Textbook-defined practice: Narrated identities of English language teachers within a standards-driven context

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Abstract: This study explores the use of textbooks by German English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals and its interrelation with their Language Teacher Identities (LTI). Prior research indicates a significant dependency of language teachers on textbooks. The study uses narrative interview data of twelve teachers and two student teachers to reconstruct types of textbook use and LTI. We used qualitative content analysis leading to type formation through positioning theory principles. While teachers of type 1 (textbook-defined practice) and 2 (adaptive practice) show a higher need for security and closed structures, type 3 (critical practice) is determined by own convictions and highly committed to his/her teaching.

Lehrwerk-Nutzung im Englischunterricht: Narrative Identitäten von Englischlehrpersonen in standardorientierten Settings
Ziel der vorliegenden Untersuchung ist es, die Schulbuchnutzung deutscher Englischlehrpersonen und dem Zusammenhang mit ihrer *language teacher identity* (LTI) zu untersuchen, da bisherige Forschung auf einen potenziellen Zusammenhang zwischen LTI und Schulbuchnutzung hinweist. Die Studie verwendet narrative Interviewdaten von zwölf Lehrer*innen und zwei Lehramtsstudierenden, um Typen von Lehrbuchnutzung und LTI zu rekonstruieren. Wir verwenden eine qualitative Inhaltsanalyse, die als Basis für eine Typenbildung dient. Während Lehrer*innen des Typs 1 (*textbook-defined practice*) und 2 (*adaptive practice*) ein höheres Sicherheitsbedürfnis haben und geschlossene Unterrichtsstrukturen zeigen, hat Typ 3 (*critical practice*) eigene Überzeugungen und engagiert sich stark im Unterricht in einer vom Lehrwerk emanzipierten Form.

Keywords: textbooks, critical language teaching, post-method, language teacher education, language teacher identity; Lehrwerk, kritische Fremdsprachendidaktik, post-method, fremdsprachliche Lehrer*innenbildung, Language Teacher Identity.

1 Introduction

Ever since Akbari (2008) introduced the term "textbook-defined practice", international research (e.g. Gray 2013) has documented the predominance of textbooks in English language teaching, which is partly caused by language teachers' reliance on them. As one of only a few research pieces in Germany with this focus, Wipperfürth and Will's (2019) small-scale study indicates a highly textbook-defined practice in German English language teaching leading to a rather functional understanding of language, which does not consider context-sensitivity, learner orientation and criticality. Looking at language teachers' practices, research mainly centres around the concept of language teacher identity (LTI) (e.g. Kayi-Aydar 2019a), which explores language teachers' practices with regard to sociocultural, cognitive, and biographical dimensions. While there are studies researching language teachers' textbook use (e.g. Forman 2014; Rathert/Cabaroğlu 2021; Wipperfürth/Will 2019; some additional references in Ruisz/Rauschert/Thaler 2019), there is a lack of research on reflections of LTI in language teachers' textbook use. To fill this research gap and to connect the aforementioned strands of research, this study focuses on the still under-researched German context and pursues the questions of how English language teachers there use textbooks and how this is reflected in their LTI.

To answer these questions, the article first examines the body of research on language teachers' use of textbooks before discussing the concept of LTI (Sections 2.1–2.2). Second, the research contexts and research questions (Section 3) as well as methods of collecting narrative interview data and analyzing it with contrastive analysis and type formation will be outlined (Section 4). Third, findings will be presented and discussed by describing the reconstructed types of teachers' textbook practice and discussing reflections of their LTI (Section 5). Finally, limitations of this study (Section 6) as well as possibilities for future research will be discussed (Section 7).

2 Conceptual background

We present two primary theoretical and conceptual strands underpinning our research: the use of textbooks in foreign language classrooms and foreign language teacher identity. The overview of previous research will help show little is known about the way language teachers use language teaching materials, especially textbooks, in their classrooms. This sets the stage for our own research questions that deal with the intersection and trajectory of textbook use and the existence and development of a language teacher identity.

