (194)

Coming back to Morgan's (1997) justifications of critical ability, the fourth point stresses the persuasive nature of texts and explains that what is accepted as the truth always privileges some people's interests over others'. According to the representatives of tertiary education Cottrell (2011) and Browne and Keeley (1994) it is, therefore, an important aim of critical ability to recognise the underlying assumptions of a text. These underlying assumptions are often

stated implicitly or are “hidden or unstated, taken for granted, influential in determining the conclusion, […], and potentially deceptive” (Browne and Keeley 1994: 48). Browne and Keeley (1994) refer to these underlying assumptions as the “glue that holds the entire argument together” (48). They explain that especially in processes involving a writer providing several reasons and coming to a conclusion based on these reasons there are always assumptions involved (48). These assumptions are often taken for granted, meaning that they are ideological assumptions which do not need to be explained because they are self-evident to the intended readership. It is, for instance, often taken for granted that men fail at coping with children or that girls are bad in maths. Moreover, texts use implicit assumptions to make readers think that they themselves came to a certain conclusion, or to persuade them to do something they actually do not wish to do. (Cottrell 2011: 93) Once the underlying assumptions and hidden arguments have been recognised, the next step in the critical process is to judge which of the assumptions are reasonable and which are not (86). Texts frequently apply implicit assumptions which are not reasonable and, thereby, jump to conclusions (89). A common mistake committed by persuasive texts is, for instance, to assume that there is a causal link between two events only because they occur in the same context (106). The critical reader must be able to recognise these flaws in arguments.

2.2.2. Methods

The following paragraphs introduce several methods how to approach a text from a critical perspective in order to uncover its underlying assumptions and intentions.

Goatly (2000) summarises the steps of critically approaching a text and dealing with its underlying assumptions. He explains that in order to decode the message “[w]e have to recognise propositions that are assumed rather than expressed. Then we must decide what attitude the writer has towards the propositions expressed or assumed. And, finally, we have to guess what inferences the writer intended us to make on the basis of the proposition” (121). In the following, methods to uncover a text’s underlying assumption and intention are provided by Wallace who writes from the perspective of foreign

language pedagogy. Moreover, Fraser and Davidson as well as Browne and Keeley suggest methods which are directed at a tertiary education audience.

Wallace (1992a) writes that the goal of critical reading is to uncover a text's underlying discourse which she defines as "ideologically determined ways of talking or writing about persons, places, events or phenomena" (68). In a later publication Wallace (2003), therefore, suggests using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a possible approach towards critical reading. She argues that by analysing vocabulary and grammar choices it is possible to detect the text's underlying assumptions and presuppositions. She proposes that the main objective of engaging in critical reading is to discover the 'hidden grammar' of a text, which helps readers uncover underlying assumptions as well as the text's standpoint (33). Advocates of CDA like Fairclough (2001, qtd. in Wallace 26) explain that CDA engages in two main concerns. It has specific aims of analysing texts as well as wider aspirations like social change. On the one hand, CDA helps to uncover the ideology underlying a text by analysing its language. The underlying ideology of a text is "the manner in which discourses, ambivalent and contradictory as they frequently are, ultimately privilege the interests of certain social groups over others" (Wallace 2003: 26-7). In order to reach the wider goal of social change, critical discourse advocates investigate all kinds of interactions like "written text, conversations, television programmes, and advertisements on billboards to show how language figures within relations of power" (Wallace 2003: 26). When critically analysing a text using Critical Discourse Analysis, Wallace (2003) suggests using a framework which is based on Halliday's (1989) "three features of the context of a situation" (12). The first feature, 'field of discourse', describes what kind of action is taking place in a situation, the second one, 'tenor of discourse', deals with the participants of a situation and their relations towards each other, and the third one, 'mode of discourse', focusses on the role language plays in the situation (12). Wallace (2003) applies Halliday's framework in order to formulate helpful questions to ask when analysing a text. Focussing on the 'field of discourse', she tries to uncover how the author depicts what is happening in a text. She proposes to pose questions in order to find out what or whom the text is about. Moreover, it is helpful to observe the usage of verbs to describe different processes and how

the circumstances and causations of a situation are indicated. In the second category which is called ‘tenor of discourse’, the reader should focus on how the author describes his or her relationship to the readers and his or her own attitude towards the topic of the text. In order to uncover the author’s relationship to the readers it is helpful to focus on the usage of personal pronouns in the text, on how the author refers to the reader, and on whether the author uses a declarative, imperative, or interrogative mood. Concerning the text’s attitude towards the topic, it is beneficial to analyse how it uses modality in order to express levels of certainty. Moreover, the reader can focus on whether the text uses adverbs, adjectives, or nouns which suggest its position. The main goal the critical reader aims to reach when analysing a text using this framework is to detect which effects the language choices have (Wallace 2003: 38-39).

Fraser and Davidson (2012) mention a different approach to critically analysing a text. They propose applying the ‘semiotic method’ or ‘study of signs’ which is often used in order to analyse texts by focussing on different literary or cultural signs. They justify the usage of this approach by mentioning that people are confronted with signs not only when reading texts but also in other situations like reading traffic signs while driving a car (2-3). Signs can have many different meanings in different contexts, as all meanings of signs are “relational, situational” (Fraser and Davidson 2012: 7). It cannot be argued that, for instance, a certain haircut has a particular meaning because it is always relative to the surrounding situation (6-7). Fraser and Davidson, therefore, suggest searching for words or concepts in a text which carry a deeper meaning. When analysing the signs it is crucial to take into account the context in which they appear, as “[s]ign study suggests that nothing possesses meaning on its own: nothing holds pre-existing significance above or beyond the specific sign system – and the particular context, culture, and historical moment – to which it belongs” (8). Fraser and Davidson, furthermore, highlight that when analysing a sign in a text one ought to try to consider different interpretations. One should not jump to one final answer, but think about several possible ways of interpreting a sign (61). They compare signs to icebergs and speak of the “semiotic iceberg” (84). Only little of a sign is visible above the water and the

majority of meanings and ideas, which have to be discovered, are underwater (81). These hidden meanings and assumptions can be detected when approaching the text critically.

It has already been mentioned above that Browne and Keeley (1994) dedicate a lot of attention to discovering a text's underlying assumptions. They propose several strategies how to uncover these assumptions. One strategy is to search for gaps between the reasons and the conclusion. Moreover, it is helpful to question the reasons and search for ideas behind them (62). Another strategy is to scan a text for fallacies in reasoning. A common mistake is that a text that aims to criticise a person's ideas, is actually attacking that person's background. Other mistakes are oversimplification, diverting from the main topic, or referring to a questionable authority (81). A highly effective way of uncovering the text's underlying assumptions is to analyse whether some significant information has been omitted (135). Browne and Keeley (1994) explain that information can be omitted by not including counterarguments, not defining the key terms properly, or examining an issue only from one value perspective. Moreover, the writer could omit the origin of 'facts' or information like the number of people asked in a survey. Furthermore, graphs often do not include all information and frequently certain effects of an idea or argument are not mentioned. The writer could, for instance, conceal that he or she would earn a lot of money by managing to make the readers believe certain ideas (138-9).

2.3. Reading – Critical Reading – Critical Thinking – in an EFL context

When considering reading in a foreign language Hedge (2000) provides the rather dim definition of reading as "making sense of a text" (188). She understands reading as a process in which the reader tries to make sense of what the text intends to convey (188). In order to teach students how to approach a text in a meaningful way, Hedge (195) more accurately suggests different ways of reading a teacher should introduce to language students. Referring to publications of Pugh (1978) and Lunzer and Gardner (1979), Hedge presents the following five types of reading: Firstly, she mentions 'receptive reading' which demands that the reader tries to understand the main argument in a newspaper article or a story. Secondly, 'reflective reading' takes

place when the reader occasionally stops while reading in order to control whether the argumentation is logical. Thirdly, ‘skim reading’ is a common labelling for gaining an approximate idea of what a text is about by reading only parts of it. Fourthly, ‘scanning’ pursues the aim of finding specific information in a text. Finally, the last type of reading is ‘intensive reading’ which describes the process of the reader taking a very close look at a text, for instance, in order to analyse it linguistically (195). When students are educated in ‘receptive reading’ they are, according to McGillis (1997), “learning to read” (126), meaning that they are only able to read uncritically and simply absorb the messages which are aimed at them. When learning to read, “[w]e learn to read what our culture presents as valuable, desirable, and acceptable” (126). However, as soon as we are able to engage in “reading to learn” (132), we have the possibility to critically question the values which are put upon us from society (132). The thesis at hand is engaging with ‘reading to learn’. Therefore, especially the methods of ‘reflective reading’ and ‘intensive reading’ are crucial, as they are beneficial in teaching students how to engage critically with a text. Below, the contemporary situation of encouraging critical reading and critical thinking in an EFL context is expounded by analysing and examining different positions on this topic.

The question whether and how critical reading and critical thinking should be incorporated into EFL teaching is a widely neglected issue in academic research (Wallace 2003). Much more attention is dedicated to critical reading in general and with reference to first language teaching. Morgan (1997), for instance, writes about enhancing critical literacy based on teaching English as a first language in Australian schools. Wallace (1992a), Macknish (2011), and Lau (2012) observe that critical reading is not only neglected in academic research but also does not receive any facilitation in EFL instruction. Wallace (1992a) writes that “critical reading has not been generally encouraged” (61) in the EFL classroom and Hooks (2010) argues that independent, autonomous thinking is often not supported at school which decreases children’s motivation to think and ask questions (8). This may result from the fact that there are opposing attitudes towards the question whether or not it is beneficial to include critical reading and thinking in EFL instruction. In numerous publications,

scholars agree on the fact that critical reading is in most cases connected with critical thinking or critical literacy (Atkinson 1997; Wallace 2003; Macknish 2011; Al-Bargi and Asghar 2014) and that it is highly influenced by cultural and social matters (Atkinson 1997; Morgan 1997; Wallace 2003; Lau 2012). Morgan (1997) adds that critical ability is connected to history (ix). Wallace (2003), who considers "reading as a social, critical process" (1), similarly addresses the importance of history in critical reading when she argues that, "*all* the texts we use in teaching are history texts - they are historically situated and embody the ideology of their day. They, therefore, repay critical analysis" (3).

Opponents of implementing critical thinking in EFL teaching claim that due to the abovementioned characteristics teachers would face serious difficulties when trying to educate students in critical competence. Atkinson (1997), who argues against incorporating critical thinking in EFL teaching, mentions four reasons why teachers should think carefully about educating their students in critical thinking in language teaching. Firstly, he claims that critical thinking is not "a well-defined and teachable pedagogical set of behaviours" (71). Secondly, he mentions the "exclusive and reductive character" (71) of critical thinking. He is, thereby, referring to his apprehension that promoting critical thinking could devaluate alternative ways of thinking. This is mentioned again on page 26. Thirdly, he expresses his concerns towards the possibility that "non-native speakers may be fraught with cultural problems" (71), and, finally, Atkinson claims that "thinking skills do not appear to transfer effectively beyond their narrow contexts of instruction" (71). Moreover, Atkinson (1997) argues that, as "critical thinking is cultural thinking", there is evidence of "vastly different understandings across cultures of three notions directly implicated in critical thought: individualism, self-expression, and using language as a tool for learning" (89). Due to the abovementioned concerns, Atkinson advises teachers not to foster critical thinking or reading unless they have deliberately considered those issues. Wallace (1992a), contrariwise, states that it is rather offensive to exclude EFL learners from the important activity of critical engagement with authentic material. She explains that

> EFL students are often marginalised as readers; their goals in interacting with written texts are perceived to be primarily those of language

> learners. What is missing is: (1) an attempt to place reading activity and written texts in a social context (2) the use of texts which are provocative (3) a methodology for interpreting texts which addresses ideological assumptions as well as propositional meaning. (62)

Wallace (2003) does not support Atkinson's reasoning of not promoting critical thinking because of cultural difficulties. She explains that it is even beneficial to encourage critical thinking in a multicultural classroom as "a diversity of readings provides a cultural and critical resource for the whole class" (75). She supports her argumentation by mentioning experiences with students who reported that by locating their opinions within a multicultural classroom, they became clearer about what their own voices and opinions were (191). Cross-cultural dialogue is crucial in a classroom as it encourages the students to take a step back and critically behold their own culture by encountering different cultures which are represented by other students in the class (75). The aim is not only to "make the strange familiar but the familiar strange" (Wallace 2003: 36).

Wallace (2003) mentions another point strongly contradicting Atkinson's argument that critical reading is more difficult for non-native speakers, as critical reading "does not make reference to native speaker norms in the way that fluency and accuracy typically does" (5). She argues that critical reading cannot be compared to other language skills as it is easier to acquire for second language learners than, for instance, fluency. She even states that critical reading can be easier for non-natives as they are not the primarily addressed target group. Rather, they have an "overhearer status" (Wallace 1995:195) and, therefore, might notice more quickly how a text tries to situate or manipulate its intended readership (42). In an earlier publication, Wallace (1992a) writes that due to the fact that non-native speakers are not the model readers of the texts, they are not as easily positioned and it is easier for them to introduce new analyses of texts (68). Similarly, Schneider (2007) argues that the linguistic weakness of non-native speakers can be beneficial in order to strengthen critical skills. As engaging critically with a text always entails encountering unfamiliar perspectives, this might be easier for non-natives who expect to be confronted with something completely new (135). Another argument supporting the incorporation of critical thinking in EFL teaching is that ideological

positioning can often be uncovered by focussing on a text's grammar. According to Wallace (1992a), this is easier for second language (L2) learners, as they usually have a better understanding of the English grammar than first language (L1) speakers (69). Moreover, Wallace (2003) highlights that critical reading contributes to a general improvement in understanding the language and pleads for critical reading to become "a way of reading which cuts across curriculum areas" (198) and not just a separate exercise that is conducted occasionally. Another response by Wallace (2003) to the objection that it is too difficult for second language learners to analyse texts critically, is that texts can be used both for learning the language and for teaching how to analyse them. She writes that "learning about language arises in the course of analysis" (193).

Macknish (2011) agrees with Atkinson (1997) that "the nature of critical reading is continually shaped by the understanding people have of it in different contexts" (445). However, she does not interpret this as a reason not to incorporate critical reading in EFL. On the contrary, she agrees with Wallace (2003) and explains that it is important for second language learners to be educated in critical reading. Therefore, she demands more attention to critical reading in English language teaching (448-50). Lau (2012), likewise, accepts the difficulties of promoting critical reading which are connected to cultural diversity and students' low language levels. Nonetheless, she challenges the assumption that critical reading is too difficult to incorporate in a second or foreign language classroom. In a study on critical reading among Chinese students studying English in Canada, Lau observed that students "grew in confidence that their opinions mattered" (2012: 329).

Moreover, problems can arise concerning the teacher's role in critical thinking education. Wallace (1995) raises the interesting issue of whether students are even "allowed to resist resistance" (195). Atkinson (1997), similarly mentions this problem when referring to the "exclusive and reductive nature" (71) of critical thinking which "marginalizes alternative approaches to thought, approaches that may in fact lead to more socially desirable consequences in the long run" (72). This problem arises due to the complicated role the teacher has to take when fostering critical thinking. On the one hand the teacher must accept all different readings and act as a fair and liberal teacher, on the other

hand, however, he or she is in an authoritarian position and should purport strategies of critical thinking (Wallace 2003: 76). Especially in multicultural classrooms, students often have completely different expectations of how to approach a text (195). Morgan (1997) agrees and mentions the problem of teachers often having certain expectations of how students would react to a text because it is (to the teacher) obviously racist or stereotypical. Adolescents, however, might have completely different perspectives due to their social and cultural backgrounds or their habits of approaching texts in their native languages. Therefore, it is crucial to offer students the opportunity to express their own positions and not to convey that their main task is to discover what the teacher wants them to think (44). Scheibe and Rogow (2012) approvingly state that it is counterproductive to tell students (whether explicitly or implicitly) what they should think when the ultimate goal is to stimulate critical autonomy (22). Hedge (2000), however, mentions that it is difficult for teachers to conceal all personal views when encouraging critical reading. She stresses that even by deciding what kind of materials to use the teacher makes judgements which are influenced by his or her beliefs (200). I suppose that it is neither possible nor wise to keep teachers from choosing the texts they want to work with. However, I agree that when analysing texts, teachers should try to adopt a “questioning style which is exploratory and interactive and which does not guide students to some pre-envisaged response” (Wallace 2003: 126).

Considering the importance of accepting every student’s attitude towards a topic, the question arises, whether this means that every possible interpretation of a text is equally appropriate. Wallace (1992b) emphasises that this is not the case. She explains that even though all students may express their interpretations, this does not entail that all of them are automatically equally adequate. There are, obviously, interpretations which are, due to the amount of background knowledge, argumentation, or other reasons, better than others (47). In Wallace (1992a) she explains how this problem can be approached. It is, of course, indispensable when enhancing critical ability to make different viewpoints acceptable. However, Wallace explains to her students that they need to defend their arguments against other interpretations of different class members in order to make their own points valid (70). Thereby, it is clear to

everyone that simply claiming to agree or disagree without having thought about the text is not an option when engaging in critical thinking. Unfortunately, this does not solve the whole problem as the issue of "[w]hich kinds of readings, which ideologies are permissible and which are unspeakable is always a dilemma for any teacher who wants to set up a liberal classroom where a plurality of views may be heard but also one where not 'anything goes'" (Morgan 1997: 99). Although there is no satisfying solution to this problem, Cottrell (2011) proposes to always try to think in a "non-dualistic" (9) way and to remember that it is often not possible to deal with an issue by answering distinct yes or no questions.

