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Normativity in language teacher learning: ELF and the *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* (EPOSTL)

Sprachlehrendenbildung wird politisch: ELF und das *Europäische Portfolio für Sprachlehrende in Ausbildung* (EPOSA)

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Abstract: As with any proposal for a change in pedagogy, the starting point for implementation is teacher education. Suggestions have been put forward for an approach to English language teaching (ELT) which takes into account the lingua franca function language can fulfill. Frameworks for how teachers might adopt a pedagogy of English as a lingua franca (ELF), however, are inconsistent with current policy guidelines for student teacher learning. This concerns most notably those directives provided in the *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* (EPOSTL), which is used in a growing number of teacher formation programs. This paper examines the ‘can-do’ statements which the EPOSTL proposes should represent the required methodological competences of language teachers. Using discourse analytic methods, the article explores what the EPOSTL portrays that prospective teachers need to know about language and how to teach it. It is argued that the language education policy represented by the EPOSTL is based on a conceptual perspective that can only impede the development of a genuinely reflective approach to the education of English language teachers and the implementation of an ELF pedagogy.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca (ELF); *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* (EPOSTL); language education policy; language teacher education; pluriculturalism; plurilingualism; target language

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Zusammenfassung: Wie bei jedem Konzept für pädagogischen Wandel, ist die Lehrendenbildung der Anfangspunkt. Ansätze für den Englischunterricht, welcher die Funktion von Sprache als Lingua Franca berücksichtigt, wurden bereits vorgeschlagen. Modelle, die zeigen wie Sprachlehrende eine Pädagogik für Englisch als Lingua Franca (ELF) einführen können, stellen sich allerdings als unvereinbar mit aktuellen sprachpolitischen Richtlinien heraus. Dies betrifft ganz besonders jene Vorgaben im *Europäischen Portfolio für Sprachlehrende in Ausbildung* (EPOSA), das in einer steigenden Anzahl von Programmen der Sprachlehrendenbildung eingesetzt wird. Dieser Artikel befasst sich mit den Kann-Beschreibungen, welche dem EPOSA zufolge die für Sprachlehrende erforderlichen methodischen Kompetenzen abbilden sollen. Mit dem Einsatz von diskursanalytischen Methoden untersucht der Artikel, was das EPOSA darstellt, dass zukünftige Sprachlehrende über Sprache wissen müssen und wie sie unterrichtet werden soll. Es wird argumentiert, dass die vom EPOSA repräsentierte Sprachbildungspolitik auf einer konzeptuellen Perspektive basiert, die sich für die Entwicklung eines genuin auf Reflexion aufbauenden Ansatzes zur Ausbildung für Englischlehrende und der Implementierung einer Pädagogik für ELF als hinderlich erweist.

Schlagworte: Englisch als Lingua Franca (ELF); *Europäisches Portfolio für Sprachlehrende in Ausbildung* (EPOSA); Plurikulturalismus; Plurilingualismus; Sprachbildungspolitik; SprachlehrerInnenbildung; Zielsprache

1 Introduction

Teachers teach language to facilitate language learning. It thus becomes obvious that the process of language teacher education and language pedagogy are intrinsically bound together. As Freeman put it, “how we define language teaching will influence, to a large extent, how we educate people as language teachers” (Freeman 1989: 28). It follows that pedagogic change needs to start in “teacher formation” (Widdowson 1997: 384), a neutral phrase that will be used synonymously with *student teacher learning* as an umbrella term for different approaches to the “*pre-service preparation* of teachers” (Widdowson 1997: 384, italics in original) until a further distinction is provided in Section 4.2. Recent research into English as a lingua franca (ELF) has put forward several proposals for pedagogies of ELF and, as a logical consequence, outlined the need to re-adjust models for teacher education (see e.g. Blair 2015; Dewey 2012, 2014; Kohn 2015, 2020; Seidlhofer 2011, 2015; Sifakis 2014, 2019).¹ These proposals now stand in contrast to

¹ It is not possible at this point to address the details of these models for reasons of space (for a comprehensive account, see Riegler 2018: Ch. 2.3).

the Council of Europe's (2007) existing framework for language teacher education. The program is represented by the *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* (EPOSTL), a language education policy (LEP) resource targeting prospective language teachers with 'can-do' statements that itemize features of pedagogic competence.