2.1 Textbook-defined practice

As a reaction to Kumaravadivelu's (2006) postmethod pedagogy, which proposes a more context- and student-oriented language pedagogy, Akbari (2008) argues "that the concept

of method has not been replaced by the concept of postmethod but rather by an era of textbook-defined practice" (647). Apart from Akbari, other scholars (e.g. Amalsaleh/Javid/ Rahimi 2010; Gray 2013) perceive a textbook-defined practice influenced by neoliberal tendencies, which normatively defines curriculum and methods in language teaching and gives rather passive roles to students and teachers. Despite the long tradition of research (e.g. Tomlinson/Masuhara 2010) mainly centering around textbook analysis, critique and development of textbooks (Forman 2014; Kurtz 2011, 2019; Ruisz/Rauschert/Thaler 2019), research in language teachers' use of textbooks is a rather neglected area, especially in foreign language research (Forman 2016; McGrath 2013; Wipperfürth/Will 2019). When speaking of textbooks, we here understand them as the textbooks that language teachers use in their teaching, excluding accompanying or additional materials.

Looking at existing research on EFL teachers' use of textbooks, we do not consider the content of textbooks important (which is a different research focus in itself) but how language teachers deal with the content (with a focus on gender, see e.g. Sunderland 2000). Zhang's (2020) theoretical paper argues, for instance, that teachers' beliefs highly affect textbook use. In addition, the author discusses systemic functional linguistics as a tool to help teachers to deconstruct textbook contents. Recently, Rathert and Cabaroğlu (2021) conducted a qualitative study on two English language teachers' use of textbooks, showing a rather textbook-driven practice that rarely considers learners and teaching contexts. In a qualitative study at a Thai university, Forman (2014) explored student English teachers' use of textbooks through field notes, lesson audio recordings and interviews. Although textbooks did not represent local contexts, the participants did not intervene in the proposed textbook instruction; nonetheless, the teachers only partly distanced themselves from the textbook representations. The reasons for teachers not distancing themselves from the textbook could be the lack of time the teacher has to question and modify textbook contents as well as the prestige of textbooks (Forman 2016). In their theoretical article, Jordan and Gray (2019) propose analytic syllabi as an alternative to textbook-driven practice in order to address learner needs and facilitate pedagogical considerations.

With regard to Germany, EFL textbooks have been criticized for being one-sided and replicating traditional views on society (e.g. Alter/König/Merse 2021) and following a rather strict curriculum of grammar instruction. Only few studies (e.g. Wipperfürth/Will 2019) look at how teachers make use of textbooks. Bohnensteffen (2011) studied the advantages (e.g. security in planning, less planning effort) and disadvantages (e.g. neglecting current didactic trends, not learner-oriented) of textbooks from the teachers' points of view with an informal small-scale questionnaire. In their small-scale qualitative study, Wipperfürth and Will (2019) pursue the question of when EFL teachers distance themselves from the textbook and report, with the help of questionnaires, that the act of distancing depends on didactical, pedagogical and motivational reasons, which are closely connected to the

teacher's identity. With this small body of research, it is crucial to look at teachers' use of textbooks more closely, especially in the German context (see Wipperfürth/Will 2019).

2.2   Language teacher identity

Language teacher identity (LTI) is a multi-faceted construct that attempts to describe the "cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical" (Barkhuizen 2017: 4) dimensions of what it means to become and be a language teacher since "[...] teaching practice is inevitably a continual identity work" (Yazan/Lindahl 2020: 2):

> Teacher professional identity then stands at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act' and 'how to understand' their work and their place in society. Importantly, teacher identity is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience (Sachs 2005: 15).

LTI develops over time, through different biographical phases and institutions that (future) language teachers go through and work for. It is therefore socioculturally embedded (e.g. Sang 2020). Learning opportunities and experiences shape a language teacher's view of the world and, thus, influence their teaching practice itself (e.g. De Costa/Norton 2017). LTI has a narrative or discursive quality in that it is based on the assumption that language teachers position themselves at a certain point in time, given a specific context or challenge from a biographical perspective, but also, potentially, a future practice (e.g. Beauchamp/Thomas 2019). Thus, LTI is connected to beliefs about teaching, such as teaching methods or students (e.g. Gerlach 2023). Despite its importance, LTI was long neglected as a construct and eventually gained attention during the sociocultural turn (e.g. Freeman/Johnson 1998; Block 2003). In a sociocultural sense, LTI raises awareness to aspects of teachers' identity, such as culture, gender, politics, or biographical background (e.g. Varghese/Morgan/Johnston/Johnson 2005). Especially for language teachers, identity as a construct is crucial because language itself shapes identity and identities construct language.