Many authors like, for instance, Morgan (1997), Wallace (1992a, 2003), Macknish (2011), Lau (2012), and Albeckay (2014) agree on the importance of fostering critical competence. Being aware of the difficulties, which arise when learners of a second language have to analyse texts critically, they are in favour of incorporating critical reading and thinking in EFL teaching. The abovementioned problems and insecurities, which are connected with promoting critical ability, should be accepted in order to reach the much more important goals of critical competence. These goals are, for instance, providing students with the opportunity of gaining "linguistic and critical resources to express their opinion in constative talk" (Wallace 2003: 190), which "allows foreign language learners to function in a wider arena than the local, the specific and the immediately relevant" (199). Referring to Freire (1970), Morgan (1997) highlights the importance of critical literacy as it helps students overcome "'naive' consciousness" and learn to "name their world" (Freire, qtd. in Morgan 8). Students should refer to their own experiences rather than to prescribed ideologies and discourses (Morgan 1997: 8). Fairclough (2001) agrees that it is necessary to support people in recognising in how far language is based on "common-sense assumptions" (3) which need to be critically evaluated. Another justification for supporting critical thinking is that the fact that our world's complexity is growing could lead to a tendency of neglecting critical evaluation of information we receive (Browne and Keeley 1994). Scheibe and Rogow (2012) especially refer to new developments in communication technology which entail the presence of a huge amount of information available to everyone

(1). The teaching of critical ability is, therefore, highly important to fight the danger of becoming “passive absorbers of information” (Browne and Keeley 1994: ix), and not to be overwhelmed by the information we are confronted with. It is necessary to think critically and to reflect upon our experiences in order to use new technology responsibly (Scheibe and Rogow 2012: 2).

The abovementioned arguments supporting the incorporation of critical reading and critical thinking in EFL teaching allow drawing a connection between critical reading and critical thinking. In all publications, critical reading tends to be seen as an overall skill of being able to engage critically with the world. This is highlighted by Wallace (2003) when she argues that critical reading should be taught “across curriculum areas” (198). There are several definitions of aims of critical thinking instruction and different approaches and principles on how to practically apply critical thinking in an EFL classroom. Those are presented in the following paragraphs.

2.3.1. Aims

My own position concerning the objectives of critical thinking in language education is that the central aim of promoting critical thinking is to educate critical personalities who think autonomously and are able to resist being positioned by the text. The following definitions of goals, aims, skills, and purposes should support this position.

The ultimate goal of facilitating critical autonomy in EFL is defined by Wallace (1992a) as follows: Support students to “feel more confident in taking up assertive positions against the text, to encourage them to feel they have options in the ways they choose to read texts, and to help them feel in a more equal relationship with the writer” (80). Morgan (1997), similarly, enumerates three aims which should be reached by promoting critical ability. Firstly, the teacher needs to “get students to re-examine their uncritical readings”. Secondly, the students should be led “to a more valid reading”, and thirdly the teacher should “encourage multiple readings” (98). Similarly, Wallace (2003) lists five skills her students should master after her critical reading classes:

- read between the lines, that is, understand the hidden messages of written texts

- understand some of the cultural meanings in written texts
- see how texts persuade us to behave or think in particular ways
- appreciate the ways in which texts are written for different audiences
- see how texts may be read in different ways by different people (Wallace 2003: 95)

The skills listed above, are very similar to Cottrell's (2011) list of critical thinking skills, which has been mentioned in section 2.2. Wallace (2003), moreover, mentions three purposes which give a clear overview of what aims should be reached in fostering critical reading. Firstly, Wallace stresses the importance of the linguistic purpose, meaning that students should learn to "reflect on the effect of language choice" (43). Secondly, she highlights the conceptual or critical approach by arguing that students need to be able to critically question implications of a text by referring to their own lives. Thirdly, Wallace states that the cultural purpose of critical reading is important as it "promote[s] insight into cultural assumptions and practices, similarities and differences across national boundaries" (43). Albeckay (2014) offers a very clear and comprehensive set of skills, which he considers to be crucial in promoting critical reading, including "distinguishing facts from opinions, identifying the author's purpose and tone, making inferences […], making evaluations and analysing the text" (177).

Having considered the abovementioned classifications of critical thinking skills, aims, and purposes, and combined them with insights gained in previous parts of this section, I compiled a list of those skills which I consider to be crucial when encouraging critical competence in an EFL context:

- finding out the text's attitude and intention
- pondering opposing arguments and making evaluations
- inferring unexpressed meaning from texts or utterances
- recognising persuasive techniques and resisting reader positioning
- understanding different positions and interpretations of a topic which are caused by cultural, historical, social, or individual differences
- questioning one's own actions and attitudes and making inferences to one's life

2.3.2. Methods and Materials

As critical ability is a complicated concept to define it is crucial to introduce it in a way that is easily amendable to students of English as a foreign language. Scheibe and Rogow (2012) raise the primary issue that students, even though

they mostly have heard of critical thinking at some point, often do not know what it actually means. Therefore, they cannot be expected to know what to do when thinking critically, and the teacher needs to present a clear set of characteristics which constitute critical reading and thinking (22). Another issue can be that students are often resistant to thinking critically. As critical thinking demands a lot of mental effort students often prefer achieving clear answers from their teacher to having to build their own opinions on a topic (Cottrell 2011: 12; Hooks 2010: 10). By explaining that every single point of view is considered when analysing a text and by taking every well-considered answer seriously, the teacher can try to motivate the students. One possibility to explain what critical thinking means is to supply the students with a set of questions a critical reader or thinker has to answer when analysing a text. Several authors (Kress 1989; Bazerman 1992; Wallace 1992a, 2003; Browne and Keeley 1994; Hood, Solomon, and Burns 1996; Goatly 2000; Montgomery et al. 2013) compiled lists of critical guiding questions.

Kress (1989) offers a list of only three critical questions to keep in mind when reading a text. He suggests asking: “Why is this topic being written about? How is the topic being written about? What other ways of writing about the topic are there?” (7). Wallace (1992a) adopts Kress’s questions and expands the list by adding two extra questions, namely “Who is writing to whom?” and “What is the topic?” (71). These questions are certainly helpful when engaging with a text, however, the list Goatly (2000) presents is even more suitable for an EFL context as it gives more detailed instructions to the critical reader. Goatly’s (2000: 158) list of critical questions is based on Bazerman’s (1992: 19). He suggests considering the following questions:

- Do I approve or disapprove?
- Do I agree or disagree?
- Are there exceptions/counterexamples?
- Are there examples which support the argument?
- Can this argument be extended?
- Do I accept the way the world/society is represented and categorised in this text?
- What relationship is the writer striking up with me?
- Can I accept the presuppositions/implications of this text?
- Can I accept the way of reading the text that I’m supposed to employ? (Goatly 2000: 158)

These questions embrace all aspects of critical reading and critical thinking which I collected in the previous sections. In an EFL context, it is much more suitable to present a set of questions to ask when approaching a text than to theoretically explain what it means to engage critically with a text. Hedge (2000) mentions that it is commonly believed that posing a set of pre-reading questions could help especially young students resist the text's reader positioning (214). Several examples of such questions have been mentioned above. Wallace (1992a) agrees that pre-reading questions are very useful, and mentions that one can incorporate while- and post-reading activities as well. What is most important when working with these activities is to apply them in a way that promotes critical reading and thinking. In a pre-reading task, for instance, instead of asking students to express their own standpoints to the topic, Wallace suggests posing the question why this certain topic has been chosen at all. She argues the same for while-reading tasks. Rather than asking students to predict how the text will continue she prefers to ask students to give a variety of possible ways the text might proceed (71).

Another teaching method of critical thinking is to compare two texts which describe similar topics, like two newspaper articles from different types of press. Thereby, students can experience how different usages of language can influence the direction of a text (Hedge 2000: 215; Hood, Solomon, and Burns 1996: 90-1). Critical reading can, moreover, be fostered by extensive reading which has many positive effects, such as improving students' language skills or gaining knowledge about different cultures (Hedge 2000: 204-5). Another way of enhancing analysis when reading a book or play is to combine the reading of the book with the film, provided there is a film adaptation available. Scheibe and Rogow (2012) suggest including the film while reading the book, not afterwards. Thereby, other aspects become visible and weak readers have the chance to follow the plot more easily. Moreover, it can be analysed how emotions or character traits are created in a book compared to in a film (22-3).

Hooks (2010) argues for the implementation of 'engaged pedagogy' when promoting critical reading and thinking. Thereby, students should learn that education is not something one does on one's own, but is gained through

conversation and mutual engagement (43). When engaging in critical thinking, it is crucial to give everyone the chance to express his or her ideas openly in the conversation and to show the students that their contributions are worthy (20-1). A teaching model which is based on conversation is especially useful when the classroom is diverse. Hooks explains that “mindful conversation, talking that is powerful and energetic, always spotlights what *really* matters. When conversations in the classroom lead to intense dialogue, students bring a heightened awareness to their engagement with assigned material” (45). Another advantage of classroom discussion is that students can learn how to cope with conflicts and with disagreement. Collins (1993) agrees that students become critical thinkers by learning to value their own thinking, and by comparing their thinking with others (4). Thereby, their minds are prepared for “radical openness” (Hooks 2010: 88), and “by teaching students to value dissent and to treasure critical exchange, we prepare them to face reality” (88).

2.4. Critical Thinking in the Austrian AHS curriculum

The following section relates critical thinking to the Austrian upper secondary AHS (Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule) curriculum, in order to highlight the relevance of facilitating critical thinking skills. Thereby, the general curriculum as well as the curriculum for foreign languages are considered equally. As has already been mentioned in the introduction, I focus on upper secondary education as the two novels, which are examined in section 4, are targeted at fifteen- to eighteen-year-old students.

The curriculum for upper secondary education of the Austrian AHS, which was most recently updated in 2004, consists of five parts. Those are the ‘general educational goals’ (Allgemeines Bildungsziel), the ‘general didactic principles’ (Allgemeine didaktische Grundsätze), a part considering ‘planning of school and instruction’ (Schul- und Unterrichtsplanung), the ‘schedules’ for each subject (Stundentafeln), and the ‘specific curricula’ for all individual subjects (Lehrpläne der einzelnen Unterrichtsgegenstände). The first three parts of the curriculum are effective in upper as well as in lower secondary education and summarise important aims and principles, which account for all subjects in equal measure. Part four and part five apply to upper secondary instruction in specific. In order

to legitimize the incorporation of critical thinking in upper secondary English education, particular attention is given to parts one, two and five.

Part one, the ‘general educational goals’, is divided into five sections, namely ‘functioning and structure of the curriculum’ (Funktion und Gliederung des Lehrplans), ‘legal mandate’ (Gesetzlicher Auftrag), ‘general principles’ (Leitvorstellungen), the school’s ‘fields of duty’ (Aufgabenbereiche der Schule), and ‘areas of education’ (Bildungsbereiche). Section one simply explains how to make use of the following curriculum and is, therefore, not of interest in this context. Section two highlights the school’s duty to educate its students by conveying knowledge, competences, and values. Special importance is granted to promote the “Bereitschaft zum selbstständigen Denken und zur kritischen Reflexion” (*Bildungsziel*, 1). The fact that autonomous thinking and critical reflection are emphasised as a major part of a school’s duties serves as a solid basis to argue that it is crucial to encourage critical thinking in upper secondary classrooms. Section three on general principles also highlights several issues, which are closely connected to critical thinking. One aspect is the mediation of cosmopolitanism and openness to different cultures (*Bildungsziel*, 1). Moreover, it is stated that in a multicultural classroom special attention is to be dedicated to the encounter of cultures in everyday life. In order to become autonomous citizens, who are able to participate in democracy, it is crucial to teach students in discernment and in taking up social responsibility. Therefore, self-assuredness and autonomous learning and acting need to be supported. Because new technologies in information and communication are shaping all areas of life, the curriculum demands to exploit the didactic potential of these technologies when teaching. However, it is not enough to apply these innovative technologies but the students should be guided to critically and rationally deal with their impact on society (*Bildungsziel*, 2). In section four, where several fields of duty are listed, there is another reference to the importance of conveying critical thinking skills:

> Zur Vermittlung fundierten Wissens als zentraler Aufgabe der Schule sollen die Schülerinnen und Schüler im Sinne eines lebensbegleitenden Lernens zur selbstständigen, aktiven Aneignung, aber auch zu einer kritisch-prüfenden Auseinandersetzung mit dem verfügbaren Wissen befähigt und ermutigt werden. (*Bildungsziel*, 2)

A lot of attention is dedicated to the fact that the mere mediation of knowledge, even though it constitutes a central duty of the AHS, needs to be supplemented by promoting autonomous learning and critical evaluation of the knowledge available (*Bildungsziel*, 2). In the fifth and last section of the general educational goals, five different areas of education are described. For this thesis, two of these areas, namely 'language and communication' and 'humans and society', are of particular importance as they mention the relevance of critical thinking in education. The following extract from the area of language and communication should illustrate the importance of critical thinking in the curriculum:

> Ausdrucks-, Denk-, Kommunikations- und Handlungsfähigkeit sind in hohem Maße von der Sprachkompetenz abhängig. In jedem Unterrichtsgegenstand sind die Schülerinnen und Schüler mit und über Sprache – zB auch in Form von Bildsprache – zu befähigen, ihre kognitiven, emotionalen, sozialen und kreativen Kapazitäten zu nutzen und zu erweitern. Die Auseinandersetzung mit unterschiedlichen Sozialisationsbedingungen ermöglicht die Einsicht, dass Weltsicht und Denkstrukturen in besonderer Weise sprachlich und kulturell geprägt sind. Wenn die Begegnung mit anderen Kulturen und Generationen sowie die sprachliche und kulturelle Vielfalt in unserer eigenen Gesellschaft als bereichernd erfahren wird, ist auch ein Grundstein für Offenheit und gegenseitige Achtung gelegt. Ein kritischer Umgang mit und eine konstruktive Nutzung von Medien sind zu fördern. (*Bildungsziel*, 3)

The fact that the ability to think, communicate and act is dependent on language ability gives special importance to language teaching. Moreover, dealing with foreign languages and cultures is an issue to broach in foreign language teaching and is especially interesting to teach when the classroom itself is multicultural. Again the abovementioned quote highlights that modern media need to be approached critically in order to be able to use it in a meaningful way. The second area of education, which is of interest here, deals with humans and society. The main demands are as follows:

> Der Unterricht hat aktiv zu einer den Menschenrechten verpflichteten Demokratie beizutragen. Urteils- und Kritikfähigkeit sowie Entscheidungs- und Handlungskompetenzen sind zu fördern, sie sind für die Stabilität pluralistischer und demokratischer Gesellschaften entscheidend. Den Schülerinnen und Schülern ist in einer zunehmend internationalen Gesellschaft jene Weltoffenheit zu vermitteln, die vom Verständnis für die existenziellen Probleme der Menschheit und von Mitverantwortung getragen ist. Dabei sind Humanität, Solidarität,

> Toleranz, Frieden, Gerechtigkeit, Gleichberechtigung und Umweltbewusstsein handlungsleitende Werte. (*Bildungsziel*, 4)

In this section the main focus is on mediating skills like the ability to judge and criticise as well as values like humanity, solidarity, tolerance, peace, justice, equality etc. in order to maintain democratic societies.

Part two, comprising the 'general didactic principles', contains nine principles of AHS education. Two of them, namely 'intercultural learning' and 'strengthening of self-acting and personal responsibility', are of importance for this thesis. Intercultural learning is more than just becoming acquainted with different cultures. Teachers should arouse students' interest in cultural differences and guide them to accept, respect, and value diversity. It is also mentioned that if there are students with different native languages in a classroom, this should always be positively connoted and students should be encouraged to bring their knowledge to class (*Bildungsziel*, 5). Promoting critical thinking can contribute to making students aware of other cultures and encouraging them to critically question their own perspectives and values. The second important issue which is mentioned in the general didactic principles is that students need to be guided towards critical and autonomous thinking (*Bildungsziel*, 6). The teachers should help them to find their own values and attitudes by giving impulses to facilitate critical reflection.

The curricula for the individual subjects can be found in part five of the AHS curriculum. The curriculum for foreign languages is based on the Common European Frame of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which has been published by the Council of Europe in 2001. In the following, the curriculum for foreign languages in upper secondary education is analysed with reference to fostering critical thinking. The foreign languages curriculum emphasises the importance of teaching intercultural competence. When teaching a foreign language it is essential to introduce students to the culture of the country where the target language is spoken. However, it needs to be mentioned here that English is spoken in many countries all around the world and is not only used as a first language (L1) but predominantly as a foreign language and as a lingua franca. A lingua franca is "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: 240). Seidlhofer (2005: 339) adds that English as a lingua franca (ELF) communication can also include L1 speakers of English. However, considering Crystal's (2003, qtd. in Seidlhofer) statement that only every fourth speaker of English all over the world is an L1 speaker of the language, it is reasonable to argue that most ELF communication occurs between L2 speakers of English (Seidlhofer 2005: 339). It is, therefore, difficult to define a target culture to introduced in EFL teaching. Students can, however, be educated in general intercultural competence and openness towards foreign cultures, not necessarily English speaking ones. Thereby, students should learn to recognise cultural stereotypes and to engage critically with their own experiences and with Austrian conditions. Moreover, students should be educated in cosmopolitanism and gain competences in solving problems and managing conflicts. By choosing appropriate topics, students can be introduced to meaningful ways of solving disagreement and dealing with different attitudes and perspectives. A passage which accurately deals with critical thinking in reading education legitimates the aim of this thesis of encouraging critical thinking by reading literature. "Auch im Fremdsprachenunterricht sind gelegentlich fachsprachliche Texte zu bearbeiten, die eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit human-, sozial-, naturwissenschaftlichen, technologischen und wirtschaftsbezogenen Entwicklungen ermöglichen" (*Fremdsprache*, 1). Even though it is disputable whether dealing with literature can be considered as engaging in a specific technical terminology, young adult literature offers great opportunities for promoting critical competence. Moreover, both dystopian young adult novels, which are analysed in the course of this thesis, offer a great deal of different technological and social developments, providing a range of technical terms. These developments definitely require critical analysis.

In the CEFR (2001) section on reading at level B2, it is argued that students should be able to read texts "in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints" (27). Moreover, at level C2 the language user should be able to "understand and interpret critically virtually all forms of the written language [and understand] subtle distinctions of style and implicit as well as explicit meaning" (69). Another goal, which should be reached at levels C1 and C2, is to "identify

finer points of detail including attitudes and implied as well as stated opinions" (70). Even though the levels C1 and C2 are usually not reached in upper secondary level, as the final examination is at level B2, the abovementioned competences need to be practiced from lower levels onwards.