The EPOSTL 'descriptors' claim to provide a theoretically sound basis for reflection in student teacher learning and are intended to guide users of the portfolio to navigate the complexities of teaching methodology. One such EPOSTL descriptor reads as follows, "I can draw on appropriate theories of language, learning, culture etc. and relevant research findings to guide my teaching" (Council of Europe 2007: 17). Two questions arise from this descriptor, which relate to basic principles that inform the whole EPOSTL project. Firstly, how are teachers supposed to *draw on* such theories and findings so that they guide their teaching? Secondly, which *theories of language, learning, culture, etc., and relevant research findings* does the EPOSTL assume to be *relevant* and *appropriate* for student teachers to reflect on? Since studies of English as a lingua franca communication have provided theoretical concepts which claim to provide particularly *relevant* and *appropriate* guidance for contemporary English language teaching (ELT), the question arises as to how far the EPOSTL recognizes the need to reflect on insights gained from research on ELF interactions and proposed for pedagogic implementation.

This article explores what the EPOSTL represents that language teachers – including English language teachers – need to know about language and do when teaching it. It is suggested that the LEP-informed approach to student teacher learning conflicts with proposals for moving beyond normativity in language education. Section 2 introduces the EPOSTL, its structure, context and conceptual background. In Section 3, I use discourse analytic methods to analyze the conceptualization of language and its teaching implied in the portfolio. Section 4 discusses to what extent the EPOSTL facilitates reflection on the pedagogical implications of how English now functions in the contemporary world. It also considers issues about language teacher formation, especially English language teacher formation, and the way these are dealt with in what has become a particularly influential program promoted by the Council of Europe.

2 Understanding the EPOSTL

The *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* defines 193 teaching methodological descriptors in the form of can-do statements which outline, "what language teachers have to learn to do in order to teach a language for

communication and what knowledge and skills they have to help learners to develop so as to be able to act effectively” (Newby 2012b: 12). These descriptors make up the main body – i.e. the self-assessment section – of the EPOSTL. The descriptors are divided into seven chapters, “Context”, “Methodology”, “Resources”, “Lesson Planning”, “Conducting a Lesson”, “Independent Learning”, and “Assessment of Learning”. Each of them is preceded by a brief unnumbered introductory contextualization into teaching methodology. The chapters then again consist of a number of alphabetically listed subsections which include the 193 individually numbered can-do statements. The descriptors in the EPOSTL are intended to trigger reflective processes in student teachers on the didactic skills and competences required for the Council of Europe’s (2007) vision of ‘good’ teaching. There are progress bars under the descriptors that offer student teachers the opportunity to visually document their development towards becoming competent language teachers.

The EPOSTL is no independent publication, but part of a prominent series of policy papers all of which serve to standardize aspects of language pedagogy in Europe. The institutional documents complementing this policy initiative towards uniformity besides the EPOSTL are the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001), the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP) (Council of Europe 2004), and the *European Profile for Language Teacher Education* (EPLTE) (Kelly and Grenfell 2004) (for a visual overview of European language policy papers and the competences they serve to develop, see Newby 2012b: 14). The *Companion volume with new descriptors* (Council of Europe 2018) expands the original version of the CEFR from 2001 and so constitutes the state of the art in European LEP. Within this series of LEP documents, the EPOSTL aims to render curricula for teacher learning programs more transparent, comparable and outcome-oriented. With this end in mind, the EPOSTL is adopted in a growing number of teacher learning programs (cf. Heyworth 2013: 16), and – comparable to the global spread of the CEFR – has also been adapted for contexts well beyond Europe (see Jimbo et al. 2011). Research on the introduction and use of the EPOSTL is comprehensive and thoroughly documented. The majority of studies report widespread approval of the EPOSTL, its usefulness and positive impact on the learning process by all stakeholders, i.e. teacher educators and student teachers themselves (cf. Cakir and Balcikanli 2012: 9; Fenner 2011: 41; Mehlmauer-Larcher 2012: 189; Orlova 2011: 25–26; Velikova 2013: 211). By contrast, criticism of the portfolio is rare (cf. Cindric et al. 2015: 130; Ivanova and Skara-Mincane 2016: 535) and an ELF perspective on the EPOSTL has been unavailable up to now. For this reason, this article explores the understanding of language and its teaching implied in the portfolio to shed new light on the