As can be seen in Kayi-Aydar's (2019a) research timeline, most studies focus on teachers' (narrative) reflections on their identity (development) (e.g. Yazan 2018). Since LTI research reconstructs teachers' positionings within certain thematic aspects, positioning theory can be helpful for analysing processes of teachers' LTI formation (e.g. Kayi-Aydar's 2019b; Trent 2012). Only few papers, however, investigate how LTI is enacted in actual EFL classroom practice (e.g. Kanno/Stuart 2011; Kubanyiova 2017; Xu 2013). Kanno/Stuart (2011) show the deep interconnectedness between language teacher identity (development) and the professionalisation of classroom practice. Another strand of research pays attention to the role of LTI in educational institutions. Farrell (2011) researches how private and professional identity are related to each other; Kayi-Aydar (2015) focuses on an

educational program enhancing LTI development and strengthening agency. LTI might be hidden and rather implicit and share certain characteristics with Bourdieu's habitus theory, in which implicit knowledge and structures guide practice. Therefore, an awareness of one's teacher identity and role within a school is closely related to the agency experienced and autonomy executed by the teacher (e.g. Vu 2016).

As for textbook use in language classrooms and its connection with identity, there seems to be a lack of research in our discipline. Due to this lack, Harwood (2017) draws on L1 studies of other subjects (e.g. mathematics) related to textbook use, promotes this interdisciplinary approach and concludes that textbook use highly influences and is influenced by teachers' identities and beliefs as well as the contexts (e.g. institutions) they are used in.

3 Research context and research questions

In the context of this study, in which language teachers talk about the role (and power) of textbooks as a guiding medium, teachers might be aware of the textbook's influence and either embrace it or critically distance themselves from it. Yet, in order to evaluate whether a textbook-defined practice is related to one's LTI, we need to consider two factors: the context in which the language teachers work and the context in which the study takes place, in this case the highly structured German school system. In addition to that, we are applying identity research in a German context, in which LTI is rarely used as a construct (for an overview see Gerlach 2022 and 2023). In Germany, teachers undergo four to five years of bachelor's and master's degrees or state examinations in universities before they receive 18–24 months of on-the-job training in state-regulated teaching colleges (Terhart 2021). Teachers usually teach two subjects and therefore, when considering and researching language teacher identity, socialisation within the second subject can be an important background for certain belief structures and practices. Language teaching methodology takes up a smaller fraction of the courses future language teachers have to take during their university degrees. Although in many cases innovative methodologies and approaches (e.g. critical, literary, digital approaches) are part of language teacher education, the dominance of textbooks in middle school cannot be dismissed. They serve as a primary source of teaching and learning materials (e.g. Wipperfürth/Will 2019), provided mainly through an oligopoly of three German textbook publishers.

While research indicates a connection between teachers' beliefs and textbook use as well as reasons for teachers distancing and taking over textbook content, there is a lack of research, especially in Germany, investigating the reflection of LTI in textbook use. Therefore, this study focuses on the following two research questions:

1   How do EFL teachers in Germany use textbooks in their language classrooms?
2   How are their language teacher identities reflected through textbook use?

4   Methodology and method

As previously mentioned, LTI can be collected through narrative/reconstructive approaches (e.g. Barkhuizen 2017; Barkhuizen/Consoli 2021), which provide insights into explicit and implicit knowledge of the respondents, their values and beliefs. The quality of this data is therefore extremely different from the studies referenced above, which have used questionnaires for exploratory research settings. Based on our data (e.g. in the form of narrative interviews with teachers), we can reconstruct teaching practices and textbook use through reconstruction and how these practices relate to LTI. To answer our research questions, we interviewed twelve teachers and two student teachers (6 male, 8 female) of English as a Foreign Language in German middle and high schools in March and April 2021 and followed an approach that was intended to elicit narrations about language teaching practices.