3. Dystopian young adult novels

The following section discusses dystopian young adult novels (abbreviated DYAN from now on). As has already been mentioned earlier in this thesis, its general aim is to show to what extent it is beneficial to incorporate DYAN in supporting critical thinking in an EFL context. In order to answer this question, two DYAN, namely Anderson's *Feed* and Doctorow's *Little Brother* are analysed, concerning their usefulness for fostering critical thinking. However, before discussing how to implement DYAN in EFL teaching it is necessary to first define the genre of dystopia in general and then to identify typical features of dystopian novels which are targeted at young adults. Subsequently, this section analyses benefits and hindrances of DYAN for EFL teaching.

3.1. Dystopia: Genre definition

Before engaging with a definition of dystopia, it is necessary to refer to the concept of utopia. Cuddon (1982) explains that the common usage of the word 'utopia' to refer to an ideal society is misleading, as 'utopia' derives from the Greek terms '*ou*', which means 'not' and '*topos*', which is translated as 'place'. The word 'utopia', therefore, does not refer to a perfect world but to a non-existent world. This misconception stems from Thomas More's work *Utopia*, which describes a place where everything is good. Writing *Utopia* in 1516, More was the first to use 'utopia' as a literary genre. The labelling of his work was meant to be "a pun on *eutopia*" (733), which would be the right denomination of a perfect world. By naming his eutopia 'utopia' More wanted to indicate that his perfect world does not exist in reality (733). Sargent (1994) defines 'utopia' as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space" (9). Like Cudden, he defines 'utopia' as a society which does not exist in reality but does not comment on whether it is a desirable conception or not. Whether the described society is better or worse than the current situation is indicated by the terms 'eutopia' and 'dystopia'. Sargent explains that

‘eutopia’ can also be called ‘positive utopia’ and defines it as “a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably better than the society in which the reader lived” (9). The contrasting concept of dystopia or ‘negative utopia’ is specified as “a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived” (9). In Cuddon (1982), the development of ‘dystopia’ or ‘anti-utopia’ is traced back to the “seeming impossibility of utopia” (735) and ‘dystopias’ are defined as “in some cases almost chiliastic forecasts of the doom awaiting mankind” (735). Due to the fact that the terms ‘utopia’ and ‘dystopia’ are often used to refer to a positive or negative description of a society, Hintz and Ostry (2003) explain that they use the word ‘utopia’

> to signify a non-existent society that is posited as significantly better than that of the reader. It strives toward perfection, has a delineated social system, and is described in reasonably specific detail. Dystopias are likewise precise descriptions of societies, ones in which the ideals for improvement have gone tragically amok. (3)

For the sake of convenience, I follow Hintz and Ostry’s example and refer to ‘utopia’ and ‘dystopia’ as explained above. However, it needs to be stressed that dystopia cannot simply be defined as the opposite of utopia, as this is, according to Noël Tataro (2003: 127), not a clear dichotomy. Basu, Broad, and Hintz (2013) agree that dystopia cannot be seen as the exact reverse of utopia. Rather they define it as a “rhetorical reduction ad absurdum of a utopian philosophy, extending a utopia to its most extreme ends in order to caution against the destructive politics and culture of the author’s present” (2). Zipes (2003) consents and explains that when trying to achieve utopia a society is often in danger of losing track of its initial goals and developing towards a dystopian society. He describes this complex connection employing several examples:

> [T]he pursuit of perfection, the perfect place and society, can also lead to rigid if not totalitarian societies. Much of what we cite as progress, especially technological progress, has a double edge to it. The cloning of vegetables, animals, and humans that may help overcome hunger and disease may eventually lead to the mechanization of the natural and human world as we know it. […] One could argue that the great drive of

> human beings to establish fairer, more socialist societies has led to perverted societies, what we might call negative utopias, or what is projected as dystopias in literary works for young and old readers. (Zipes 2003: xi)

Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash (2010) consent that utopia and dystopia are closely interrelated and argue that every utopia has its implicit dystopia. This could be, for instance, the present situation in society, which is criticised in the utopia or "a dystopia found in the way this specific utopia corrupts itself in practice" (2). They, moreover, introduce another argumentation why dystopia cannot be seen as the clear opposite of utopia by conducting a thought experiment trying to imagine what the real opposite of a utopia would look like. They explain that the opposite of utopia would be a society that is not planned at all or is wilfully planned in a way to be depressing and frightful. This is, according to Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash, not a description of dystopia and they, similarly to Basu, Broad, and Hintz (2013) and Zipes (2003), suggest defining dystopia as "a utopia that has gone wrong, or a utopia that functions only for a particular segment of society" (2010: 1). This indicates that dystopias are societies that are built upon a certain plan, which has not been deliberated well enough. On this account, Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash (2010) compare dystopias to societies that really existed in the past or are present today. They argue that a dystopian society is much more likely to develop than a utopian one as there are many more possibilities to make wrong decisions than to make right ones (1). The perspective of dystopias is negative rather than positive as dystopias, unlike utopias, do not show us how to create a perfect world but how to possibly avoid a world much worse than the current one (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 2013: 2-3). They are "imaginative and encouraging extrapolations that offer ethical pathways to better futures than current behavioural paradigms are likely to produce" (Morrissey 2013: 189). The fact that dystopias are always connected to current situations makes it easier for their readers to relate to them. "Whereas utopia takes us into a future and serves to indict the present, dystopia places us directly in a dark and depressing reality, conjuring up a terrifying future if we do not recognize and treat its symptoms in the here and now" (Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash 2010: 2). Burford (2012), likewise, highlights the genre's close relationship to reality, saying that it is "not mere entertainment or

escapism into some impossible future but instead […] about issues right in front of our faces" (59). Although both utopias and dystopias wish for an improved future and aim to radically change a society by depicting the problems and providing radical solution statements, due to their proximity to people's lives, dystopias are more easily accessible to their readers (Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash 2010: 2).

The abovementioned tendency is very likely to represent one of the reasons for the deterioration of utopias and the increasing popularity of dystopias since the first half of the 20th century. The genre's popularity was triggered by 20th century classics like Huxley's *Brave New World*, Orwell's *1984* or Zamyatin's *We*. Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash (2010) call dystopia "utopia's twentieth-century doppelgänger" (1) as dystopian writing developed in the 20th century (Baccolini and Moylan 2003: 1) and utopia is now less popular than it has ever been (Pordzik 2002: 9). Hintz and Ostry (2003) highlight that during the last thirty years of the 20th century the dystopian novel emerged to the predominant genre of futuristic novels for children and young adults (16). The current popularity of DYAN is addressed in detail in section 3.2. Burford (2012) lists several explanations for the popularity of dystopian fiction. He explains that "the mass popular culture appeal of the genre is due to its relevance to modern problems, relatable characters, effective use of both wonder and fear, and its ability to engage readers in imaginary and cautious thinking" (Burford 2012: 21). Due to the fact that dystopian novels are very appealing to their readers, Burford expects that the genre's importance is going to increase in the future (160).

3.1.1. Features

Having explained the most important aspects of the development of the dystopian genre above, the following paragraphs aim to define features and themes that commonly occur in dystopian literature.

Burford's (2012) writes about incorporating dystopian science fiction in the literature classroom. He defines dystopian science fiction as

> a subgenre of science fiction and dystopian literature that concerns itself with rebellious characters who fight against an overwhelming force in a decaying, problem-riddled, often technology-influenced world that mirrors

> current political, sociological, economic, environmental, and/or technological issues during the time it was written. (33-34)

As the majority of dystopian literature features the abovementioned characteristics, I propose to use dystopian science fiction and dystopian literature synonymously. Burford explains that the main characteristics of dystopian literature are “social critique and fantastic speculation on the future” (20). Furthermore, Burford mentions “forlorn futures, commentary on contemporary difficulties, and the struggles of individuals against a larger authority” (21) as well as faulty characters (46) to be typical features of the genre. Baccolini and Moylan (2003) argue that dystopian writing often starts in the middle of the dystopian society without guiding the readers towards it. By featuring a protagonist who is completely absorbed by the society and does not question it at all, the dystopia is depicted as a perfectly ordinary world. In the course of the story, “[h]owever, a counter-narrative develops as the dystopian citizen moves from apparent contentment into an experience of alienation and resistance” (Baccolini and Moylan 2003: 5). This characteristic applies to both novels which are analysed later in this thesis. In Anderson’s *Feed* as well as in Doctorow’s *Little Brother* the setting is initially described as completely normal, and later in the novel a critical perspective is captured.

Another trait of dystopian fiction is that it is closely connected to the present because imagining a dystopian future predicates a lot about present issues (Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash 2010: 1), and dystopian writings always reveal characteristics of the time when they were written (4). Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash, moreover, mention that visions about the future “are never arbitrary. They always draw on the resources present in the ambient culture and develop them with specific ends in mind that are heavily structured by the present” (2010: 4). The close relation to the present is also obvious when focussing on typical themes which often occur in dystopian fiction. Basu, Broad, and Hintz (2013) mention the following recurring themes: “threat of environmental destruction”, “postapocalyptic dystopia”, “enslavement and silencing of citizens”, “explosion of information”, and “conformity” (3-4). In novels about conformity, a major issue is often how to find the right midway between individual freedom and communal peace (4). Spisak (2012) agrees with Basu, Broad, and Hintz

(2013) and adds the themes of social repression by an authority figure and the problems of "surveillance and invasive technologies" (55). Burford (2012), likewise, agrees with Basu, Broad, and Hintz (2013) and Spisak (2012), summarising the themes of dystopian as being "focused on repression, humanity's relationships with its surroundings, questions of identity, social concerns, and austere endings; rebellious, flawed, average characters; and fantastically bleak settings marred by technology and other problems" (21).

A typical feature of dystopian literature is also the occurrence of a powerful individual who instils rebellion against the system (Baccolini and Moylan 2003; Gordon, Tilley, and Prakash 2010; Burford 2012). This issue is further elaborated when discussing features of dystopian literature for young adults.

3.1.2 Purpose

It is generally agreed among scholars that dystopian fiction pursues the overall aim of warning its readers of a horrible future, which is going to eventuate unless the present society undertakes measures in order to stop the threats of a current trend. Burford (2012) rightly explains that the main purpose of dystopian fiction is to "reflect and comment on modern social issues" (58). In addition to that, he mentions that dystopian literature aims to entertain its readers while cautioning them about threatening trends in society (21). Sambell (2003) as well as Baccolini and Moylan (2003) agree that dystopian writing tries to dismay its readers by showing them possible outcomes of current social or political trends and, thereby, alerting them to the indispensable necessity for change in social, political, and human issues. Sambell (2003) summarises that "[i]f people do not change, [dystopian writing] warns, the future looks devastatingly bleak" (163). The fact that dystopian literature aims at warning its readers implicates that the authors still have some hope that their imaginations of a dreadful future might be prevented. Many scholars agree that in order to achieve its purpose, dystopian literature often does not only make use of shocking perceptions of a possible future, but also intersperses indications of hope. Basu, Broad, and Hintz (2013), for instance, explain the dreariness of dystopian literature not only with its intention to caution its readers but also with its objective to "display – in sharp relief – the possibility of utopian change even in the darkest of

circumstances" (3). Burford (2012: 159) as well as Baccolini and Moylan (2003: 6) agree that dystopian writing can predict catastrophe as well as preserve a flicker of hope for improvement (159). Baccolini (2004) explains that hope can be found in dystopia either beyond or within the story. On the one hand, "[t]he narrative closure of the protagonist's final defeat and failure is absolutely crucial to the admonitory impulse of the classic adult dystopia" (Sambell 2003: 165). In novels like Orwell's *1984*, which do not feature any possibility of escape for the characters, hope can be found only outside the story regarding the novel as a warning to prevent the horrible future described in the fictional work. On the other hand, there are novels like Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, featuring unclear endings, where hope is possible within the story (Baccolini 2004: 520). Baccolini explains that "ambiguous, open endings maintain the utopian impulse *within* the work" (520). She argues, however, that the fact that there is hope at the end of a novel does not mean that it can be considered a happy ending. It rather aims to raise the protagonists' awareness of responsibility and leaves them to make their choices. The central goal is "the acceptance of responsibility and accountability" (521). Baccolini and Moylan (2003) give a valuable summary of the main purpose utopian as well as dystopian fiction is aiming to achieve:

> Whether we are talking about eutopia's potential for providing an education of desire or dystopia's for an education of perception, our hope as scholars, teachers, and citizens is that the thought experiments we read and write about, […] will support or catalyse a social transformation that will bring an end to the conditions that produced the twentieth-century dystopias. (11)

3.2. Features of dystopian young adult novels

Many scholars refer to the recent popularity of DYAN, which, according to Basu, Broad, and Hintz (2013), emerged in the early 2000s (2) and is still growing as stated by Morrissey (2013: 189). There are several explanations for the current huge success of DYAN. Suvin (2003) and Morrissey (2013) both argue that the genre's popularity is rooted in the fact that we ourselves live in dystopian times right now. Morrissey (2013) explains that the current dystopia in the US emerged due to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 and the financial collapse in 2008. Ames (2013) agrees that "the socio-political climate that has emerged

post-9/11 has greatly contributed to the mass consumption of these texts" (6). Morrissey writes that children and young adults are aware of problematic issues like that and, therefore, interested in reading novels dealing with similarly complicated, terrifying concerns in a way that is tangible for them (199). Ames (2013) interprets the huge interest of teenagers in dystopian fiction in a very positive way saying that "[r]ather than predicting a bleak future for the young persons of today, this dystopian trend may very well be pointing toward a more positive future, at least in terms of political engagement" (Ames 2013: 18). I suppose that Ames's argumentation is reasonable, as young people's interest in current social and political issues is a very positive tendency. The fact that DYAN are obviously great tools to engage with these problems increases their value and justifies their usage in educational contexts.

Moreover, DYAN are successful due to their themes, which are very appealing to teenagers. Newgard (2011) investigated the recurring topics in dystopian young adult literature and proposed a favourable list of the most frequent issues dealt with in young adult dystopian fiction. Besides several others, she lists the following topics:

- Strong young adult presence where the reader can empathize with characters
- Growing up
- Uncertainty
- Resilience of the protagonist
- Focus on survival
- Cooperation between young adults
- Need for survival
- Societal conformity
- Love between the protagonist and another young adult
- City vs. Wilderness
- Strong family or community structures
- Governmental control (Newgard 2011: 18)

All of the abovementioned themes can be related to young adults' everyday lives, which makes DYAN excellent readings for teenagers. However, it needs to be mentioned that the problems most teenagers are facing in their everyday lives cannot be compared to issues dealt with in dystopian fiction. Rather the plots can be seen as exaggerations of teenage problems, which make the books more thrilling to read. Hintz and Ostry (2003) highlight the relationship

between dystopias and adolescence explaining that teenagers are often unsure about themselves, want to have more power, and rebel against the social system they live in (9-10). Hintz and Ostry (2003: 9) as well as Basu, Broad, and Hintz (2013: 6) connect the genre to the coming-of-age novel or bildungsroman, which draws attention to the teenage loss of infantile innocence. The connection to the bildungsroman is based on the fact that "the conditions of the dystopian society force protagonists to fall from innocence and achieve maturity as they realize the dystopian realities in which they live" (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 2013: 7). Protagonists often find out about the problems of the adult world for the first time and understand that their parents or the system cannot protect them (7).

Jones (2012) stresses the frequency of mind control as a form of governmental control in young adult dystopian literature. Miller (2012), likewise, mentions the theme of surveillance in DYAN and argues that it is closely connected to teenagers' realities growing up under their parents and teachers' surveillance. Burford (2012) agrees, mentioning the topic of "repression and identity" to be relevant for students who are under control of teachers, parents, and peers and always have the goal to fit in. Moreover, he argues that "[e]nvironmental and technological disaster and socioeconomic issues" are relevant to young adults as they are shaping the world they will once be living in (2012: 108). The topic of "individual vs. society" and "freedom vs. responsibility" (Jones 2012: 13) respectively is also a major issue in dystopian fiction for adults, but especially reflects questions of trying to achieve freedom from adults, which are very much present in teenagers' worlds. Freedom is a central issue when dealing with terrorist attacks, which often serve as justifications for limiting freedom in favour of governmental control (13). Jones (2012) raises the relevant issue of how much individual freedom people would discard in return for a save country, school, and family (17), which is another frequent topic in young adult dystopias. Hintz and Ostry (2003) agree in stating that "[t]he conundrum of many utopian and dystopian books for young readers is as follows: At what point does utopian cooperation become dystopian conformity?" (7). All the abovementioned engaging topics are a great basis for discussing DYAN in an educational context. This is elaborated in section 3.2.1.

Even though Newgard's (2011) list above shows that topics in dystopian young adult literature can be connected to teenagers' realities, the main concerns of DYAN are mostly similar to those written for adult readers. Burford (2012), therefore, argues that the distinction between dystopian fiction and young adult dystopian fiction is often not necessary (131). Hintz and Ostry (2003) and Basu, Broad, and Hintz (2013) equally mention that dystopias for young adults frequently deal with global concerns like "liberty and self-determination, environmental destruction and looming catastrophe, questions of identity, and the increasingly fragile boundaries between technology and the self" (Basu, Broad and Hintz 2013: 1). They argue that the novels mirror present-day worries and uncertainties about the future, which concern all humans equally (13).

Although the topics are similar in dystopian fiction for adults and young readers, there are several aspects which are unique to dystopian young adult literature. Hughes (2003), Basu, Broad, and Hintz (2013) as well as Spisak (2012) agree that literature which is targeted at young adults needs to fulfil certain requirements in order to be appealing to teenagers. Hughes (2003) explains that the novels need to have a thrilling plot, as the message cannot come across if the readers are bored (156). Basu, Broad, and Hintz (2013) agree and add that it is also beneficial to use first-person narration, dialogues, and diary entries in order to bring the readers very close to the story (1). Spisak (2012) argues that the setting should be described very vividly (56) and explains that "[w]ell-written dystopias, the most memorable ones, offer both: space for asking big-scale life questions along with plenty of adventure and danger to keep things exciting as one cogitates" (60). Several authors mention that a major difference to dystopian fiction for adults is that young adult dystopian fiction must contain hope at the end of the story. Unlike in dystopian fiction for adults hope is a characteristic every novel for young adults needs to incorporate (Hughes 2003; Sambell 2003; Miller 2012; Basu, Broad, and Hintz 2013). Sambell even calls it an "unwritten law" (2003: 165) in children's literature to write a happy ending or at least a hopeful outcome of the story. Even though the problem dealt with in the novel can be depressing, there needs to be some positive perspective at the end. As Hughes (2003) puts it: "You may lead a child

into the darkness, but you must never turn out the light" (156). Sambell sees this issue as rather problematic for authors of young adult dystopian fiction:

> The problems of reconciling the aim of presenting the dark truth of the values against which one cautions, whilst simultaneously maintaining a sharp focus on hope (often regarded as essential for the young) forms a significant creative dilemma for children's authors using the dystopian narrative form. (Sambell 2003: 164)

Hughes (2003), who wrote several novels for young adults, explains how she deals with the abovementioned problem. Many of her dystopian novels do not reach utopia at the end, but the protagonists are promised a utopia.