relationship between student teacher learning, language education policy and ELF communication.

Of these language policy guidelines, the CEFR is undoubtedly the most influential one as it has an increasingly authoritative say in language education all over the world (McNamara 2012: 199). Despite its impact it is, however, also the LEP document that has been the most controversial one. Critical accounts have been provided not only by researchers addressing the relevance and representation of ELF communication in the CEFR (see e.g. Hynninen 2014; Leung 2013; McNamara 2012; Pitzl 2015), but by applied linguists more generally (see e.g. Brunfaut and Harding 2020; Fulcher 2004; Hulstijn 2007). From an ELF perspective, a central point of criticism concerns the missing recognition of English in its role as lingua franca since the CEFR is intended to pertain to all languages (Seidlhofer 2011: 185). It is therefore important to say that all of the above LEP papers are complementary and conceptually uniform in their vision of language teaching and learning (Newby 2012a: 208). This means that the EPOSTL as the most recent component of this LEP initiative is conceptually based on the CEFR (Newby 2012a: 208) and in principle a “systematic device for introducing the underlying principles stated in CEFR” (Hismanoglu 2013: 940). The inherent link between the much-criticized CEFR and the EPOSTL then raises the question to what extent we need to be skeptical of the student teacher portfolio as well.

On a conceptual level, the EPOSTL represents reflection as an educational principle in teacher learning which overcomes the shortcomings of previously available models, for example the craft and applied science model (cf. Cook 2013: 14). What propels the adoption of reflective approaches in teacher formation is the premise that reflection enables teachers to make pedagogically informed decisions and to develop teacher autonomy (e.g. Akbari 2007: 204; Burton 2009: 298; Crandall 2000: 39–40). Based on the EPOSTL’s outright promotion of self-assessment in teacher formation, it is easy to see the portfolio as following a shift towards reflective models for student teacher learning. This is also evident from the subtitle of the student teacher portfolio, which reads *A reflection tool for language teacher education*. After all, the portfolio understands student teacher learning as reflective engagement with the can-do statements. It guides prospective teachers to reflect on how the pedagogic concepts that are implied in the descriptors can be linked to methodological competences in actual practice. The EPOSTL thus claims to educate prospective teachers to be reflective and well-informed practitioners. From an ELF perspective, then, the issue arises as to how far the EPOSTL recognizes the need to reflect on insights gained from research on ELF interactions and proposed for pedagogic implementation.

3 Analyzing reflections on language in the EPOSTL

In order to study what the EPOSTL² communicates that teacher candidates need to know about language and how to teach it, discourse analytic methods inspired by Pitzl's (2015) examination of the CEFR are used. The aim of the analysis is to explore the directions in which the reflection tool guides student teachers' thinking and to consider how compatible the orientation to language constructed in the portfolio is with ELF-informed³ reasoning. The text for analysis includes the 193 can-do statements and the introductions to the chapters but excludes the text in headers and footers. Initial search queries were performed by applying the search function (Ctrl + F) to a text document retrieved from the PDF version of the EPOSTL to obtain all occurrences of the term *language*.⁴ In a next step, the most frequent bigram was identified using the collocation function in *AntConc* (Anthony 2016). The search query conducted for *language* yielded 64 occurrences of the token in total. In the instances where the EPOSTL refers to *language*, the most frequent two-word cluster generated from the search item is *target language*,⁵ which the document features 16 times altogether. The relative prominence of this concept is not entirely uncontroversial and already signals that a certain understanding of language and learning is implied in the student teacher portfolio, an issue analyzed more closely in the following two sub-sections. These provide a qualitative analysis of contextual and co-textual patterns to study the discourse surrounding the notion of *target language*.