The data was originally collected within a research project on critical language teacher education following a reconstructive approach with the documentary method (e.g. Bohnsack 2017). Because of the research methodology, teachers were interviewed with open, narrative-oriented questions aiming at an analysis of teachers' orientations through reconstruction. The teachers were between 28 and 63 years old and, apart from one, all teachers were educated in the German system and, prior to the interviews, all teachers gave their formal consent to participate in an interview study. The participants were approached through the institution they were working at via email. Interviews were conducted via Zoom because of the Corona pandemic. Moreover, we reflected on our biases as interviewers and researchers with the help of a research diary.

Instead of asking closed questions, which would have resulted in collecting argumentative and highly reflective declarative knowledge, we wanted our interview partners to have the freedom to narrate their experiences and tell stories about their lesson planning, classroom interactions and, eventually, their textbook use (e.g. Vàsquez 2011; Gerlach 2022). The main topics of the interviews are 'the role of the English language teacher', 'colleagues', 'learners', 'methods', 'textbooks' and 'teaching contents' (see appendix A). In reality, and because of the narrative interview, passages about teachers' textbook use make up only a small part of the interviews, which were up to 100 minutes long. The interviews were transcribed according to Dresing and Pehl (2018). We extracted and transcribed those parts of the interview that allowed us to reconstruct both the textbook use and passages that helped us to gain insights into how the interview partners see themselves as language teachers and how they position themselves within the context of textbook use (i.e. their LTI).

We followed the principles of qualitative content analysis (e.g. Kuckartz 2016: 45) with a type formation based on positioning theory (e.g. Kayi-Aydar 2019b) in order to analyse characteristics that language teachers shared in terms of their textbook use and/or LTI. In practice, we adhered to the following steps of data analysis based on Kuckartz (2016: 46–

49): 1) Identifying of interest and focus, 2) selecting of relevant dimensions for analysis (in this this case: textbook use and characteristics of LTI), 3) extracting relevant text passages fitting to the dimensions, 4) grouping the participants according to their characteristics of textbook use and LTI, 5) describing each type with the help of interview passages, 6) analysing connections and differences within each type and between the different types, and 7) deepening the analysis of each type and selecting prototypical cases within each type that will be presented. To construct types, we considered positioning theory according to Kayi-Aydar (2019b). In consideration of positioning theory, our analyses have produced three distinguishable types, which will be explained in the findings section.

5 Findings and Discussion

We now present the three identified types, along with their analyzed characteristics, illustrated through excerpts from interviews. The first type shows a textbook-defined practice, the second type employs an adaptive practice and the third type a critical practice.

5.1 Type 1: Textbook-defined practice

The type 'textbook-defined practice' regards the role of textbooks in language classrooms as generally positive:

> Um, in fact, it is that we (.) um are now well taken along by the books, so, uh it must not always be written 30 vocabulary words at the beginning of the school year, but the books uh are now structured so that the first (.) three, four weeks a repetition phase takes place, where we can thematically motivate all the children thematically (Teacher 1: l. 51–57).

Using passive voice, the teacher states that the textbook is guiding both students and teachers and that repetitive language exercises help all students to progress in their language skills. With this positive attitude towards ELT textbooks, this type uses textbooks for structuring his/her lessons, although, one may argue, the content is rather pre-structured through the textbook itself (not necessarily actively through the teacher). This type, therefore, focuses on the transmission of knowledge and runs the risk of neglecting learners' experiences and needs.

The type 'textbook-defined practice' differentiates between teaching in elementary, intermediate, and upper levels: While teachers of this type predominantly base their teaching on textbooks in elementary and intermediate levels (grades 1–9), they exhibit a rather autonomous practice in high school courses (grades 10–13), because textbooks may not be available or due to different curricular expectations for final exams. The following quote illustrates this practice:

So the textbook plays a BIG role for me at the upper-intermediate level or in the orientation stage. Um, simply because/ well, in the meantime, it's probably a bit outdated, but we have the book from NAME OF PUBLISHER (.) um and I actually find that really good and motivating. And so I stick very closely to it from fifth grade to eighth grade and then over time I move on to more projects or when we read a book. So, but otherwise, the book is actually quite clearly the guideline (Teacher 2: l. 424–431).