> Often the utopian world is not actually realized at the end of my novels, but is promised only with the proviso that the protagonists continue to work together amicably, aware of the causes of the dystopia from which they have escaped, and determined to maintain – or renew – the quality of their world without exploiting resources or people. (Hughes 2003: 160)

Another possibility to preserve hope, offered by Sambell (2003) is to replace the explicitly disastrous outcome of adult literature with more equivocal, unclear endings leaving the story unfinished (172). Thereby, readers are motivated to form their own outcomes and conclusions, whether positive or negative, and are invited to make up their mind about the issues discussed in the story.

3.2.1. Benefits of DYAN for EFL teaching

"Dystopian science [sic] is the most suitable literature for the classroom because of its appeals to uncertain times, its mass popularity, its ability to both amuse and instruct through wonder and fear, and its appeals to imagination and caution" (Burford 2012: 144). This quote thoroughly sums up the main advantages of implementing dystopian fiction for young adults in education. The following section aims at finding out in how far the implementation of DYAN is beneficial in EFL teaching. Special focus is, thereby, on its usefulness when promoting critical thinking in an EFL context. Dystopian young adult fiction offers a great variety of topics, which can be related to teenagers' everyday lives. As has already been mentioned above it is, however, important to consider that the problems in dystopian fiction are exaggerated versions of teenage problems. There always needs to be a distancing element which makes it possible for students to see the difference between the dystopia and

their own worlds. Moreover, the themes dealt with in these novels serve as a great basis for discussion as they are often about ethical questions focussing on the future of our world. Below, the advantages of the abovementioned characteristics for the EFL classroom are elaborated.

The fact that DYAN deal with up-to-date issues is beneficial as it awakes students' interest in reading novels. A great chance for motivating teenagers to read these books is the current boom of the genre. Thanks to the great range of current novels, teachers can offer their students to choose from a pool of different books about various topics. Burford (2012), who is an assured advocate of the implication of dystopian fiction in education, criticises its scarce usage in schools (6). He argues that, unlike lectures about the dangers of internet and technology abuse, the reading of dystopian novels is much more constructive for education as the books describe "the worst possible picture using the colors extrapolated from current societies to create a fictional story that warns readers/viewers" (140). Hintz and Ostry (2003) agree that dystopian fiction is beneficial in education as it warns young people to care for the environment and for each other (12) and teaches them about social organisation (7). The huge success of DYAN and their popularity in education can, to a large extent, be explained by its capability of being didactically valuable while at the same time featuring thrilling plots which allow teenagers to immerse themselves into an exciting fictional world.

Another great benefit of dystopian fiction for young adults is the fact that young readers can easily identify with the characters who are always ordinary teenagers themselves trying to resist the regulatory systems. Burford (2012) highlights that especially the protagonists' rebellious characters can readily be connected to young adults' lives (114) and mentions that the protagonists often feel excluded in a way from dominant society and are searching for someone to comprehend their problems (109). "The characters of the genre provide a unique connection to students in the secondary classroom who are exploring their place in the world, their insecurities, and their own ability to cope with a world that is increasingly becoming like a dystopian setting" (Burford 2012: 106). Wyatt (2008) raises the issue of information overload which teenagers are confronted with today, and argues that in times like these it is especially

important for teenagers to read about protagonists who are campaigning for their convictions and are not afraid to do so against the rules of authorities. The main characters allow a close connection to the texts and can encourage students to allocate what they read to their own lives and start challenging the current societal arrangements they are surrounded by. However, I suggest that it is very unlikely that an average teenager is able to detect this ability of dystopian texts without adult guidance. It is, therefore, necessary to deal with dystopian texts in school where the teacher can assist the teenage readers in approaching dystopian fiction and reflecting on it. Thereby, the implementation of DYAN in EFL teaching is once more justified.

Not only the appealing characters but also the settings of the novels contribute to the popularity of DYAN in the classroom. Burford (2012) writes that especially the fact that the books are frequently set in a very near future makes them highly interesting and relevant for the present (121). Thereby, the teachers manage to wake their students' interest and show them how these novels comment on current society. As has been mentioned in the above paragraph, the obvious dystopian settings are appealing to teenagers who are confronted with an increasingly dystopian world themselves. In dystopian fiction, the current societal situation is often exaggerated, showing the worst-case scenario the current development could lead to. Thereby, the present situation is reflected by the novel and makes it easy for teenagers to relate to it and to understand the dangers of the present. The dystopian genre is very engaging for young readers as "it both indulges the seemingly inherent taste for darkness and also reflects the societies students live in or know about" (Burford 2012: 146).

Most important for this thesis, the usage of DYAN in education offers great possibilities to promote critical thinking in language education. Particular focus is, thereby, on the Austrian upper secondary AHS English classroom. The fact that Austrian students read novels which have originally been written for English-speaking teenagers increases the books' values for encouraging critical thinking. It has already been mentioned in section 2.3. that non-natives are advantaged in reflecting critically on a text as they are not the ones primarily addressed. In section 2.3. it has, moreover, been explained why it is highly

important to promote critical thinking skills. The usefulness of DYAN to develop these skills is explicit as these books have the global aim of making people rethink a current situation and change their behaviour in a way that will prevent the described dystopian future from becoming reality. Several scholars who have written about the didactic potential of DYAN support this theory. Basu, Broad, and Hintz (2013) write that dystopian fiction, with its exaggerated and tragic settings, can serve as an introduction or a first motivation for young readers to think about social or political problems. For more advanced students these novels can open new perspectives to think about societal concerns (4-5). Morrissey (2013) stresses the close relation of young adult dystopias to the present reality, which he interprets as a great possibility for critical thinking. He calls DYAN "fictive versions of the contemporary world that promote reflection and critique" (189). Hintz and Ostry (2003) also highlight the great potentials of dystopian literature for facilitating critical thinking by inspiring its readers to regard society critically and to call their attention to political concerns (7). Sambell (2003) argues that the dystopian text serves as a space where teenagers can "rehearse, actively, almost playfully, a way of reflective thinking that focuses on asking questions, discovering analyses, and hypothetically testing out solutions at their own pace in an imaginative environment that is affirming and supportive, but which also articulates dark truths" (173). Many DYAN feature different characters the reader can identify with. Having the possibility to actively choose which side to take in the novel, teenagers can experience problems from different points of view. This issue is elaborated in detail when discussing Anderson's novel *Feed*. Burford (2012) mentions a number of reasons why DYAN are a great tool for promoting critical thinking. He argues that "[t]he unique usefulness of dystopian science fiction, over any other genre, is that it contains elements to spark student imagination and interest while still retaining didactic elements that can help teachers broaden their students' critical thinking skills and worldviews" (123). He writes that it is generally beneficial to address social problems in class in order to show students how to question their own society and think about how it can affect the future. Relating to the issues discussed in the dystopian novels, students have the chance to form their own opinions about society by critically questioning it and experiencing it from different perspectives (135-136). According to Burford,

the goal of dystopian literature is not to escape from the problems of one's world but to view them from a different point of view. He calls this process 'displacement' or 'estrangement', which can help students to understand social problems (150). Being an assured advocate of incorporating dystopian young adult fiction in education, I fully agree with Burford (2012) arguing that "[i]f the goal of education is to create productive, critical thinkers ready to interact with and create in a global society, dystopian science fiction should be the literature of choice in secondary classrooms" (156).

3.2.2. Potential hindrances of DYAN for EFL teaching

The following section broaches the matter of potential drawbacks when implementing DYAN in EFL teaching.

Basu, Broad, and Hintz (2013) raise their concerns about the fact that DYAN on the one hand aim to serve young readers with an entertaining escape from their everyday lives, but on the other hand intend to educate their readers in social and political topics. They are aware of the difficulty of combining and finding the right balance between entertaining and instructing when writing DYAN. Nevertheless, they criticise authors for writing novels which sound "preachy and even old-fashioned" (5) due to their obvious didacticism which is contradicting the idea of literature serving as an escape from everyday life (5). Another problem they mention is the oversimplification of problems which can be observed in dystopian young adult literature. They explain that one factor which makes the books so appealing to young readers is that they are conveying extremely clear messages. Referring to Anderson's *Feed*, they argue that issues like consumerism, mental idleness, and decadent attitudes of teenagers are criticised very plainly, oversimplifying the problems (5). They argue that "[t]his blatant didacticism signals to readers the problems with society while offering something like a training manual on how to overcome the dilemma, reverse the damage, and start anew" (5). This simplification is criticised because it threatens to detain readers from noticing the real intricacies, subtleties, and uncertainties of current social and political problems (5). Even though these objections are reasonable and elaborate, they are not as powerful as to overshadow the numerous positive arguments of implementing dystopian

fiction in schools. Whether a novel sounds preachy is obviously a matter of taste, and even though it might be old-fashioned, the positive effect of books which try to entertain as well as educate cannot be denied. Moreover, it has to be kept in mind that English teachers have the freedom to choose from a wide variety of DYAN on various topics. It is, therefore, very likely that every teacher can find at least one DYAN that satisfies his or her demands. Raising the issue of novels oversimplifying complex problems is definitely justified. It would certainly be even better to find a way of explaining complicated issues to teenagers without simplifying them. However, for the sake of entertainment and motivation, I suggest that it is much more productive to confront teenagers with issues that are comprehensible for them without having to ask teachers or parents for help. However, it is vital to address the fact that some novels are simplifying real problems when discussing the novel in class. This, again, facilitates students' critical thinking skills.

Burford (2012) mentions several other problems which are connected to using DYAN in the classroom. He notes that students are often not used to reading fictional texts as most school literature features stories about real-life scenarios (163). He quotes Madeline Ashby who argues that "reading about the future is a lot like opening one's eyes underwater. Experienced divers know how to see under there. Non-divers really don't" (2011, qtd. in Burford 164). This is an important issue to consider when planning to confront students with a DYAN for the first time. It is, however, not very problematic as Burford (165) himself mentions that simply making the students familiar with the most important concepts of the genre before reading it in class does not pose a serious problem.

The next problem to be examined does not apply to teaching in Austrian upper secondary schools but is worth mentioning here, for its extremely ironic nature. A quite shocking hindrance when intending to implement dystopian young adult fiction in the US is connected to the censorship of many dystopian books like, for instance, Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Lowry's *The Giver*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Burford (2012) explains that "[a]lthough censorship by an authoritative source is one of the primary themes in dystopian science fiction, schools – usually at the request of parents and/or

organizations – still frequently ban works in the genre for several themes" (173). This is obviously a major hindrance for teachers in the US but luckily does not pose a problem for Austrian schools. Moreover, Burford (2012) is convinced that the banning of these books by certain schools definitely do not decrease the students' interest in them (172). Another problem, which is frequently raised, is the hopelessness of DYAN, which could be problematic for students (Burford 2012: 179). This is an obvious contradiction to what I have argued in section 3.2., where hope is labelled an essential aspect of all dystopian young adult literature. I, therefore, suppose that hopelessness cannot be considered a serious problem in dystopian fiction. Lois Lowry's novel *The Giver*, for instance, features an open ending, which allows the readers to hope for a positive closing of the story. The protagonist flees from an unethical world without memories or feelings, knowing that once there was another world called 'Elswhere' where feelings and memories could be experienced by humans. The novel ends when he is about to find this world. Another example is Patrick Ness's dystopian novel *The Knife of Never Letting Go* which features hope as a central and recurring theme not only at the end, but throughout the book. The following quote is taken from a scene in which an adult character tries to explain the importance of hope to the teenage protagonists: "You've come farther than most people on this planet will in their lifetimes. You've overcome obstacles and dangers and things that should've killed you. […] How do you think you could have possibly come this far if you didn't have hope?" (Ness 375-6). Their hope in a better future motivates the protagonists not to give up searching for help in a futuristic world where men start killing women because everyone can hear men's thoughts while women's thoughts are private. Moreover, Anderson's novel *Feed* features a hopeful ending, which I discuss on page 64. Even if there is no hope in a story, there can still be hope outside the story when readers interpret the novel as a warning to prohibit a future like the one described in the novel. For example, Doctorow's novel *Little Brother*, which is presented below, awakes teenagers' hopes, making them aware of their power and encouraging them to contribute actively in making their world a better place. Even though DYAN tend to be dismal and sad, they should be implemented in education. Burford (2012) ultimately decides to argue for the usage of dystopian books in schools explaining that "[u]nfortunately, tragedy and disaster have the better track

record of mobilizing people and rousing them to action; history is full of staggeringly inhumane events […] that have caused entire nations to band together and create something positive in the aftermath" (181).

4. Encouraging critical thinking with DYAN

The following section combines the concepts of critical thinking and DYAN by presenting various possibilities of incorporating DYAN in promoting critical thinking in the EFL classroom. As a basis I employ two DYAN, which have already been mentioned above, namely M. T. Anderson's *Feed*, which was first published in 2002, and Cory Doctorow's *Little Brother*, first published in 2008. It is important to mention that these novels have several characteristics in common. Miskec (2011) argues that although they take completely different perspectives, both books deal with the influences of technology on human life and discuss its advantages and potential dangers. They both openly encourage readers to critically question modern technologies. Referring to Peter Hollindale, Miskec calls this overt purpose 'surface ideologies', which are "the values and ideas that the author has attended to that the reader is supposed to understand (plot, theme, and lessons, for example). The passive ideologies are equally present, but are left unexamined by the author and easily ignored by the uncritical reader" (72-3). Miskec argues that when concentrating on the 'passive ideologies' one can observe that Doctorow does not yearn for a world without technology. "Instead, he considers how technology can corrupt, but how it can liberate, too" (73). Anderson on the other hand seems to be against technology altogether. Miskec interprets the ending of his novel, repeating the sentence "Everything must go" (*Feed*, 299-300) several times in a decreasing font size, as a demand for a completely new start without any technology. "While Anderson longs for a time without technology, Doctorow endeavours to promote a critical eye toward our technology-centered society" (73). She suggests teaching both books simultaneously because "[w]hen students can unpack the ideologies of a text, they are on their way to a more critical way of reading the rest of their world, literary and mediated alike" (73). I broach this issue again later in this section.

The main objective of this section is to show how students can be encouraged to critically question current advances in communication and information technology by referring to the futuristic worlds described in the dystopian novels. Hintz and Ostry (2003) highlight that DYAN dealing with technology offer great possibilities to teach young adults how to use technology wisely. They argue that technology is a topic teenagers are usually highly interested in because it "can represent both darkest fears and brightest hopes, as young readers are exposed to anxieties about technology while being shown the wonders that it can perform" (11). In the following, I briefly introduce both novels and provide a compressed plot summary. Subsequently, the novels' potential for fostering critical reading in EFL is elaborated, and three concrete exemplary activities to incorporate them in class are suggested.

4.1. *Feed*

M. T. Anderson, who was born in 1968, is a successful American author of children's books as well as young adult fiction (Anderson 2015). In his satiric DYAN *Feed*, which was first published in 2002, he criticises the enormous influence of technology, advertisement, and consumerism on society. Depicting an exaggerated version of today's technology-driven society, he aims at inspiring young adults to question the world they are living in. In an interview conducted by Shoemaker (2004), Anderson explains that many teenagers are aware of the fact that they are manipulated and are trying to "satirize what's happening all around them. I hope that this book will give them an opportunity to do just that" (101). The novel received positive acknowledgement by various critics, praising it to be "a virtuoso performance" (Morrissey 2013: 195), "a sophisticated satire" (192), and "the perfect device for an ingenious satire of corporate America and our present-day value system" (Adams 2002: 564). Anderson himself considers his book didactical and gives some advice for incorporating it in schools (Blasingame 2003: 98-9). Bradburn (2002) agrees by classifying it as a didactic "cautionary tale" (401). Morrissey (2013) praises *Feed* by writing that its "young adult audience will grasp the gravity of the subject matter but also appreciate and maybe even be inspired by the novel's grace and wit. The book celebrates literacy and critical thinking as the only antidotes for terminal consumerism" (195). Acknowledging Morrissey's reasonable

reference to critical thinking, I present the potentials of the novel for encouraging critical thinking skills in section 4.3.

Plot Summary

Set in a not too distant future, the novel depicts a group of teenagers who are completely embedded in a world that is directed by technology. They have a chip, named 'the feed', implanted into their brains which constantly besieges them with advertisements and information, and enables them to chat without having to speak or type. Therefore, they tend to forget how to write, speak, and think on their own. When Titus and his friends fly to the moon for spring break, he meets Violet who comes from an unconventional and, therefore, underprivileged social background. Her father is a retired university professor who is worried about the decay of language, and Violet criticises the crude way Titus and his friends behave. When their feeds are destroyed in a hacker attack, all teenagers' feeds can be completely mended except for Violet's. The technicians have problems repairing her feed as it has only been implanted since she has been seven years old and is, therefore, not very thoroughly connected to her body. Titus and Violet fall in love, even though Titus cannot fully understand Violet's criticism against the feed. In order to resist the system Violet tries to create a completely random user profile by pretending to be interested in odd and completely incoherent products. When her feed is deteriorating, detaining her arms and legs to work properly, the maintenance unit refuses to repair it because Violet does not have an appropriate consumer profile that would be worth saving. When her condition is slowly deteriorating and she loses her body functions, Titus who is unable to deal with this situation turns his back on her.