3.1 Portrayal of culture

The salient discursive pattern in four out of these 16 retrievals of the search term *target language* is a repeated reference to the theme of culture. It is made in the chapters "Methodology" and "Assessment", each of which has a designated section for culture-related descriptors.

² This yields a total word count of 5,099 words.

³ I deliberately use the term 'ELF-informed' (for reasons, see Riegler 2018: Ch. 2.3).

⁴ In the process, I noticed that using the search function in the PDF file of the EPOSTL did not yield all possible results as several words were split up, which is why the relevant text passages were converted into a text file for analysis.

⁵ The analysis considers one-word pre- as well as post-modification.

- (1) I can create opportunities for learners to explore the culture of **target language communities**⁶ out of class (Internet, emails etc.).
(Council of Europe 2007: 29)
[Chapter 2 Methodology; G. Culture; Descriptor 2]
- (2) I can assess the learners' knowledge⁷ of cultural facts, events etc. of the **target language communities**.
(Council of Europe 2007: 56)
[Chapter 7 Assessment; E. Culture; Descriptor 1]
- (3) I can assess the learners' ability to make comparisons⁸ between their own and the culture of **target language communities**.
(Council of Europe 2007: 56)
[Chapter 7 Assessment; E. Culture; Descriptor 2]
- (4) I can assess the learner's ability to respond and act appropriately in encounters with the **target language culture**.
(Council of Europe 2007: 56)
[Chapter 7 Assessment; E. Culture; Descriptor 3]

A close look at the can-do statements retrieved reveals that the notion of *target language* is repeatedly, i.e. in the descriptors in examples (1)–(4), thematically linked to the concepts of *community* and *culture* to establish target language communities as the cultural frame of reference. As the portfolio does not mention any communities or social entities other than that of the target language, the preferable benchmark for sociocultural reference that the EPOSTL communicates is essentially that of native speakers. This already indicates that the reflection tool understands language learning as a telic process, i.e. as targeting a fixed native speaker yardstick. Such a view necessarily stands in contrast to a conceptualization of language education that is independent of external norms and not determined with respect to target language communities, as put forward by Larsen-Freeman (2014: 210–214). The native-speaking norm that is discursively constructed for the cultural dimension of language teaching and learning

6 Bold face is used to highlight the key terms in the descriptors; underlining shows thematic patterns identified within the co-text.

7 See also descriptor 1 in the section “Culture” that is part of the chapter “Methodology” (Council of Europe 2007: 29) and Council of Europe (2007: 51) for a text passage in the introduction to the chapter on assessment for similar references.

8 See also descriptors 3 and 5 in Council of Europe (2007: 29), i.e. the section entitled “Culture” belonging to the chapter on teaching methodology.

in the EPOSTL also runs counter to findings on ELF communication in which native-speaking communities are deemed hardly relevant, and if so, clearly do not become the exclusive model of culture (Pözl and Seidlhofer 2006: 153). Such an overreliance on the ‘target language’ community as cultural norm may at worst evoke associations of cultures with particular nations, and hence foster an essentialist view of culture among prospective teachers.