In this quote, the teacher describes her teaching practice, which is not structured autonomously but strictly guided by the course textbook until the upper level. Despite criticism of older, outdated contents of textbooks, teachers of this type still extensively use textbooks because of institutional pressure in terms of curricula, lack of time or parents' expectations and colleagues. The following quote from another interview illustrates this pressure:

Um, and (...) the/ the textbooks are also structured like this/ you always have a beginning double-page, where it is then/ where the topic is somehow introduced and then you have so/ so two learning stations, I'd say, where knowledge is then deepened, (.) and then at the end you usually have a story and in some books, you have a small project/ in each unit, where they [the students] can then be creative, and I usually look at whether that makes sense or whether it costs us too much time because you have to somehow finish the book and uh (..) it is not so easy. When we had G8 [former educational reform: eight years of high school instead of nine years], it was even worse, because then you felt/ you were only taught vocabulary. You couldn't teach anything else. They had so much vocabulary to learn [laughing] and that was also quite exhausting because all the creative things that were possible before were suddenly no longer possible because you didn't have the time (Teacher 3: l. 904–914).

This teaching practice shows a certain routine which is proposed by the structure of the textbook and although the teacher wants to work more creatively with the students, time and curricular pressure seem to make it impossible for her. Apart from the extrinsic influences mentioned earlier, the teaching type 'textbook-defined practice' is also inhibited from a critical teaching practice because of not having enough confidence to structure lessons more autonomously.

5.2   Type 2: Adaptive practice

Compared to teachers that follow a textbook-defined practice (see type 1 above), English language teachers of the type 'adaptive practice' still regard textbooks as useful for structuring their lessons because of external factors, e.g. time pressure. Similar to type 1, teachers of type 2 also use their textbooks differently at different levels because they use textbooks in lower/intermediate and not in upper classes:

(.) Yes, so we only have a textbook for lower and intermediate levels at my school. Uh, we talked about it once, and I'm also the subject speaker [a person is responsible for subject-related conferences, school-internal curricula and teaching organisation] in English, um that's why I was also uh involved in the discussion whether we should introduce a textbook for high school. We argued about it for ages until a colleague said that we should put something together ourselves. And then I thought, no, we don't have to overdo this. The day has 24 hours and at some point, I have to sleep again. Um, and yes, in the upper school, I think it doesn't play such a central role anymore because you have a curriculum that you have to stick to (Teacher 4: l. 379–389).

The teacher states that he uses textbooks in lower/intermediate classes because of the time needed to prepare materials himself. In higher grades, he states that the textbook is not an integral part of English teaching anymore. However, it is implied that this teacher feels obligated to follow the externally determined curriculum.

Teachers of the type 'adaptive practice' base their teaching on dialogue with learners about teaching contents and the co-construction of learning processes. Following this principle, teachers of type 2 regard learners' interests, needs, and experiences as crucial for structuring their lessons and, thus, they show a stronger learner orientation in their teaching. The following quote underlines this practice:

Okay. Um (.) I actually have different roles and I notice that, um (..) the little ones [i.e. younger learners], they often like to think I'm a walking dictionary. So I um somehow have to know all the vocabulary immediately and uh always have to have the translation available. Um, I tell the students that it doesn't really work that way and that you can't always translate everything exactly, (.) which is why I also do these mediation tasks. (.) But otherwise, I am very/ (..) very close to the students. Some colleagues find that almost TOO close. Um (..) but I have made the experience so far, (..) the more open I am and the more open I am towards the students, the more open they are towards ME and towards the subject. Um, and then they also say certain things that are sometimes personal, um (.) especially when it's about family trees, relationships or something to do with the younger students, um, so then you really (...) find out about extreme family backgrounds in some cases (Teacher 5: l. 74–89).

Aside from feeling committed to answering learners' language questions, this teacher encourages learners not to focus solely on vocabulary range. She rather fosters openness and is personally interested in learners' needs and experiences when addressing authentic topics suggested by textbooks such as family trees. Since learner orientation cannot be executed authentically when sticking too closely to the textbook, teachers of this type adapt textbooks and/or add materials to textbooks with regard to the learners:

Um, the stupid thing is, of course, when these textbooks/ they also partly have tasks and texts and pages and chapters that are not so well-designed (laughing) and these are sometimes a bit stupid. Um (.) and there/ the main problem is, I think, that these textbooks try to pretend to be authentic. And that doesn't always work, yes? Um, and then as a teacher you can either try to defend it and pretend that it's all authentic, yes, and we just have to do it now. Um, or you laugh with the students about the nonsense, uh, that they sometimes write in there and uh, these uh, made-up stories, that is, I think, the better way, that you also make it very clear with the PUPILS and students, um, that this is typical for the textbook and that this is, on the one hand, an aid for us to work with the textbook, um, but that English lessons, um, and especially cultural learning is not the textbook. Yes? And then maybe you have to make sure that you somehow add authentic material to compensate for the weaknesses of the textbook (Teacher 4: l. 402–420).