4.2. *Little Brother*

Cory Doctorow, the author of the novel *Little Brother*, was born in Canada in 1971. On his personal home page he is described as a successful author, blogger, and advocate of the softening of copyright laws. *Little Brother* is, therefore, available not only in a print version but also as a free download under a Creative Commons licence (Doctorow 2015). In *Little Brother*, which was first published in 2008, he critically comments on the war against terror and

demonstrates that he is extremely versed in modern technologies and programming. His book is one of the many DYAN which deal with the 9/11 terrorist attacks. According to Hintz and Ostry (2003: 12), 9/11 had a huge impact on children and young adults and caused them to worry about terrorism, which lead to the publication of novels approaching this issue. *Little Brother* achieved positive acknowledgement from various critics. “Suspenseful, fast-moving and crammed full of techno-talk, this tale of rebellious, freedom-loving geeks vs. repressive authority is all too believable” (Rohrlick 2008: 12). Moreover, Finkelstein (2009) compliments Doctorow’s descriptions to be “better than any movie – the reader will have no trouble envisaging the scenes” (32). A topic which is addressed by many critics is the novel’s reference to Orwell’s *1984* calling *Little Brother* an “updated version of *1984*” (Rohrlick 2008: 12). In an interview conducted by Bernick, Steele, and Bernick (2010), Doctorow confirms that the book is influenced by Orwell’s novel and that the title is inspired by *1984* (437). He explains the difference to *1984* referring to the fact that *Little Brother* also considers the power of technology for those who are not in powerful positions. “Orwell saw technology in a fairly one-sided way. He was brilliant and insightful and gifted, and a wonderful writer. But there is no inkling in *1984* of the notion that technology cuts both ways and actually cuts harder against the establishment than it does against the anti-establishment” (438). This is a highly interesting thought, which I consider when discussing the potential of *Little Brother* for encouraging critical thinking skills.

Plot Summary

When 17-year-old Marcus and his friends sneak out of school in order to play an online game, terrorists attack the San Francisco Bay Bridge. Because they are accidentally near the Bay Bridge when the attack happens, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) holds them for questioning for several days. When they are finally released, they are warned not to tell anybody about what happened during the last few days or they threaten to catch them again. After the terrorist attacks, security measurements are tightened, depriving citizens of their privacy. Back home, Marcus realises that his computer has been bugged by the DHS and decides to use his Xbox to create an internet connection the DHS cannot trace. Thanks to his great understanding of technology, Marcus

who uses the screen names ‘W1n5t0n’ and ‘M1k3y’ in order to keep his privacy manages to spread the illegal actions of the DHS via the Xnet to teenagers all across the US. When his friends notice that Marcus becomes more serious in attacking the DHS, they are scared and turn their backs on him. Marcus, however, does not give up and meets Ange who supports his plans. When Marcus finds out that his friend Darryl who has been held captive by the DHS ever since the terrorist attacks is still alive, he breaks down and tells his parents what happened to him. Together they decide to tell the story to a journalist in order to raise awareness of the ruthless activities of the DHS. As soon as the story is public, Marcus organises a demonstration against the DHS to distract them from his attempt of going underground. Unfortunately, he is caught by the DHS again. When they start torturing him in order to receive information, the DHS is stormed by the California Highway Patrol and banished from the state.

4.3. Potential for encouraging critical thinking skills

The following section aims to present and explain how critical thinking skills can be encouraged by using Anderson’s *Feed* and Doctorow’s *Little Brother*. It is structured according to the list of critical thinking skills I have compiled at the end of section 2.3.1.

4.3.1. Finding out the text’s attitude and intention

Asking questions about the text’s attitude and intention is always a vital way of gaining deeper understanding of a text. As both *Feed* and *Little Brother* are DYAN, the reader can assume that the intention could be to criticise present social and political structures which might lead to a dystopian future. When having a closer look at the text’s intentions, it is necessary to also consider its underlying attitudes which obviously influence its intentions.

Considering the text’s attitudes, it is interesting to refer to several topics which are raised in *Feed*. Students can, for instance, be encouraged to think about whether the text is in favour or against the usage of technology. Moreover, the perspective on consumerism, advertisement, and the importance of language can be examined. It is, however, especially interesting to consider the novel’s attitude towards technology. As I have mentioned above, some scholars argue

that Anderson is against technology, and that the last scene of the book indicates the necessity of a new start for society without any technology. Although, this is a valid point, I do not fully agree that the book's aim is to denounce all technical devices. Rather I suppose that it intends to emphasise the importance of being able to use technology wisely. As long as technology is applied for the benefit of humans, the text is not arguing against it. In *Feed*, however, technology is mainly used to increase sales and to push economy by bombarding citizens with advertisements. Therefore, I propose that the novel criticises the unethical use of technology, which is depicted in *Feed*. Starting from this controversy, a class discussion debating the students' different understandings of the functions of the text can be introduced.

Furthermore, the students can be asked to interpret the intention behind the descriptions of the world in *Feed*. At first sight, most readers probably argue that the futuristic world of *Feed* is completely different from present reality. However, when taking a closer look, the direct connection between Anderson's inventions, like the implanted microchip, the up-cars, or the strange fashion trends, and the present society becomes apparent. These inventions are frankly just exaggerations of what is already happening in present reality. Likewise, the environmental situation of a completely polluted sea and only genetically grown plants directs to the contemporary critical environmental conditions. "What the imagined space and time of science fiction thus offer the reader is not a vision of a possible future, but an interrogation of the present" (Bullen and Parsons 2007: 128). Anderson himself agrees that his novel applies an imagined future to consider our present-day problems (Shoemaker 2004: 100).

Moreover, in order to teach students the competence of detecting the text's intentions, they can be instructed to analyse how the strange new inventions are introduced in the novel. Detailed information about the conditions of the futuristic world is interspersed, while the plot is proceeding without discussing any of the shocking facts in detail. The environmental problems are "indirectly revealed as background information" (Bullen and Parsons 2007: 132), for instance, when Titus's father mentions the deforestation of a park: "Yeah. Jefferson Park? Yeah. That was knocked down to make an air factory" (*Feed*, 125). Inventions which are completely bizarre to the reader are described in a

way as if they were the most ordinary things in the world. Thereby, the book intends to drastically show how deeply the narrator Titus is imbedded in the technology-driven society he is part of. He and his friends do not reflect on their world until Violet begins to explain the terrible effects of the feed. Adams (2002) argues that these details about the futuristic everyday life create a very realistic world (565). Every house is, for instance, described to have its own bubble and its own sun which the inhabitants can turn on and off themselves (*Feed*, 214). Moreover, due to funding cuts, the school can no longer afford to employ "alive teachers" (*Feed*, 234) and is, therefore, forced to use holograms to replace teachers. Another technique to weave the reader into the futuristic world, also mentioned by Schwebel (2014: 206) and Ventura (2011: 93), are short insertions with information from the feed which are interspersed between chapters and do not have anything to do with the plot. Thereby, the readers are enabled to experience the feed's interrupting nature.

Considering *Little Brother*, students can also try to find out the text's attitude towards technology. In case both novels are read in a class, the teacher should ignite an interesting confrontation of *Feed* and *Little Brother*'s perspectives on technology. As has been mentioned above, Doctorow tries to convey that technology can be used by everyone, not only by powerful politicians who control citizens by spying on them. Thereby, he indicates that technologies must not be seen only as a threat. McDuffie (2013) rightly argues that "Marcus's aggressive use of technology sends a message that young adults can and should be participants and agents, rather than victims, of technology" (152). In order to be able to control technology and to use it wisely, Doctorow claims that everyone needs to possess basic programming skills. His position can be guessed from Marcus's statement that "[c]omputers can control you or they can lighten your work – if you want to be in charge of your machines, you have to learn to write code" (*Little Brother*, 120). After having found out about Doctorow's attitude, it is fruitful to debate on whether the students agree that it is necessary to know how to write code in order not to be controlled by technologic devices. Moreover, the book offers a great opportunity to approach the issue of terrorism by discussing what terrorism actually is and how preventive security measures work.

Once having discovered the attitudes, it is interesting to question what the text's intentions are. In an interview conducted by Bernick, Steele, and Bernick (2010) Doctorow explains that he hopes for people "to reevaluate this intuition they have that the threat [of terrorism] is so great now that we have to do anything and it justifies everything. You can't have a War on Terror because terror is a crime, not an army" (437). This statement offers a great basis for discussing what terrorism actually is. However, I suppose that the intention of *Little Brother* is not only to make the readers think about whether the war against terrorism justifies everything. Rather I agree with McDuffie (2013) that the novel intends to show that being technologically versed can be seen as a new kind of literacy. The book presents "new literacies as methods of resistance, rather than limiting resistance to traditional literacies like handwriting and canonical literature" (153). This is a vast contrast to *Feed*, trying to show the deterioration of language and the necessity of traditional ways of communication. Marcus knows how security systems, encryption etc. work and "[a]lthough he is a gamer, his use of and interest in technology extends beyond recreational uses into critical literacy" (McDuffie 2013: 152). McDuffie calls Marcus a critical user of technology because he questions authorities that use technology to invade personal freedom and uses his intelligence to fight back against that invasion (152-3). The novel intends Marcus to serve as a role model for teenagers, encouraging them to be critical citizens and to inform themselves about the importance of technology in their society.

4.3.2. Pondering opposing arguments

Both books offer situations featuring two characters with opposing ideas, which can be used to train students in pondering opposing arguments.

In *Feed*, Titus and Violet's actions can be compared, and students can discuss how they would react in the various situations. By analysing the pros and cons of both modes of behaviour, the teacher can ignite a discussion about ethical decision-making. Titus obviously experiences a situation of standing between his peer group on the one hand, and Violet on the other hand. Bradford (2010: 131) agrees that he struggles to choose between sticking to the norms of his peer group, and knowing that Violet does not approve of them. He tries to

integrate Violet into his circle of friends, knowing that she does not appreciate their behaviour. He is drawn back and forth between his familiar environment of going with the flow, not questioning his world like all his friends do, and Violet who plans to rebel against consumerism and the feed. Violet's situation is not less complicated. She knows that she does not have very long to live and decides to experience as much as possible during her last months. On the one hand, she is convinced to act against the terrible effects consumerism has on society, but on the other hand, she longs to lead a normal teenage life like Titus and his friends. Both positions offer a fruitful basis for class discussion.

Similar to the disagreement between Titus and Violet in *Feed*, the conflict between Marcus and his father in *Little Brother* serves as a beneficial basis for argument in class. Marcus and his father disagree on whether personal freedom and privacy, or security and surveillance are more important in life. Several scenes in the novel can serve as a basis for critically evaluating both perspectives. There is one situation in which Marcus's father says, "What's the big deal? Would you rather have privacy or terrorists?" (*Little Brother*, 138). The fact that he uses a rhetorical question implies that he is completely convinced of his opinion and suggests that it is a stupid question to ask, as the answer is obvious for him. However, Marcus could not disagree more distinctly. He answers, "Dad, come on. Taking away our privacy isn't catching terrorists: it's just inconveniencing normal people" (*Little Brother*, 138). Starting from these statements, students can be directed to find arguments for and against each point of view, and, thereby, improve their critical thinking skills. Moreover, it is an interesting issue to debate about how much freedom one is ready to give up for the sake of security. On the one hand, when Marcus is watching TV he hears the President say, "that no price was too high for security" (*Little Brother*, 141). On the other hand, Marcus supposes that "[t]here's something really liberating about having some corner of your life that's *yours*, that no one gets to see except you. […] It's not about doing something shameful. It's about doing something *private*. It's about your life belonging to you" (*Little Brother*, 57).

4.3.3. Inferring unexpressed meaning from the text

Anderson does not express everything he wants to convey to his readers in an obvious and explicit manner. In order to understand the entire meaning of the book, the students need to use their skills of inferring unexpressed meaning from the text. By describing that the characters in *Feed* are consistently confronted with advertisements, the novel indicates that they are denied any information about other topics, like, for instance, political or social issues. Ventura (2011: 94) observes that "Anderson suggests that globalized production and consumption deny subjectivity and any potential for resistance". Only Violet manages to penetrate the corporations' aim of creating products which are more and more basic in order to appeal to as many consumers as possible and, thereby, forming people who are less and less diverse. Bullen and Parson (2007: 133) agree with Bradford (2010: 129) that the characters in *Feed* are overwhelmed by information and advertisement, but barred from gaining any insight into political or social contexts. Bradford (2010) even calls consumerism "a substitute for participation in citizenship", and explains that "[d]enied an education, the young people of *Feed* are trained not as citizens but as consumers" (129). This becomes obvious when the education system is described as an establishment that is no longer run by the state, but by corporations. Due to the fact that everyone's brain has direct access to the Internet and can look up information within a split second, School™ does not teach its students any facts or knowledge, but aims to show them how to best use their feeds in order to make purchases. It is, like Schwebel (2014) mentions, not at all surprising that "School™'s aim is to cultivate good consumers, not critical thinkers or discerning citizens" (212-3).

Another unexpressed statement is that even though all citizens can access the Internet via the feed and, therefore, have all knowledge at their direct disposal, they are unable to use this knowledge in a meaningful way. As Titus enthusiastically explains, "it's pretty brag" (*Feed*, 109) that it is no longer necessary to learn any facts, as everything can be looked up on the Internet. In order to illustrate his statement, he mentions that he knows that George Washington fought in the American Civil War: "That's one of the great things about the feed – that you can be supersmart without ever working. Everyone is

supersmart now. You can look things up automatic, like science and history, like if you want to know which battle of the Civil War George Washington fought in and shit" (*Feed*, 47). This is of course not right, as George Washington did not fight in the Civil War at all. Schwebel (2014) rightly argues that "Titus's error – along with his sloppy sentence structure – highlights just how unhelpful access to data is without a cognitive framework" (213). Thereby, the book emphasises that access to all possible pieces of information senseless without the cognitive competence of using it in a meaningful way. Students obviously need guidance from the teacher in order to understand these implications.

Inferring unexpressed meaning from the text can also be practiced when dealing with the ambiguous ending of the novel. I have already explained in section 3.2. that the endings of DYAN should always leave a spark of hope for the readers. Concerning *Feed*, notwithstanding Violet's tragic fate, the ending is ambiguous and leaves some space for hope. It encourages readers to keep on thinking about Violet's terrible experiences and their effect on Titus. Titus does mature towards the end of the novel when he decides to become a storyteller and tell his and Violet's story. The fact that Violet manages to spark a tiny bit of critical reflection in Titus, which causes him to spread Violet's story, indicates that Violet's life has not been completely wasted. She manages to encourage a movement against the blind consumer society, which can only be pursued if more people decide to question the world they are living in. I, therefore, do not agree with Bullen and Parsons (2007) who argue that the reader is left "grimly contemplating Violet's wasted life" (137). Hanson's (2015) argument that the ending "retains the dim but not extinct utopian hope" (273), as "Titus has the ability to change" (274) is more appropriate. The thoughtful reader can find hope in the ending of the story as Titus wants to remember Violet. However, this is just one of many different ways the ending can be interpreted. Another possible interpretation is, for instance, that Titus's beginning to tell Violet's story like a trailer for a Hollywood movie (Bullen and Parsons 2007; Schwebel 2014; Hanson 2015) points at his inability to rebel against the system as he is too deeply dependent on the consumerist world. The ambiguous closing of the novel encourages students to think critically about what it could possibly imply.

Doctorow's *Little Brother* also contains several instances in which the meaning is not clearly expressed by the text. One of the topics, which are never openly addressed, is power. I suppose that power represents a major theme in the novel, as it features many indications of who is able to control whom and who holds power. Students should be encouraged to analyse scenes in which implicit references to power relations can be discovered.

Moreover, it is not openly expressed that the text lays a lot of responsibility into young people's hands. They should be the ones to prevent the dystopian future, which is described in the novel, from becoming reality. There are several hints supporting this interpretation like, for instance, the book's title. McDuffie (2013) mentions that Marcus and his friends are all very smart while adults are described as "complacent, controlling, and egocentric" (154). Furthermore, she mentions that their knowledge about technology enables young adults to escape manipulation and control of adults and authorities (154). Ange openly describes her distrust in adults in the following scene:

> I don't know how to know who to trust, but I know who *not* to trust: old people. Our parents. Grown-ups. When they think of someone being spied on, they think of someone *else*, a bad guy. When they think of someone being caught and sent to a secret prison, it's someone *else* – someone brown, someone young, someone foreign. (*Little Brother*, 165-6)

This quote could be used as a starting point for finding more indications of the text's aim to express that initiative needs to come from the young.

Little Brother lends itself to another way of practicing inferring unexpressed meaning from the text, as it is never clearly stated when the novel takes place. It can be assumed that it is probably set in a not too distant future. In order to prove this, students can find several indications which point at the time when the novel takes place. Possible clues are references to historic events, the technology used by the teenagers, as well as the security systems applied by the government. If both *Feed* and *Little Brother* are read in a class, the students can compare the novels and discuss which of the books is set further in the future.

4.3.4. Recognising persuasive techniques – resisting reader positioning

When talking about *Feed*, there are two levels of discussing persuasive techniques. The more obvious one is the ubiquity of advertisement in the novel, which obviously applies persuasive techniques to make people buy all kinds of products. The more subtle level is outside of the novel itself when thinking about whether the text is trying to persuade or position its readers.

Considering the first level, the extremely advanced consumerism can be used in class to make teenagers aware of how advertisements try to make citizens buy particular products. Titus's absolute ignorance of the manipulation by advertisement he receives through the feed, offers a great start for critical thinking and discussion. Throughout the novel, the fact that in the futuristic world everything depends on producing good consumers rather than autonomous individuals becomes evident in many instances. Goatly's (2000) statement that "consumerism encourages the idea that the way to solve problems is by buying a product" (188) aptly describes the world in Anderson's novel. Bullen and Parsons (2007: 136) agree that the teenagers are not interested in any political or social topics because they are constantly 'fed' with more enjoyable possibilities like watching soap operas, chatting with friends, or catching a special bargain by purchasing a product as soon as possible. I consider the scene in which Titus and his friends find out about a special offer by 'Coca Cola' as particularly shocking. The company promises customers to give a year's supply of coke to those who manage to use the word 'coke' most frequently in their conversation. In an attempt to fool the company, the teenagers decide to make their conversation only about coke. Going on and on praising the great qualities of coke, they end up being incredibly thirsty and decide to make a stop at the next supermarket to buy some coke (*Feed*, 158-162). Clearly, it is not them who outwit the company, but the company that manages to win them as customers. Persuasion within the novel can also be recognised when the government tries to convince the citizens via the feed that the lesions, which appear on people's skins, are not caused by American industry (*Feed*, 85).