What this kind of understanding ignores is that national culture is merely one of many representatives of sociocultural constellations that are available as cultural norm (Baker 2015b: 137, 2018: 31; Holliday et al. 2004: 4). Instead, Baker (2015b: 99) provides convincing evidence of ELF interactions that progress without reference to, or practices and meanings of, native speaker culture. Research on the basis of ELF data shows further how communication naturally evolves in socioculturally diverse settings without a definitive target community and culture that it can be ascribed to (Baker 2011: 200; Pitzl 2009: 300). Such linguaculturally heterogeneous contexts are not confined to specific cultural frames of reference, with the effect that practices and identities are negotiated ad hoc instead of being fixed and pre-established (Cogo and Dewey 2012: 112–113). Even more so, communication through ELF often occurs in more liminal and emergent sociocultural constellations or “transient international groups” (Pitzl 2018b). These diverse groups build “translingual and transcultural territory” (Pitzl 2018b: 37) and as empirical studies illustrate, do so without relying on reference to a ‘target language culture’ (Pitzl 2018b: 37–53). As a matter of fact, drawing on interactive resources that refer to particular target cultural norms may prove uncooperative and inappropriate in settings where ELF is used since the relevance of these frames of reference cannot be assumed to remain valid in other contexts with different communicative purposes (cf. e.g. the discussion of unilateral idiomaticity in Seidlhofer 2009: 201). All of this renders the link forged between appropriacy and interactions with a ‘target language culture’ (for a critical account, cf. Seidlhofer 2012: 76) in the can-do statement in example (4) a problematic one, as the implicit assumption seems to be that acting appropriately in intercultural encounters means subscribing to the cultural norms of the target language community.

It becomes evident that the EPOSTL cannot foster an understanding of language use which does not adhere to the culturally informed practices of the target language community. On the contrary, it rather tends to promote a simplified culture-nation correlation (cf. e.g. Baker 2011: 198, 2015b: 137; Pözl and Seidlhofer 2006: 153; Seidlhofer 2010: 356–357) by excluding reference to communities or even non-communities (e.g. transient international groups or nonrecurring interactions) other than native-speaking ones (see e.g. Pitzl 2018b). Likewise, the portfolio does not seem to adequately reflect a view of culture as

liminal, with meanings flexibly modified for the particular interaction and norms not pre-given (cf. e.g. Baker 2011: 205; see also Zhu 2015). While it may be legitimate for some other modern languages to be taught and learnt within the confinements of native speaker cultural norms, such an approach seems no longer valid for ELT if the function of English as lingua franca is taken into account.

As is clear from these descriptors, the EPOSTL fosters an understanding of intercultural communication as involving a deference to native-speaking cultural norms and as the following can-do statement makes explicit, puts particular emphasis on the interrelationship between culture and language.

- (5) I can plan activities to emphasise the interdependence of language and culture.⁹

(Council of Europe 2007: 35)

[Chapter 4 Lesson Planning; B. Lesson Content; Descriptor 4]

The descriptor in example (5) constructs culture and language as irrevocably intertwined, which means that the EPOSTL might urge student teachers to adopt a culturally deterministic perspective. Yet, when teachers take such a position, their teaching is unlikely to reflect “the ability of language and culture to come together in novel ways that enables a language such as English to function as a global lingua franca” (Baker 2018: 29). This view puts any presumed associations of a specific culture with a particular language into question. Above all, in combining the discourses on culture and language and positioning this interrelationship as entrenched, the EPOSTL renders the native speaker norm for cultural reference equally valid for language. That is, the reflection tool not only fosters a normative understanding of culture, but in conflating the concepts of culture and language, it fosters the same kind of normative understanding of language.

Even more points of concern arise if one considers the immediate co-texts of the bigram *target language* in the examples (2) and (3) that establish thematic patterns in themselves (for a more detailed account, see Riegler 2018: 71–76). The can-do statement in (2) brings in knowledge of the ‘target language culture’ as an assessment criterion for students. If students learn a language within a foreign language paradigm, the rationale for such an assessment specification is fairly straightforward. However, the adoption of this principle is not that valid in ELT when ELF studies argue that knowledge of a specific (target) culture only is unlikely to fully capture how culture influences intercultural communication in ELF settings (Baker 2011: 202). As for the descriptor in (3), teacher candidates are

⁹ See also descriptor 8 in the chapter “Methodology”, section “Culture” (Council of Europe 2007: 29), and paragraph 2 in the introduction to this chapter (Council of Europe 2007: 20) for text passages following the exact same pattern.

encouraged by the EPOSTL to introduce ‘foreign’ cultures via comparisons of their own culture with that of the target language community. What such an understanding of culture in the classroom seems to entail is that the notion of otherness is given special attention. The danger of this approach is that it may essentialize intercultural encounters by neglecting how ELF users establish “translingual and transcultural territory” (Pitzl 2018b: 37) for the communicative purpose of their talk instead of foregrounding cultural differences.