This quote illustrates the adaption process when working with textbooks. This teacher criticizes textbook content together with his learners and adds authentic materials to make topics more relevant for the class.

Despite the criticism of textbooks, none of the teachers of type 2 distances him/herself entirely from the textbook by using their own materials. However, these teachers add materials to textbooks and adapt them with more authentic materials that are more relevant to the learners.

5.3   Type 3: Critical practice

'Critical practice' teachers criticize other teachers for using textbooks extensively and distance themselves from using textbooks as a structuring instrument in their lessons. The following quote illustrates this attitude:

Well, I've already told you what shocks me. I always have the feeling that we don't learn a foreign language at school. Rather, as we have already briefly mentioned, it is teaching to the test. (.) We are/ especially in Germany, it is very important/ we always have the grammar in the foreground. RULES. So I often say, it's almost like in mathematics, the English lessons. And (.) um, English tests also look like that. The work is textbook-oriented. It is important (.) um to get through certain chapters in a book. And then you as a teacher/ you can make a tick and say, I have done my job, yes? But that's not how I see it (Teacher 6: l. 9–21).

Apart from textbook-defined practice, this teacher criticizes test orientation as well as the emphasis on mere knowledge transmission leading to a devaluation of language teachers' work. Similar to type 2, teachers of type 3 focus on the needs, interests and experiences of their learners by constructing classroom discourse with their learners dialogically and

cooperatively. In this manner, type 3 teachers enhance learners' autonomy in English language learning:

> Um (...) and so on and that you do a lot of cultural studies and then you always complete it with the respective grammar or vocabulary or sometimes a text, a diary entry or something, a postcard, um (.) the more I have said goodbye to the textbook in recent years, the more I look for my own materials and my own content, which uh in my opinion also fits well into the curriculum now. Or we just have a situation like with the ninth graders. They want to talk about Black Lives Matter now, then I won't say, NO, that's not in the curriculum, but, yes, let's do it anyway (Teacher 7: l. 1011–1022).

The teacher describes her own teaching practice and emphasizes her resistance to the textbook by talking about a situation with her learners, in which she neglected curricular norms and rather catered to the needs of her learners. As already indicated through the previous quote, teachers of type 3 teach rather autonomously by resisting not only textbooks but also institutional norms, such as colleagues or state curricula. Another example shows this by describing a situation in her teaching, in which she refuses to fulfil the expectation of her colleagues:

> So, we once had / uh (.) it was REQUIRED that I hold my lessons like the teacher who had taught English before. Why do I teach English so differently? That was also a very influential situation that gave me a lot to think about. Do I want to change now? Do I now have to fulfil the role that the teacher had before, do I take that now? Because that is what is demanded of the students because they are so used to this teaching? Or do I stick to MY attitude and try to (.) design lessons differently and still achieve these goals (.) as common goals? We want to pass an exam. We want to be prepared in tenth grade [i.e. final exams] (.) um for high school in all kinds of areas. Curriculum read (.), curriculum adapted. Yes (..) so THAT was an influential situation. (..) Then actually/ where it became clear to me: No, I do NOT want to take the old role of the former teacher, but I want to teach the way I do. And I try to implement that in the classroom as well (Teacher 6: l. 137–155).

5.4   The reflection of LTI in textbook use

The different types of language teachers reconstructed above show ambivalent ways of dealing with textbooks that can be linked to their LTI through positioning theory. And although the reconstructive focus of our interview analysis is textbook use and not a social dimension that Kayi-Aydar (2019b) is obviously interested in when investigating LTI through positioning theory, we did observe a social dimension, as the narrative interviews involved biographical as well as reflective passages in which teachers positioned

themselves implicitly or explicitly within (or against) the institutional contexts, existing norms and communities of practice with colleagues.