On the second level, students should think about whether the text tries to persuade them to believe a certain argumentation. One possibility to do so is to question Anderson's critique of language deterioration. McDuffie (2013) is not surprised that Anderson addresses the issue of language deterioration in his young adult novel, as the loss of literacy is one of the greatest fears of today's adult society (145). The degradation of language is omnipresent in Anderson's novel, as the first-person narrator is one of the teenagers who do not have to read, write, and speak very often, due to the assistance of technological devices. He makes excessive use of the filler 'like' and often inserts 'da da da da da' when he does not know something or cannot be bothered to explain it in detail. In addition to that, McDuffie (2013) observes the usage of "empty modifiers" (147) like 'big' and 'meg'. Moreover, she highlights that Titus uses too many question marks, which she interprets as "a lack of confidence in his thoughts" (147). His style of "first-person, stream-of-consciousness narration demonstrates language and cognitive deterioration" (147). There are several instances in which Titus's faulty language becomes especially obvious. When he is driving his up-car through smoke columns, he has difficulties describing their colour: "They were as gray as, I don't know. They were just gray ok?" (*Feed*, 169). Another exemplary situation is Titus saying that Violet sat down on an "old thing" (194) failing to describe the artefact in a more detailed way. The loss of literacy is not only a problem of the teenage generation, but also "Titus's parents' teen-speak implies that their assumptions about the world are equally adolescent" (Bullen and Parsons 2007: 137). The only adult character who is not affected by the deterioration of language is Violet's father who fights to keep literacy alive, which makes him an outsider and an embarrassment for his daughter. He uses highly academic speech and archaic vocabulary like 'tryst' or 'locale' in order to preserve language. However, the novel does not celebrate him as a rebellious hero due to reasons which are soundly summarised by Bullen and Parsons (2007):

> By making the only positive adult character sometimes ridiculous, the novel carefully sets itself just outside a didactic and sermonizing critique of contemporary America by decentring intelligent dissenting characters. Violet's father is demonstrably right in his critical assessments of the world of the novel, but he is not recognised or celebrated for his intelligence in ways that might alienate an implied reader likely to resent

> a message about an old-fashioned, adult academic being ‘‘in the know’’. (137)

The topic of language deterioration can motivate students to think about whether it is important to use a certain kind of language in order to communicate successfully. The text obviously tries to convince the readers that the language depicted in the novel is utterly amiss. In order to resist reader positioning, the students should think for themselves whether they agree or disagree. Moreover, it is interesting to discuss what the novel aims to achieve by featuring a character like Violet’s father. Should it teach the readers a lesson not to use youth speech?

What could possibly pose a problem when using *Feed* in EFL teaching, is the fact that Anderson uses invented terms like ‘brag’, ‘meg’, or ‘null’. This can be confusing for non-native speakers, but is not particularly problematic as the terms are used in contexts which make their meanings quite easy to understand. Moreover, the use of swearwords might be problematic, but Anderson argues that it is necessary to experience the decline of the English language and to directly feel this language with all its swearing in order to be able to reject it (Shoemaker 2004: 100).

In *Little Brother* persuasion can also be discussed on two different levels. Persuasion within the book primarily happens in connection with the efficiency of security systems used in society. The traffic authorities, for instance, explain to citizens that they use Fast-pass technologies to make paying for the motorway more convenient for drivers. However, they do not allude to the fact that these technologies also track every single car and keep record of when, where, and how often drivers use the Fast-pass. By focussing on the convenience, citizens are distracted from realising the real intention behind this facility. The narrator hints to the senselessness of tracking down citizens’ driving behaviours when observing that “[t]here were lots of people who have abnormal traffic patterns, abnormal usage patterns. Abnormal is so common, it’s practically normal” (*Little Brother*, 121).

In order to resist reader positioning, students need to become aware of the persuasive devices the text uses to influence its readers. As has been indicated above, Doctorow hopes that young people will counteract the situation of

exaggerated security measures, which do not serve any purpose. Ames (2014) writes that "[u]nlike most young adult novels, Doctorow's text reads as if he was purposely attempting to spark political action in teen readers" (13). I agree with Ames that Doctorow tries to encourage teenagers to become aware of their power in a technological society by showing them how much they can achieve by rebelling against authorities. This is a great strategy to make young people interested in political and social issues. However, students should be aware of the novel's intention, which is why I propose to scrutinise how the text manages to convince young readers of their power. They should find out what kind of persuasive techniques are used and judge for themselves whether they share the text's attitudes. One technique Doctorow applies is sarcasm, when describing the absurdity of society's reaction to the terrorist attacks. Marcus thinks about terrorism and society's measures against it in several instances:

> I'd never really believed in terrorists before – I mean, I knew that in the abstract there were terrorists somewhere in the world, but they didn't really represent any risk to me. […] Terrorists kill a lot fewer people than bathroom falls and accidental electrocutions. Worrying about them always struck me as about as useful as worrying about getting hit by lightning. (*Little Brother*, 41)

The abovementioned quote can be analysed critically by asking whether Marcus's argument is solid. Even though Marcus seems to be completely convinced, readers could ask themselves whether the fact that a terrorist attack is unlikely, justifies not taking any measures against it. Which measures would make more sense than an increase in security? Another statement of Marcus, concerning the new security cameras in schools is highly sarcastic and demands analysis to make sure that students understand what he actually wants to say: "Why did we have cameras in our classrooms now? Terrorists. Of course. Because by blowing up a bridge, terrorists had indicated that schools were next. Somehow that was the conclusion that the Board had reached anyway" (*Little Brother*, 92). By making fun of the authorities, the text manages to show readers that even though they always seem to be the ones who have power over everyone, their decisions need to be questioned critically. In a discussion with his classmates Marcus says, "Isn't the point of terrorism to make us afraid? That's why it's called *terror*ism, right? […] So aren't we doing what the terrorists want from us? Don't they win if we act all afraid and put

cameras in the classrooms and all of that?" (*Little Brother*, 92-3). This statement serves as a very good basis for igniting a discussion about how to react to terrorist attacks.

Both books are wise choices for class reading and for practicing resisting reader positioning. Both Marcus who skips school, outsmarts the school's surveillance system and challenges adults' attitudes, and Titus who does not question the feed in any way do not serve as role models for teenagers. This is an important aspect when focussing on encouraging critical thinking. Critical engagement with a text in no sense aims at approaching a novel by spotting role models to identify with. Lewis (2000) supports my argument that identifying with characters of a novel does not promote critical thinking, asserting that when children's literature "is about characters whose cultures and life worlds are very different from the reader's, disrupting the reader's inclination to identify with the text can heighten the reader's self consciousness and text consciousness" (253). It is, therefore, beneficial to keep a certain emotional distance and consciousness about the text and about one's role as a reader when critically evaluating a text.

4.3.5. Understanding different positions and interpretations

A great potential of Anderson's *Feed* is that the reader has the possibility of choosing which perspective to take when reading the novel, meaning that the reader can either identify with the narrator Titus or with the rebellious character Violet. Bullen and Parsons (2007) argue that the fact that the story is narrated from Titus's point of view is rather unusual for dystopian young adult fiction. They explain that it is much more common to write dystopian fiction from the perspective of the character who detects a society's flaws and rebels against them. Readers are normally meant to identify with the activist who is also the focal character in most young adult literature like, for instance, in the bildungsroman (134). Having the possibility of either identifying with Titus or with Violet, the "[r]eaders of *Feed* are invited to assess this world by inhabiting two opposed subject positions as represented by the novel's protagonists" (134). On the one hand, it is tempting for teenagers to identify with Titus as he is the first-person narrator and the reader learns a lot about his inner thoughts.

Moreover, Bullen and Parsons (2007) explain that the fact that Titus features many characteristics which are very common among present-day teenagers, invites readers to relate to him. Spisak (2012) also argues that, even though his behaviour can be hard to retrace for the readers, Titus is a highly developed character who evokes the reader's sympathy (58). On the other hand, Bullen and Parsons argue that "*Feed* asks readers both to identify with, and resist, Titus's world-view" (136). Bradford (2010) agrees, explaining that presenting Titus as an "unreliable – and at times unlikeable – narrator, […] does not readily invite reader identification" (131). According to Bullen and Parsons (2007), readers are

> invited to make discriminating judgements of Titus and his value system. Although readers are shown the events of the plot from Titus's perspective, it is almost impossible to empathise with him given his cruelty to Violet as she dies. Readers are thus given the provocative narrative position of experiencing the world of the story through Titus, and simultaneously having to reject and critique that world-view, while they are looking through it. This produces a kind of schizophrenic reading situation that requires readers to step outside the norms the novel assumes average teens would usually inhabit. (136)

The reading position, which has been described above, is extremely useful when promoting critical thinking in an EFL context. Unlike in most young adult novels, the text's didactic leaning is not completely obvious because the focal character resists the activist movement, which is encouraged by another character. It is much more likely to motivate students to read a text which does not bluntly tell them how to behave. I suggest that it is obviously much more constructive to give students the chance to decide for themselves whether they approve of Titus's actions and attitudes or not. This narrative style empowers young readers to critically challenge Titus's behaviour and gives them a sense of what it means to question a text rather than simply identify with the focal character, believing what he or she claims. Ames (2013) mentions another advantage of *Feed*'s unusual narrative structure which manages to make young readers realise where political indifference can lead. She expects that "[i]f teen readers are frustrated by, or disapprove of, Titus's lack of action, perhaps this text has the potential to spark self-reflection and generational critique" (16).

Even though *Little Brother* does not feature a special narrative structure like *Feed*, it is still possible to try to view the incidents in the novel from different perspectives. One can, for instance, examine why Marcus's friends Van and Jolu decide to stop working with him when they realise that he is very serious in pursuing his plans of rebelling against the DHS. Both Van and Jolu's decisions are expounded in the novel. Jolu tries to explain to Marcus that he is afraid of being caught by the police, as he does not trust them to treat people with different origins equally. He tells Marcus, "I hate to say it, but you're white. I'm not. White people get caught with cocaine and do a little rehab time. Brown people get caught with crack and go to prison for twenty years" (*Little Brother*, 160). Van explains that she thinks that it is too dangerous and too risky to rebel against the authorities. Jolu mentions that her decision could have been influenced by the fact that Van and her parents managed to escape the North Korean regime when she was little, while two of her uncles have been caught. Advantages and drawbacks of rebelling with Marcus can be listed and students can decide for themselves what they would do in Van and Jolu's situations. Students can be motivated to think about whether they would also be afraid and whether they would trust Marcus in his intentions.

The understanding of different positions can also be practiced referring to a scene of Marcus and his classmates rebelling against their new teacher who tries to convince the pupils that security is more important than privacy and freedom. Referring to the United States Declaration of Independence, the teacher explains that

> [t]he role of the government is to secure for citizens the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In that order. It's like a filter. If the government wants to do something that makes us a little unhappy, or takes away some of our liberty, it's okay, providing they're doing it to save our lives. […] You lose your liberty and happiness to protect life. If you've got life, you might get liberty and happiness later. (*Little Brother*, 209)

The teacher obviously needs to discuss this statement with the students when reading the novel. In the scene above, the pupils challenge the teacher's standpoint of justifying a limitation of freedom and happiness for the sake of protecting life: "Doesn't that mean that they can do anything they want, if they say it's to stop someone from hurting us in the future?" (*Little Brother*, 209).

Marcus adds that their "rights were being taken away in the name of protecting them! […] [T]he government was treating everyone like a suspected terrorist" (*Little Brother*, 210). Defending the rebellion of the young people against the authorities, Marcus also refers to a part of the Declaration of Independence:

> Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such a form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. (*Little Brother*, 180)

Those two opposing arguments are highly controversial and offer a great opportunity to practice critical thinking and to deal with analysing different argumentations and mindsets. Moreover, students can be guided to form their own views by considering different possibilities. When dealing with a delicate topic like this, the teacher needs to be especially careful not to influence the students by showing his or her own attitude towards the issue. Rather the teacher should act as an adviser and coach who describes the controversial situation, helps to ponder advantages and drawbacks, and explains possible reasons for taking up the two perspectives.

4.3.6. Questioning one's own actions and attitudes

Anderson explains that by confronting teenagers with issues like consumerism and persuading ads "outside of their usual context, they instantly see what's up. They see all of the ways in which a whole cultural *context* is being constructed for them to promote certain kinds of sales" (Blasingame 2003: 98-9). This is a great potential of dystopian novels in general. Anderson suggests "decontextualizing and recontextualizing – inviting kids to step outside their world for long enough that they can see what we're all living in, and start to ask questions" (Blasingame 2003: 99). Moreover, young readers prefer addressing contemporary social issues in a space that is separated from this reality, because it is easier to discuss them in a fictional context (Ames 2013: 17).

Titus's refusal to challenge anything about his society offers a fruitful basis to motivate students to reflect on their own worlds. Focussing on the fact that Titus blindly accepts things in his society as they are and does not critically question them in any way, invites students to take a step back and think about their own

behaviours. They can be encouraged to think about whether there are aspects of their worlds that might seem bizarre or stupid to people who do not know anything about our society. Moreover, the teacher can motivate them to think about our reality and to come up with things that strike them as weird. It is, for instance, striking that people are often phoning while driving even though it is well known that this can actually kill people. Another weird aspect of our world is that dogs and cats live with humans in cities where they do not have the possibility of pursuing their lives in a natural environment. Human habits like church rites or typical demeanours of today's internet generation, like texting while walking, are possible aspects of society, which could strike students as weird.

In order to motivate citizens in *Feed* to constantly buy new products, the corporations make trends change extremely quickly. There is one scene in which Titus explains that the girls went to the toilet because hairstyles had changed. Towards the end of the novel, Titus, however, notices that he is always running after these trends which change so rapidly. He says that "[s]ometimes that made me feel kind of tired. It was like I kept buying these things to be cool, but cool was always flying just ahead of me, and I could never exactly catch up to it" (279). Discussing scenes like these in class, teachers can motivate young readers to reflect on their own consuming behaviour and on the influence trends and advertisements have on their lives. By engaging teenagers with the abovementioned topics, they can be encouraged to think critically about their shopping habits, how they might be influenced by advertising, and, thereby, realise how important it is to receive decent education in order to be able to question one's world with a critical eye. It needs to be emphasised here that teenage students require support and encouragement from teachers, as it is unlikely that they independently start to reflect on their own behaviour.

Hintz and Ostry (2003) raise the rather philosophical question of "what it means to be human in the twenty-first century" (11). Being part human part machine, the characters in *Feed* can be described as cyborgs. "A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism" (Haraway 1998: 149). Ventura (2011) argues that Anderson aims to show that the technologic progress is "dehumanization" (92). She, furthermore, says, as has already been mentioned

above, that “human subjectivity is erased and the identity of the consumer is the only available space to occupy” (92). Kerr (2009) agrees with Ventura and argues that the feed “demolishes free thinking, turning individuals into rampant consumers and trend-crazed drones for whom the idea of autonomy is virtually nonexistent” (28). She further explains that even though the citizens in *Feed* do theoretically have free will, the fact that the feed has become a part of their bodies “has disrupted their ability to exercise it or even to desire it” (29). The teacher can bring up the philosophical question of in how far the characters of the book are human or dehumanised. Considering the fact that they have the feed implanted into their brains, the question could be raised whether the behaviour of Titus and his friends can still be classified as human or not. Subsequently, the question arises in how far they can be held responsible for their actions. Moreover, the teacher can direct the discussion towards the present situation considering the extent to which our lives are already technologically enhanced.

Two quotes from the novel, which soundly describe the phenomenon above are given below:

“I don’t know when they first had feeds. Like maybe, fifty or a hundred years ago. Before that, they had to use their hands and their eyes. Computers were all outside the body. They carried them around outside of them, in their hand, like if you carried your lungs in a briefcase and opened it to breathe” (*Feed*, 47). The fact that Titus thinks about computers as organs of the body, illustrates the characters’ absolute dependence on technology. The feed is connected to the limbic system and can, therefore, never be removed without causing major physical damage or even death. Violet who suffers from a deterioration of her feed gradually loses control over her body parts and in the end dies from the technical malfunction. Titus tries to explain Violet’s rebellious behaviour with the damage of her feed and thinks that “[s]he didn’t mean those things. It was because of the damage. It was making her not herself. I told myself that again and again” (*Feed*, 211). The fact that Titus worries about a tampering of Violet’s personality due to increasing *absence* of technology is another indication of the close interrelation of technology and human nature. Thinking of technological inventions like internet goggles or watches with the functioning of controlling

one's pulse and supervising one's sleeping patterns, it is worth discussing whether these devices are already experienced as body parts. Another igniting topic for discussion is what we generally understand as human and where the border lies between a human being and a cyborg. I elaborate on this when I describe the concrete classroom activity dealing with this issue.

The majority of the topics in *Little Brother*, which serve as a great basis for encouraging critical thinking, can be related to the presence and, thereby, students can make inferences to their own lives and reflect on their own actions and attitudes. One of the main topics in the novel is technology and its impact on social life. The depiction of how power relations are influenced by technology, invites pupils to reflect on how they experience technology in their everyday lives. A discussion about how students relate to technology, whether they feel that they are in control of technology or that technology controls them, would serve great material for critical thinking. Students should be encouraged to think about in how far their lives are influenced by technological devices, and whether they use these devices critically.