Given the dominance of Byram’s (1997) model for intercultural communication in language education, the occurrence of the themes *target language communities as the cultural frame of reference*, *knowledge of the target language culture* and *cultural comparisons* discussed in this section does not come as a surprise. What I want to raise awareness of is how the EPOSTL features these patterns prominently in the co-text of the term *target language*, which provides for normative cultural orientations in teacher formation. That way, an approach to teaching that acknowledges the lingua franca function that language can serve is precluded through the discourse in the EPOSTL.

3.2 Status of plurilingual resources

The second discursive pattern established in the EPOSTL concerns language use in the classroom. Coming to the remaining can-do statements featuring the search term *target language*, a co-textual pattern can be observed that constructs a monolingual norm for language pedagogy. The text passage in (6) as well as the descriptors in (7)–(9) that refer to *target language*, cluster in chapter 5, “Conducting a Lesson”, in the EPOSTL. So do examples (13)–(16) that are discussed with reference to another predominant theme in greater detail below.

- (6) Also involved is the teacher’s ability to help learners understand what is said or written, as well as to encourage them to use the **target language** when communicating with the teacher and with each other.
(Council of Europe 2007: 38)
[Chapter 5 Conducting a Lesson; Introduction; Paragraph 3]
- (7) I can conduct a lesson in the **target language**.
(Council of Europe 2007: 43)
[Chapter 5 Conducting a Lesson; E. Classroom Language; Descriptor 1]

- (8) I can use the **target language** as metalanguage.
(Council of Europe 2007: 43)
[Chapter 5 Conducting a Lesson; E. Classroom Language; Descriptor 3]
- (9) I can encourage learners to use the target language in their activities.
(Council of Europe 2007: 43)
[Chapter 5 Conducting a Lesson; E. Classroom Language; Descriptor 5]

The above descriptors (7)–(9) and those in (13)–(15) (see below) make up the section “Classroom Language” in the EPOSTL. The observation that the bigram *target language* features prominently in the part of the portfolio that defines good practice for language use in the classroom is not entirely unexpected. Yet, it becomes clear under close scrutiny that the discourse in the reflection tool constructs a monolingual classroom as the favorable learning environment. That is, the text passage in (6) means that communication between teachers and their students ideally occurs in the target language. (7) and (8) then introduce a target language norm also for teachers, while the co-text in (9) impresses on student teachers that the more students use the language studied, the better. The can-do statements in (10)–(12) also refer to the search term *target language* and extend the monolingual norm in the language classroom through reference in the sections “Lesson Content”, “Lesson Organisation” and “Speaking/Spoken Interaction” to even more learning contexts, aspects of classroom language use and linguistic systems (for more detailed discussion, see Riegler 2018: 93).

- (10) I can plan to teach elements of other subjects using the **target language** (cross- curricular teaching, CLIL etc.).
(Council of Europe 2007: 35)
[Chapter 4 Lesson planning; B. Lesson Content; Descriptor 6]
- (11) I can plan when and how to use the **target language**, including metalanguage I may need in the classroom.
(Council of Europe 2007: 37)
[Chapter 4 Lesson planning; C. Lesson Organisation; Descriptor 3]
- (12) I can evaluate and select a variety of techniques to make learners aware of, discriminate and help them to pronounce sounds in the **target language**.
(Council of Europe 2007: 22)
[Chapter 2 Methodology; A. Speaking/Spoken Interaction; Descriptor 10]