- The first type reveals little courage to distinguish himself/herself and seeks confidence in the pre-selection of topics. At the same time, his/her actions are dependent on contextual factors such as parents, colleagues, the headmaster, and curricula. However, it also becomes obvious that the teachers of this type feel responsible for conveying language competencies to the pupils.
- Type 2 reveals a more autonomous language teacher identity. He/she works on the basis of his/her own convictions, which he/she also articulates and thus assures himself/herself of. In parts, he/she shows dependency by sticking to textbooks, but he/she incorporates authentic materials that strengthen him/her in his/her practice and identity. As a result of their search for security and confidence, these teachers cooperate with their colleagues.
- The last language teacher type that we reconstructed in terms of textbook-defined practice reveals complete autonomy when it comes to textbook use. The LTI is determined by the teachers' own convictions and a high level of commitment within the teaching context. This is accompanied by a high level of responsibility towards the learners, which is also explicitly articulated (in contrast to the other types). Compared to type 2, this type does not need confirmation e.g. from colleagues to distance himself/herself from the textbook.

The following table gives an overview of the three types including their textbook use and reflections of their LTI:

Table 1: Overview of the three types including their textbook use and reflections of their LTI

	Type 1: Textbook-defined practice	Type 2: Adaptive practice	Type 3: Critical practice
Use of textbooks	- Generally positive attitude towards textbooks - Base teaching on textbooks in elementary and intermediate levels - No autonomous practice	- Regards textbooks as useful for structuring lessons - Differentiates between textbook use on different levels - Dialogue with learners about teaching contents - Learner orientation - Adaption of textbooks	- Criticism of textbooks - Criticism of transmission orientation - No use of textbooks - Learner orientation - Dialogue and cooperation with learners - Resistance toward institutional constraints

Reflections of their LTI	• Little courage to distinguish himself/herself from textbooks • Security • Dependent on contextual factors (e.g. curricula) • Conveying language competencies to pupils	• More autonomy • He/she works on the basis of his/her convictions and beliefs • Latent dependency on textbooks • Security → cooperation with colleagues	• Very autonomous practice • Own convictions • High commitment to teaching • High level of responsibility towards learners

6   Limitations of this study

Taking a reflective stance toward the findings, one must address the limitations of the study. First, the results of the study cannot be broadly generalized because of the reconstructive and qualitative nature of the case study design. Although this narrative approach gives insights into language teachers' subjective orientations and identities, a method which avoids explicit knowledge as a form of social desirability (e.g. Gerlach 2022), general implications for language teachers' actual classroom practice with textbooks should be considered with caution. In order to substantiate certain recommendations or implications, one might need to study teachers' classroom practices through e.g. observation. In addition, we used a pre-selected sample of German language teachers who showed a general interest in critical classroom practice and who therefore might already be more critical of their own textbook usage.

For future research, it could be interesting to compare the highly specific and standards-driven German context to others with regard to language teachers' textbook use. Additionally, future studies of language teachers' textbook use and LTI should use more naturally selected samples of teachers. We did not consider other contextual factors (e.g. the teachers' second subject, different ways of teacher education or certification) when analyzing the teachers' use of textbooks and the connection to their identities. We researched how language teachers use textbooks at a certain point in time without any deliberate intervention. To understand the development of LTI and, thus, textbook use, one might aim for a (quasi-)longitudinal study and/or research language teachers' LTI development against the background of textbook use or changes in textbook use throughout their respective individual careers.

7   Conclusion

Since theoretical as well as empirical research (e.g. Akbari 2008; Jordan/Gray 2019; Wipperfürth/Will 2019) indicates that language teachers show a strong reliance on textbooks, this study aimed at exploring English language teachers' textbook use as a glimpse into their general and complex LTI. Our study confirms that there are types of German EFL teachers who strongly rely on textbooks in their teaching practice. The LTI of type 1 and 2, who stands for an extensive use of textbooks, shows a strong need for security by means of a clear structure provided in the textbook. In contrast to type 1, type 3 is rather courageous when structuring his/her teaching and does not need closed structures for teaching. Interestingly, the social positioning of the teachers towards learners and colleagues helps to contrast the three distinct types.