Terrorism and its impact on security measures and individual freedom is another topic that can be related to the present-day society. Especially when considering the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, this topic is extremely current and teenagers have most likely been confronted with it at school or in the media. When working with *Little Brother*, it is highly beneficial to ask students to conduct some research on what measures are currently taken by Europe and the USA to stop terrorism. Once they have found some information on that, this can be compared to the measures taken in the book and students can discuss what they think about these actions. Students are, moreover, encouraged to think further and propose different possibilities of how to react to terrorism. The reaction to terrorism, which is undertaken in the book, has a huge impact on the citizens' privacy and individual freedom. The authorities decide that in order to fight terrorism the state needs to tighten security and surveillance measures. Doctorow even writes about surveillance cameras which are installed in every single classroom. Students can be instructed to think about their own lives and whether there are any surveillance or security measures which control their lives and limit their privacy. Examples are, Facebook, Google, or security

control at airports. Once having found examples, the students can think about whether these devices actually increase people's security. The following questions serve as a great basis for discussion: 'How much security can be accepted in order to still have freedom and privacy?', 'How could we be protected if not by surveillance?', 'Does surveillance protect us at all?'.

The scene in which Marcus and his classmates debate with their teacher about whether securing life justifies limiting liberty and happiness, offers the opportunity to learn about the United States Constitution and the United States Declaration of Independence. Students can be instructed to do online research and find out the key statements of both documents. I suppose that this is necessary to include when teaching *Little Brother*, as I assume that Austrian teenagers might not be familiar with these American laws. Subsequently, it is very interesting to compare the American laws with the Austrian ones, and to find out how privacy, liberty, and surveillance are managed in Austria. This can probably also be done in connection with the subject 'History and Social studies'.

4.4. Example activities

In the following section I propose three activities which aim at encouraging critical thinking in the EFL classroom by using the novels presented above. The first example deals with Anderson's *Feed* and centres around a Pro- and Cons-Discussion. In the second example critical thinking is promoted by means of Doctorow's *Little Brother* and an activity in which students are encouraged to engage critically with their surroundings. Finally, the third example combines both novels by focussing on the topic 'technology' and conducting a 'Fishbowl Discussion'. Concerning difficulty, the activities can be classified as exercises for level B1-B2 according to the CEFR. They are, therefore, targeted at a 7th or 8th form of an AHS. All materials, like worksheets and instructions for activities, are provided in the appendix.

***Feed*:**

When teaching *Feed*, it is beneficial to use what Thaler (2008) denominates the 'segment approach'. The segment approach demands that before each lesson, students prepare segments of a book which are later dealt with in class. As the

students do not have to read the whole book before discussing it in class, the suspense can be kept for a longer period of time. Another positive aspect of this approach is the possibility of using pre-, while-, and post-reading activities. As a potential drawback, Thaler mentions the fact that it is rather time-consuming (105). The objectives of the following activities are to improve students' abilities of pondering opposing arguments, understanding different positions, and questioning one's own actions. More precisely, the students should first read a certain part of the novel, form their own opinion on a topic, and then participate in a discussion. In the discussion, students have to find arguments either in favour or against the implantation of the feed in an imaginative future society. They do not necessarily have the chance to represent their own opinions but might also have to find arguments supporting someone else's stance. Thereby, they are encouraged to be open-minded and to understand arguments for and against different positions. By discussing these issues, competences which are listed in the curriculum's educational area of 'humans and society', like, for instance, the ability to judge and criticise, can be improved (see section 2.4.).

Procedure:

At the end of the previous lesson, the students have received a worksheet featuring several tasks to complete until the first teaching unit dealing with *Feed*. This worksheet is provided in the appendix. They should read up to page 165 of the novel. Moreover, they are to give thought to how the novel, the narrator, and the other characters think about the feed, meaning the microchip which is implanted into people's minds. Furthermore, they should express their own opinions on whether they think that the feed is a good or a bad invention. They are instructed to find advantages and disadvantages of the feed and estimate its impact on humans and their freedom and responsibilities. Thinking about the feed's impact on humanity entails the question of what 'humanity' even means. What characteristics constitute a human being and where is the border between humans and cyborgs, which cannot be held responsible for their actions? The students should make up their minds about this issue which is going to be broached in class. Finally, the worksheet instructs the students to think about whether they would want to have the feed implanted, if they were living in a world where the majority of the population does have it.

In class, the teacher explains that a discussion about whether the feed should be implemented in the future is going to be conducted. The students should try to imagine living in a world where implanting the feed is technically possible but not yet legally allowed. They are divided into five groups. Two groups obtain instructions to find arguments in favour of the feed technology, and two groups should try to argue against the implementation of the feed. The fifth group functions as the jury who needs to agree on what arguments they consider appropriate and valid. In the end, the jury decides whether the arguments in favour or those against the implementation of the feed are more convincing. The groups have fifteen to twenty minutes to prepare for the discussion. They are instructed to compare their notes and to come up with a plan how to win the discussion or how to judge the arguments respectively. The jury should think about how they are going to lead through the discussion and possibly chose one or several moderators. Moreover, the jury group should conduct some preparations for the discussion like arranging the desks in a U-shape and making sure that there is enough space for everyone. The opposing groups sit down opposite each other while the jury takes place in the middle. The teacher introduces several rules, which need to be respected during the discussion. After 20 minutes, the discussion is interrupted and the members of the jury decide on whether to legalise the feed or not. When presenting their decision they need to justify it accordingly.

As a homework assignment, the students should respond to a short extract from the novel, dealing with the fact that corporations try to divide people into personality types in order to foster economic growth. Dalrymple (2003) suggests analysing the effects the feed has on Titus's intelligence and personality. In addition to referring to the extract given, the students should try to find other passages which indicate the feed's influence on Titus.

Waters and Viney (2012) suggest another beneficial activity with great potential for improving students' skills of inferring unexpressed meaning from a text.

> Read the newscast about the President denying that American Industry is responsible for the lesions people are getting. [p. 85] Does he provide any good reasons for his claim? What reasons does he provide? What about the language he's using? Can anyone notice any mistakes in

> grammar or sloppy presentation? Why do you think M.T. Anderson included this in the book? (Waters and Viney 2012: 37)

The instructions above could first serve as a homework and after everyone has worked with the passage individually, students can discuss it in groups of four or five.

Explanations:

I chose to use an in-class discussion because understanding opposing arguments and recognising flaws in other people's reasoning is one of the most important competences to convey when promoting critical thinking. The fact that the students first think about the issue themselves, then talk about it in small groups, and finally discuss it with the whole class gives them the opportunity to experience various different opinions and argumentations on the topic. Moreover, the fact that not everybody is able to argue for his or her personal perspective is vital for learning to appreciate and understand different viewpoints. The teacher needs to mention explicitly that the discussion is not about the students' personal opinions. Rather they should try to play their roles and argue as convincingly as possible. The fact that students are confronted with different attitudes, encourages them to think about perspectives which are different from their own. In case their role supports their personal opinion, they need to think about how the other group could possibly argue. In case their role does not support their personal opinion, they automatically need to think about arguments supporting the other perspective.

It has been mentioned above that there are several rules the students need to follow during the discussion. They must address each other politely and let everyone finish his or her statements. Moreover, they should briefly summarise what the previous person has been explaining, before they utter their own argument. Only one student is allowed to speak at a time while the others need to listen carefully. The jury is instructed to take notes during the discussion in order to log its process. The jury, moreover, functions as a moderator of the discussion and needs to make sure that everyone has the possibility to contribute to the conversation.

I suggest that it is a good idea to invent a fictional situation to frame this discussion. Therefore, I decided to include the story of legalising the feed and a jury group which serves as an observer and in the end decides whether the feed is going to be legalised or not. I suppose that it is motivating for the students to know that there is going to be a winner, and that their discussion leads to a decision of the jury. This discussion could also be conducted with different issues like, for instance, whether language rules should be abolished altogether, or whether the people in *Feed* should be held responsible for their actions.

I value Waters and Viney's (2012) suggestion of reading the extract of the President denying that the US is responsible for the lesions because this passage actually does not include any proper explanations for the lesions. The fact that the President is obviously unable to provide any reasons, lends itself to improve students' critical ability. Only because the statement is uttered by the President, does not ensure that it is necessarily valid or clever.

Little Brother:

When reading *Little Brother*, it is advisable to use the 'sandwich approach'. This approach signifies that the students do not read all chapters of a book. Thaler (2008) explains that the class should discuss the parts which are omitted in different ways by student or teacher presentations or summaries. An advantage of this approach is that it is timesaving. However, it can be confusing for students not to read all parts in detail (Thaler 2008: 105-6). The objectives of the following set of activities are to support students' competences in questioning technical devices critically and to make them aware of the presence of security measures in our world. By reading the novel and discussing the issue of security and privacy, the students are encouraged to make inferences to their own lives. Most importantly, they should receive an understanding of how technologic devices can control us and how they can uncover aspects of our private lives. Dealing with these issues is helpful for reaching the aims mentioned in the curriculum section of foreign languages, mentioning that literature should be used to facilitate critical engagement with technological and social developments (see section 2.4.). Due to the fact that *Little Brother*

contains several paragraphs describing technological devices, encryption methods and ways to hack into networks, I propose to spare students the effort of reading through all chapters. Instead, they need to read about half of the book and present one of the chapters which are not read by everyone to the rest of the class. In their presentations, students ought to describe how the plot is progressing in the particular chapter and explain difficult topics. Thereby, complicated technological and political issues can be approached in class.

Procedure:

In the first lesson, the teacher introduces the book, and the students are assigned to a chapter they need to prepare and present to their colleagues. For their presentations, students obtain cards with clear directions considering which topics to discuss or explain in particular. These cards can be found in the appendix. Provided that the class manages to work through four chapters per week, the discussion of the book should be completed after five weeks. Based on the student presentations, the topics of technology, security, freedom, surveillance, and terrorism are considered in class.

Once the class has discussed the whole book, the students are encouraged to make inferences to the present society and think about security measures in their own lives. During one week, they should go through their lives with open eyes and note all kinds of security or surveillance measures they encounter. They can add measures they did not directly encounter, but which came to their minds, like, for instance, security controls in airports or government buildings. Once they have written down their observations, they should critically question in how far each measure protects or improves human lives and in how far it reduces people's freedom. A handout, featuring a grid where they can document their observations and thoughts, supports their work. The handout is provided in the appendix. After one week, the students are asked to bring their grids to class and to discuss and document their findings in groups of five. Their task is to design a PowerPoint-presentation, summarising their experiences and presenting their opinions on how much security is acceptable in order to secure our lives, and how much freedom they are ready to give up for security. Each

group is to send their presentation to the teacher. In the next lesson, the teacher and the students discuss the presentations in class.

Explanations:

The sandwich approach is appropriate when working with *Little Brother* as the book comprises 365 pages and includes many technological and political issues which demand discussion in order to understand the novel.

During five weeks of working with the novel, one of the most delicate topics to approach is terrorism and security measures. It is highly discussed today, due to the recent terrorist attacks in Paris. Therefore, I propose that it is vital to address this topic in school, in order to explain its nature to the students. It would, for instance, be beneficial to ask the students to find out themselves what 'terrorism' really means by conducting an online research. In class, students and teacher can debate about Doctorow's explanation that, "[y]ou can't have a War on Terror because terror is a crime, not an army" (Bernick, Steele and Bernick 2010: 437). When working with a sensitive issue like that, it is particularly important for the teacher to try not to influence the students with his or her own attitudes and perspectives.

The activity of keeping a list of all security and surveillance measures one is confronted with, is beneficial for promoting critical competence. Most teenagers are used to all kinds of technologic devices they use every day and probably have never thought about what information they, thereby, reveal about themselves. Devoting their attention to these measures and questioning their effectiveness, helps students to learn engaging critically with their world. When filling out the grid I expect them to notice that there are security or surveillance measures, which do not have the primary goal of securing humans, but of gaining as much information as possible in order to improve their sales by sending advertisements for their products. Even providing one's email-address and name to an online company provides the company with a variety of possibilities how to influence one's life. They can, for instance, track down one's online shopping behaviour and adapt the advertisements one sees on the screen to one's interests. Possible security measures the students could come up with are cameras in shops, security controls at concerts or other huge

events, airport controls, the fact that Google stores all our searches, cameras in banks, subway cameras, NSA controls etc.

***Feed* and *Little Brother*:**

As the two novels both deal with the topic of technology controlling our lives, it is reasonable to use both novels simultaneously in the EFL classroom. The following teaching suggestions are based on the 'topic approach', which demands students to read several excerpts of different books from the same author, genre, period, or topic. The understanding of a particular issue can, thereby, be improved, however, the students are not expected to read entire books (Thaler 2008: 106). When working with *Feed* and *Little Brother*, the topic approach can be applied by focussing on the common topic of technology. Amongst other books, they can serve as examples of novels dealing with this topic. The students are informed about the plots by a short summary provided by the teacher. Subsequently, they are to read certain extracts, dealing with the selected topic. The main objectives of the following activities are to practice the critical thinking skills of finding out the texts' position and intention, inferring unexpressed meaning from the text, as well as reflecting on one's own actions and attitudes. Students should discover the texts' positions and attitudes towards technology by looking for unexpressed meaning, which could reveal the novels' intentions. They should practice their ability to discover persuasive devices, meaning to understand how the text positions its readers in order to convey the intended meaning. Thereby, competences like critical autonomous thinking, which are mentioned in the didactic principle of 'strengthening of self-acting and personal responsibility', can be improved (see section 2.4.).

Procedure:

The teacher introduces the novels in class by giving a short summary of the first chapters and mentioning the central issues addressed in the books. Important sections can also be read to the students, in order to give them an idea of the novels' language styles. After this lesson, the students receive instructions explaining what extracts of the books to read at home. Detailed explanations of why I chose certain extracts are provided in the section 'explanation' below. Moreover, the students need to think about and answer several questions

dealing with the topic, which are subject of the next class. Thereby, they are well prepared for the fishbowl discussions, which are conducted in the following lesson.

In class, students are divided into four groups of around five people. Two groups work with *Feed* and two groups work with *Little Brother*. They receive clear instructions what to discuss in their groups in order to discover the text's position and intention. Each group is provided with a worksheet containing questions to answer and different quotes from the book to relate their answers to. The teacher explains that each group has to choose two speakers who are going to participate in the fishbowl discussions later on. If the students have never worked with the fishbowl method before, the teacher will need to introduce this procedure. A detailed description of the method is provided below. The students work in groups for 20 minutes and try to answer the questions on the worksheets.

In the first fishbowl discussion, the students discuss Anderson's novel. Waters and Viney (2012) offer a useful explanation of the fishbowl method. The speakers of group 1 and group 2 are asked to arrange their chairs in a circle in the centre of the class. The rest of the students, who act as observers, form a larger circle around the small one. The inner circle is where the discussion takes place. One of the students in the inner circle is the facilitator who needs to make sure that the discussion keeps going by asking questions and making sure that everyone can contribute to the conversation. The observers are not allowed to speak during the discussion. Their task is to listen carefully and to take notes. However, in the inner circle there is one additional free chair which can be taken by observing students who shortly want to add something to the discussion, ask a question, or lead the conversation to a particular direction. One of the observers is assigned the responsibility of time-keeping (Waters and Viney 2012: 62). The discussion should last for ten minutes. After that, the speakers of group 3 and group 4 are asked to come to the centre of the room and the same procedure starts again, now discussing Doctorow's novel. If the students are motivated, another round of fishbowl discussion can be conducted in order to give more students the opportunity to discuss in the inner circle. After each discussion, the observers are asked to share their impressions. They

should give a short summary of the most important issues and share with the class what they consider as the discussion results. After that, the teacher asks the students how they felt using this discussion method, and what they think that they have learned from this lesson.

Explanation:

The topic ‘technology’ has been chosen for the topic approach because it is highly interesting how *Feed* and *Little Brother* have completely different methods of dealing with this issue. The fact that the texts’ approaches are so contrary, offers a great opportunity to practice analysing in how far the texts’ attitudes and intentions become obvious in the novels. When presenting the novels in the first lesson, the teacher should on the one hand give a precise summary of the plots and introduce the main characters; on the other hand, it is also important to direct the students’ attention to the topic of technology. This can be done, for instance, by reading short passages from the book in which the topic is dealt with.

All of the extracts, which need to be read by the students, reveal some aspect of the text’s perspective on technology and show what the novel intends to convey. In *Feed*, the first extract centres around the fact that Titus and his friends are disconnected from the feed for a few days because of a hacker attack. They have difficulties dealing with this situation and find it hard to kill time without the Internet. The intention behind this scene might be to point out that people are nowadays highly dependent on technology. Students should think about how they would feel if they did not have access to the Internet for several days. The second extract deals with Violet’s plan of creating a customer profile which does not allow the corporations to find any logical connections in her purchases. She expresses her worries about consumerism making people less varied but Titus cannot really understand her concerns. This scene implies the widespread fear of consumerism eliminating individuality. Referring to the third extract, the students should refer to the very elegant and archaic way of language which is used by Violet’s father. In this case, it is a little bit more difficult for the students to figure out the text’s intention, as has already been explained earlier in this thesis. On the one hand, this extract might intend to

draw attention to the deterioration of language, but on the other hand, Titus and Violet both make fun of the way Violet's father expresses himself. Nevertheless, this issue is worth thinking about and can be approached in the fishbowl discussion. In the fourth extract the students should read, they are confronted with the teenagers' attempt to outsmart the company 'Coca Cola' by saying the word 'coke' as often as possible in their conversation. Students should find out that the teenagers in the novel are actually not the smart ones who outwit the company, but that they behave exactly as the company had planned. This is another indication that the novel is sceptical about consumerism and modern technologies. Finally, the fifth extract deals with the dramatic message Violet receives from the FeedTech about not receiving financial support for repairing her feed because her purchasing habits do not make her a reliable investment. This scene wants to warn readers of the horrible effects of technology. Violet is no longer regarded and respected as a human being who needs help in order to survive, but is reduced to a consumer who is not worth being saved because the corporations do not understand her purchasing patterns.

In *Little Brother*, the first extract is about how Marcus manages not to be spied on by the DHS who implanted a bug in his laptop. Marcus explains that his technologic skills make him feel powerful. Obviously, the text's intention is to encourage teenagers to inform themselves about how to use technology wisely, as it serves as a tool for being powerful and able to protect oneself. The second extract contains an explanation of how cryptography works. The students should think about why this explanation is included in the novel. In the third extract, students are confronted with more explanations of encryption methods, surveillance measures, and programming competences. The novel's attitude towards technology becomes apparent. It aims to convey that technology is a great tool to improve our lives. However, in order to use computers for our own good, we need to be able to use them intelligently in order not to be controlled by them. Finally, the fourth extract deals with different methods Marcus and his friends apply in order to attack the security systems of San Francisco. Moreover, the ineffectiveness of technologies which are trying to detect terrorists is explained. In this extract, the text's intention of showing teenagers that they do have the power to change the world becomes evident. By

explaining that the DHS is not as clever as it may seem, teenagers are encouraged to become politically active citizens and to critically question what authorities depict as useful security systems.