Types 1 and 2 imply that textbooks still play a major role in German EFL classes and that teacher education, as well as teacher research, must further explore this and analyse its relevance both for educational innovation/implementation and professional development. To navigate teachers' textbook use towards more autonomy, teacher education should react to the dominance of the textbook in German EFL teaching by including phases for LTI development (e.g. biographical reflections) as well as reflective activities about textbook use. In this manner, it seems crucial to collaboratively work on LTI development in all phases of German language teacher education (e.g. Gerlach 2023).

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Appendix A: Guiding questions during the interviews

- Narrative prompt:

  - At the beginning of this interview, I would first like to ask you to tell me about your English classes in general. In doing so, feel free to tell me anything you think is relevant.

- Follow-up questions:

  - Topic 1: Your role in the English classroom

    - Tell me about your role as an English teacher. (You can go into as much detail as you wish).

    - Tell me about a situation that has stuck in your mind regarding your role as an English teacher.

    - Thinking back to when you started your career, have you changed as an English teacher since that time? Can you tell me about a situation in which this change is particularly evident?

    - In what ways do you anticipate changes in your role as an English teacher in the future? Think of a possible future situation in which this is evident.

  - Topic 2: The role of learners in the English classroom

    - Tell me about the role of learners in your English classroom. (You can go into as much detail as you wish).

    - Recall a situation with learners that stuck in your mind as an English teacher.

    - What is your relationship like with your students? Can you tell me about a situation in which this relationship is particularly evident?

    - In what ways do you anticipate changes in your relationship with students in the future? Imagine a possible future situation in which this becomes clear.

  - Topic 3: Methods in English classes

    - Tell me about methods in your English classes. (You can go into as much detail as you wish).

    - Recall a situation that has stuck in your mind with regard to methods in your English lessons.

    - How do you design your English lessons? Can you tell me about a situation in which this is particularly evident?

- - ■ To what extent do you anticipate changes in the methods you use in your teaching in the future? Try to imagine a possible future situation in which this becomes clear.

    - ○ Topic 4: The role of the textbook

      - ■ Tell me about the role of the textbook in your English class. (You can go into as much detail as you wish).

      - ■ Recall a situation with the textbook in English class that has stuck in your mind.

      - ■ How do you use textbooks in your English classes?

      - ■ To what extent do you anticipate changes in the use of textbooks in your English classes in the future? Imagine a possible future situation in which this becomes clear.

    - ○ Topic 5: Contents in English lessons

      - ■ Tell me about the content of your English lessons.

      - ■ Recall a situation that has stuck in your mind with regard to the content of English lessons.

      - ■ How do you organize the content of your English lessons? Can you tell me about a situation in which this design is particularly evident?

      - ■ To what extent do you anticipate changes in the contents of your English classes in the future? Imagine a possible future situation in which this becomes clear.

    - ○ Topic 6: The role of colleagues

      - ■ Tell me about the role of colleagues in your everyday teaching. (You can go into as much detail as you wish).

      - ■ Recall a situation with colleagues that stuck in your memory as an English teacher.

      - ■ What is your relationship with your colleagues like? Can you tell me about a situation in which this relationship is evident?

      - ■ To what extent do you expect changes in your relationship with colleagues in the future? Imagine a possible future situation in which this becomes clear.

- • Conclusion:

  - ○ We have now come to the end of the interview. Is there anything else you would like to say about your teaching practice that has not been mentioned enough in the interview so far? You are welcome to take a short moment to reflect on this.

Kurzbio:

Prof. Dr. David Gerlach ist seit 2021 Inhaber des Lehrstuhls für die Didaktik des Englischen an der Fakultät für Geistes- und Kulturwissenschaften der Bergischen Universität Wuppertal. Er ist unter anderem Koordinator der *Forschungsgemeinschaft für Rekonstruktive Fremdsprachenforschung*. Bis Oktober 2020 war er wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter an der Philipps-Universität Marburg im Fachbereich 21 am Lehrstuhl für Allgemeine Didaktik und Sprachlehrforschung. Er lehrt in der Breite der Englischdidaktik und forscht insbesondere zu kritischen Ansätzen in der Fremdsprachendidaktik, zu sprachdidaktischen Fragestellungen (bes. Lese- und Schreibkompetenz) und Lernschwierigkeiten sowie zur Professionalität und Professionalisierung von Englischlehrkräften.

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