The group discussions in class serve as a preparation for the fishbowl discussions. As soon as the groups have chosen two speakers, they can start planning how to convey their arguments. Together they should find arguments the speakers can later raise in the fishbowl. I propose that the fishbowl discussion is especially useful, as it helps students to learn to listen actively to what their colleagues have to say. The focus is always on a few students who have the chance to utter their views in front of the others. This also provides students who find it hard to participate in a whole class discussion with a possibility to contribute to the conversation.

After each fishbowl discussion, the observing students are asked to summarise the results. Thereby, they are motivated to be attentive during the discussion, and have the possibility of uttering their positions. Subsequently, the teacher should conduct a comparison of *Feed* and *Little Brother*'s ways of dealing with the issue of technology controlling our lives.

5. Conclusion

Throughout this diploma thesis I have argued on the basis of theory and referring to two concrete DYAN that critical thinking is an important competence to support in school and that DYAN are highly beneficial when encouraging critical thinking in language teaching. With reference to Anderson's *Feed* and Doctorow's *Little Brother* I have demonstrated several possible ways how implementing DYAN for promoting critical thinking in EFL classrooms might work.

Concerning the first research question about why it is important to foster critical thinking, it can be summarised that even though some opponents of incorporating critical thinking in EFL teaching mention possible difficulties connected to cultural diversity and linguistic weakness, the arguments for integrating it prevail. The question of why it is important to implement critical thinking in EFL teaching can be answered by referring to Wallace (1992a) who describes the ultimate aim of critical competence. She explains that encouraging students to be confident in questioning a text and making them aware that they have various options to interpret a text and do not need to believe what the author is claiming, is crucial when educating autonomous individuals. The second research question is engaged in discussing in how far DYAN can encourage critical thinking skills. The potential of DYAN to develop these skills is explicit as these books have the global aim of making people rethink a current situation and change their behaviour in a way that will prevent the described dystopian future from becoming reality. Moreover, dystopian fiction can serve as a first motivation for young readers to think about social and political problems. Burford (2012) summarises that "[i]f the goal of education is to create productive, critical thinkers ready to interact with and create in a global society, dystopian science fiction should be the literature of choice in secondary classrooms" (156). Concerning the third research question about how to implement DYAN in the Austrian EFL classroom in order to promote critical thinking skills, the focus was on two DYAN namely Anderson's *Feed* and Doctorow's *Little Brother*. Having analysed these novels' potential for encouraging critical thinking, it can be argued that providing the students with guiding questions is crucial in order to support them in their reading process

and help them understand hidden meaning and question the text critically. Moreover, it is useful to implement class discussions that can often facilitate students' ability to accept different attitudes and perspectives on an issue. In case a novel comprises a lot of complicated, demanding topics student or teacher presentations of particular parts of the book are beneficial and offer an opportunity to discuss those issues in class.

To conclude, this thesis emphasises the importance of promoting critical competence in Austrian upper secondary EFL classrooms and highlights the favourable possibility of developing these skills by implementing DYAN. Furthermore, a number of possible ways of incorporating DYAN in EFL teaching demonstrate its value for educating autonomous critical thinkers. As a proponent of encouraging critical thinking and a friend of DYAN, I am definitely going to implement these books for fostering critical competence in my future career as an English teacher.

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7. Appendix

***Feed* – Materials used:**

Homework:

Read up to **page 165** and make up your mind about the following questions. **Take notes!** You will need them in class.

- What position do the novel, the narrator, and the other characters hold towards the feed?
- What do you think of the feed? Do you consider it a great invention? Come up with at least three advantages and three disadvantages of the feed.
- How does the feed influence people's lives? Does it have an impact on free will and free choice?
- Can the characters in *Feed* be considered human? Can they be held responsible for their actions? (In order to answer this question in a meaningful way you need to consider what humanity is in the first place. What characteristics constitute a human being?)
- If you lived in a world, where the majority of the population has the feed, would you want to get one as well?

Homework:

Write an **essay** responding to the given passage and analyse the **effects the feed** has on Titus's intelligence and personality. Try to find other passages, which indicate the feed's influence on Titus. You should write about **250 words**.

They're also waiting to make you want things. Everything we've grown up with…it's all streamlining our personalities so we're easier to sell to…they do these demographic studies that divide everyone up into a few personality types, and then you get ads based on what you're supposedly like. They try to figure out who you are, and to make you conform to one of their types for easy marketing. (p.80-81)

Homework:

Read the newscast about the President denying that American Industry is responsible for the lesions people are getting. **[p. 85]** Does he provide any good reasons for his claim? What reasons does he provide? What about the language he is using? Can anyone notice any mistakes in grammar or sloppy presentation? (Waters and Viney 2012: 37)

Take notes! We are going to discuss this in the next lesson.

"… which the President denied in an address early on Tuesday. "It is not the will of the American people, the people of this great nation, to believe the allegations that were made by these corporate 'watch' organizations, which are not the majority of the American people, I repeat not, and aren't its will. It is our duty as Americans, and as a nation dedicated to freedom and free commerce, to stand behind our fellow Americans and not cast…things at them. Stones, for example. The first stone. By this I mean that we shouldn't think that there are any truth to the rumors that the lesions are the result of any activity of American industry. Of course they are not the result of anything American industry has done. The people of the United States know, as I know, that that is just plain hooey. We need to remember…Okay, we need to remember that America is the nation of freedom, and that freedom, my friends, freedom does not lesions make" The President is expected to veto the congressional …" (Feed, 85)

***Little Brother* – Materials used:**

Cards for chapter presentations:

Group 1: Chapter 1 In your presentation you are expected to summarise the plot and to explain the following expressions: • TOR • Harajuku Fun Madness • Gait-recognition cameras • Arphid	**Group 2: Chapter 3:** In your presentation you are expected to summarise the plot and to explain the following expressions: • BART • DHS You should give particular attention to Marcus's opinion on terrorists. (p. 41)
Group 3: Chapter 5 In your presentation you are expected to summarise the plot and to explain the following expressions: • Metal-detectors and x-rays • Spy-cam • Xbox • ParanoidXbox DVD	**Group 4: Chapter 7** In your presentation you are expected to summarise the plot and to explain the following expressions: • Fast Pass tracking • Xnet
Group 5: Chapter 9 In your presentation you are expected to summarise the plot and to explain the following legal documents: • Bill of Rights • Constitution	**Group 6: Chapter 11** In your presentation you are expected to summarise the plot and to explain the following expressions: • Public key • Private key
Group 7: Chapter 13: In your presentation you are expected to summarise the plot and to explain the following legal document: • United States declaration of Independence	**Group 8: Chapter 15:** In your presentation you are expected to summarise the plot and particularly focus on: • The press conference Marcus and Ange are conducting • Zeb's letter
Group 9: Chapter 17: In your presentation you are expected to summarise the plot and particularly focus on: • explaining "encryption" • Masha's suggestion	**Group 10: Chapter 19:** In your presentation you are expected to summarise the plot and particularly focus on: • The VampMob -> what is the intention behind it,…
Group 11: Chapter 21: In your presentation you are expected to summarise the plot and explain the following expression: • Waterboarding	

Handout:

For the next seven days take notes of all kinds of security or surveillance measures you encounter. Once you have written down your observations, you

should critically question in how far the measure protects or improves human lives and in how far it reduces people's freedom.

Observed security/surveillance measure	In how far does it protect or improve human lives?

Group activity:

In your group go through the following activities:

- Every group member presents the grid and tells the others about his or her observations and thoughts.
- Try to find similarities and differences in your grids and discuss them.
- Discuss the following questions:
  → “Can surveillance protect us? If not, what are other measures to make people safe?”
  → “What is more important: security or privacy/freedom?”
  → “How much of our freedom are we ready to give up for the sake of security?”
- Create a PowerPoint-presentation summarising your experiences of the last week. Add a slide presenting your answers to the questions above.

***Feed* and *Little Brother* – Materials used:**

Homework:

Read the following extracts and think about the questions. **Take notes!**

Feed:

- p. **43-49**
  → How do Titus and his friends feel about being disconnected from the feed?
  → Think about how Titus describes the usage of computers.
  → Do some research on George Washington and the Civil War. Can you find out anything that surprises you?
- p. **95-104**
  → What is Violet's plan? Try to describe it.
  → What do you think about Titus's reaction to Violet's worries that consumerism makes people less varied.
- p. **134-138**
  → How would you describe the language Violet's father uses?
  → What do Violet and Titus think of his language?
  → Why does the novel feature a character like Violet's father?
- p. **158-162**
  → Why do Titus and his friends decide to use the word 'Coke' as often as possible in their conversation?
  → What is Violet's opinion on this game?
  → What could be the text's intention behind this scene?
- p. **245-248**
  → What is Titus experiencing when he "tries on" Violet's memories?
  → Why does Violet not get any financial support for repairing her feed?

Little Brother:

- p. **82-88**
  → What does Marcus notice when he boots his laptop at home?
  → How does he manage to access the Internet without being spied on?
- p. **89-100**
  → What is Marcus's opinion on the cameras in his school?
  → Try to explain in your own words how cryptography works?
  → Why do you think the explanation of cryptography is included in the book?
- p. **109-120**
  → What did you learn about programming computers, encryption methods and surveillance measures in this extract?
  → Why do you think these explanations of different technologies are included in the book?
  → Why does Marcus think that it is important to know how to write code? Do you agree with him? Why?/Why not?
- p. **127-132**
  → What methods are Marcus and the other Xnetters using to attack the security systems of San Francisco?
  → Briefly describe the theory of the 'paradox of the false positive'.

Group activity:

Group 1: FEED

Discuss the questions below:

- What position towards technology is conveyed in *Feed*? Does the novel view it as something positive, which improves our lives or is the text critical about it, fearing that it could deteriorate our lives?
- What intention does the novel *Feed* pursue? What does it want to convey to its readers?

Relate your answers to the following quotes and discuss in what ways they could reveal the novel's position and intention.

1) "Everything in my head was quiet. It was fucked. "What do we do?" she asked. I didn't know." (p.44)
2) "Computers were all outside the body. They carried them around outside of them, in their hands, like if you carried your lungs in a briefcase and opened it to breathe." (p. 47)
3) "That's one of the great things about the feed – that you can be supersmart without ever working. Everyone is supersmart now. You can look things up automatic, like science and history, like if you want to know which battles of the Civil War George Washington fought in and shit." (p.47)
4) "Everything we've grown up with – the stories on the feed, the games, all of that – it's all streamlining our personalities so we're easier to sell to. I mean, they do these demographic studies that divide everyone up into a few personality types, and then you get ads based on what you're supposedly like. They try to figure out who you are, and to make you conform to one of their types for easy marketing. It's like a spiral: They keep making everything more basic so it will appeal to everyone. And gradually, everyone gets used to everything being basic, so we get less and less varied as people, more simple." (p. 97)

Group 2: FEED

Discuss the questions below:

- What position towards technology in conveyed in *Feed*? Does the novel view it as something positive, which improves our lives or is the text critical about it, fearing that it could deteriorate our lives?
- What intention does the novel *Feed* pursue? What does it want to convey to its readers?

Relate your answers to the following quotes and discuss in what ways they could reveal the novel's position and intention.

1) "The place was a mess. Everything had words on it." (p. 135)
2) "I am filled with astonishment at the regularity of your features and the handsome generosity you have shown my daughter. The two of you are close, which gladdens the heart, as close as twin wings torn off the same butterfly." (p. 136)
3) "[T]here was this promotion, where if you talked about the great taste of Coca-Cola to your friends like a thousand times, you got a free six-pack of it, so we decided to take them for some meg ride by all getting together and being like; Coke, Coke, Coke, Coke for about three hours so we'd get a year's supply. It was a chance to rip off the corporations, which we all thought was a funny idea." (p. 158) "Marty was like, "No. But, fuck, aren't you getting like meg thirsty? With all of this talking about the great taste of Coke?" […] "Let's go out and get some," said Link." (p. 162)
4) "We're sorry, Violet Durn. Unfortunately, FeedTech and other investors reviewed your purchasing history, and we don't feel that you would be a reliable investment at this time." (p. 247)

Group 3: LITTLE BROTHER

Discuss the questions below:

- What position towards technology in conveyed in *Little Brother*? Does the novel view it as something positive, which improves our lives or is the text critical about it, fearing that it could deteriorate our lives?
- What intention does the novel *Little Brother* pursue? What does it want to convey to its readers?

Relate your answers to the following quotes and discuss in what ways they could reveal the novel's position and intention.

1) "The best part of all of this is how it made me *feel*: in control. My technology was working for me, serving me, protecting me. It wasn't spying on me. This is why I loved technology: if you used it right, it could give you power and privacy." (p. 88)
2) "And the more they thought about it, the more they realized that *anyone* can come up with a security system that he can't figure out how to break. But *no one* can figure out what a smarter person might do." (p. 99)
3) "If you want to be safe, you don't use cryptography that some genius thought of last week. You use the stuff that people have been using for as long as possible without anyone figuring out how to break them." (p. 100)

Group 4: LITTLE BROTHER

Discuss the questions below:

- What position towards technology in conveyed in *Little Brother*? Does the novel view it as something positive, which improves our lives or is the text critical about it, fearing that it could deteriorate our lives?
- What intention does the novel *Little Brother* pursue? What does it want to convey to its readers?

Relate your answers to the following quotes and discuss in what ways they could reveal the novel's position and intention.

1) "A computer is the most complicated machine you'll ever use. It's made of billions of microminiaturized transistors that can be configured to run any program you can imagine. But when you sit down at the keyboard and write a line of code, those transistors do what you tell them to do." (p. 119)
2) "You can learn to write simple code in an afternoon. Start with a language like Python, which was written to give nonprogrammers an easier way to make the machine dance to their tune. Even if you only write code for one day, one afternoon, you have to do it. Computers can control you or they can lighten your work – if you want to be in charge of your machines, you have to learn to write code." (p. 120)
3) "The important thing about security systems isn't how they work, it's how they fail." (p. 127)
4) "[T]he Department of Homeland Security had set itself up to fail badly. They were trying to spot incredibly rare events – a person is a terrorist – with inaccurate systems. Is it any wonder we were able to make such a mess?" (p. 129)

Abstract English

This diploma thesis investigates how critical thinking can be encouraged in the Austrian upper secondary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom and explores how the implementation of dystopian young adult novels (DYAN) can be beneficial in fostering students' critical thinking skills. A literature review defining the concepts of 'reading', 'critical reading' and 'critical thinking' serves as a basis for discussing possibilities of how to empower students to be critical and autonomous thinkers. As the main focus of this diploma thesis is on encouraging critical thinking skills in EFL teaching in the Austrian upper secondary AHS (Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule), reference is made to the mention of critical thinking skills in the Austrian AHS curriculum in order to legitimate its incorporation in EFL teaching. A brief history and definition of dystopian novels in general and of DYAN in particular initiates the consideration of implementing dystopian literature in EFL teaching. Relating to two DYAN, namely M. T. Anderson's *Feed* and Cory Doctorow's *Little Brother*, it is discussed in how far DYAN can be implemented in EFL teaching in order to foster critical thinking skills.

This thesis emphasises the importance of encouraging critical thinking as it is crucial to make students aware of the fact that as autonomous persons they have various options how to approach and interpret what they encounter in their lives. Moreover, the potential of DYAN to foster these skills is highlighted as the books have the global aim of making people rethink a current situation and change their behaviour in a way that will prevent the described dystopian future from becoming reality. Furthermore, a number of exemplary activities of incorporating DYAN in EFL teaching demonstrate their value for educating autonomous critical thinkers.

Abstract Deutsch

Diese Diplomarbeit untersucht wie kritisches Denken im österreichischen Englischunterricht in der Oberstufe unterrichtet werden kann und wie die Verwendung dystopischer Jugendliteratur in der Entwicklung kritischen Denkens hilfreich sein kann. In einer Literaturauswertung werden die Begriffe ‚Lesen', ‚kritisches Lesen' und ‚Kritisches Denken' definiert. Diese Definitionen dienen als Grundlage für die Diskussion verschiedener Möglichkeiten, Schülerinnen und Schüler zu kritischem und selbstständigem Denken zu motivieren. Der Fokus dieser Diplomarbeit liegt auf der Förderung kritischen Denkens im Englischunterricht der AHS-Oberstufe. Es wird auf Ausschnitte des Lehrplans verwiesen, die die Wichtigkeit kritischen Denkens hervorheben, um dadurch die Einführung desselben in den Englischunterricht zu rechtfertigen. Eine kurze Geschichte und Definition dystopischer Romane im Allgemeinen, sowie dystopischer Jugendromane, leitet eine Diskussion über die Sinnhaftigkeit der Verwendung dystopischer Literatur im Englischunterricht ein. Anhand zweier dystopischer Jugendromane, zum einen M.T. Andersons *Feed*, zum anderen Cory Doctorows *Little Brother*, wird erörtert, auf welche Art und Weise dystopische Jugendliteratur im Englischunterricht für die Förderung kritischen Denkens eingesetzt werden kann.

Diese Diplomarbeit hebt die Wichtigkeit, kritisches Denken zu unterrichten, hervor da es entscheidend ist, jungen Menschen deutlich zu machen, dass sie als selbstständige Individuen an Dinge unterschiedlich herangehen beziehungsweise Texte kritisch interpretieren können. Außerdem wird betont, dass dystopische Jugendromane das Potential haben, kritisches Denken zu fördern, weil sie das Ziel haben, Menschen dazu zu motivieren, eine aktuelle Situation zu überdenken und ihr Verhalten zu verändern, um die Verwirklichung der beschriebenen dystopischen Zukunft zu verhindern. Darüber hinaus zeigen einige beispielhafte Unterrichtssequenzen den Wert dystopischer Jugendliteratur für das Unterrichten kritischen Denkens im Englischunterricht.

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