The essential point to consider is that in urging prospective teachers to maximize the use of the *target language*, the EPOSTL also implies that reference to plurilingual repertoires is ideally minimized. Monolingual teaching and learning practices are interpreted as a sign of student teachers' professional growth and increased methodological competence, which entails that prospective teachers are rewarded for steadily reducing the use of plurilingual linguistic resources. According to the EPOSTL, then, the preferred way of teaching and learning language is by conforming to a target language norm and by gradually excluding linguistic resources other than the target language from the classroom. Needless to say, such guidelines are drawn up regardless of learning aims students may pursue in language education, and regardless of the reasons they have for studying language and their educational context.

The salient theme established in the can-do statements in (13)–(15) and the explanatory passage in (16) determine the role alternative linguistic resources may fulfill. The examples make clear that divergence from a monolingual norm is only reluctantly accepted.

- (13) I can decide when it is appropriate to use the **target language** and when not to.
(Council of Europe 2007: 43)
[Chapter 5 Conducting a Lesson; E. Classroom Language; Descriptor 2]

- (14) I can use various strategies when learners do not understand the **target language**.
(Council of Europe 2007: 43)
[Chapter 5 Conducting a Lesson; E. Classroom Language; Descriptor 4]

- (15) I can encourage learners to relate the **target language** to other languages they speak or have learned where and when this is helpful.
(Council of Europe 2007: 43)
[Chapter 5 Conducting a Lesson; E. Classroom Language; Descriptor 6]

- (16) Experience and research tell us that the skills involved here [in the teacher's ability to use the **target language** as classroom language] have to do with deciding when it is most effective in terms of learning to use the **target language** and for what purposes, and when recourse to the home language might be more appropriate.
(Council of Europe 2007: 38)
[Chapter 5 Conducting a Lesson; Introduction; Paragraph 3]

Without doubt, the above can-do statements and passage qualify the exclusively monolingual orientation to language found in the EPOSTL in so far as they refer to *other languages*, the *home language*, and communicative *strategies* (e.g. use of plurilingual linguistic resources) as potential resources for negotiating meaning. Still, the thematic patterns in the co-text communicate certain restrictions for when to draw on linguistic resources other than the target language. What I am saying is that while the use of the target language in the classroom in the examples (6)–(9) is a matter of course, the guidelines in (13)–(16) attach conditions to the use of linguistic resources from ‘other languages’. Put differently, non-conformity to a monolingual orientation to language in the classroom is authorized only if need be. This reasoning is suggested by the syntactic structure of the competence descriptions in (13)–(16), all of which refer to the use of alternative linguistic resources in a conditional clause. Hence, while the use of the ‘target language’ goes without saying, violation of the English-only principle would not be tolerated without good reason. The EPOSTL thus seems to support what has been negatively called ‘parallel monolingualism’ (for critical discussion, see e.g. contributions in Heller 2007), while non-adherence to a monolingual approach is only a second best, dispreferred option.

Studies on the functions plurilingual resources fulfill in ELF communication are not rare (cf. Cogo 2016: 68; Klimpfinger 2009: 366; Klötzl 2014: 40–41; Pietikäinen 2014: 1). However, monolingual norms and ideals may remain intact, when language pedagogy degrades the use of plurilingual resources as mere indicators of gaps in students’ communicative abilities (Cogo 2018: 359). This is not the case for ELF communication where ELF users effectively and purposefully draw on their plurilingual repertoire to enhance understanding (cf. Klimpfinger 2009: 367) and do not just resort to it as a compensation strategy (cf. Cogo 2009: 259; Franceschi 2017: 75–76). Likewise, the conventionally negatively connotated notion of transfer has been revisited to draw attention to how it may enhance interactions in ELF (Hülmbauer 2011: 140). Therefore, prospective teachers who are referred to the portfolio during teacher formation are likely to be implicitly socialized into monolingual norms. At worst, the can-do directives discussed in this section may even stigmatize plurilingual skills such as for instance the use of cognates (for discussion of examples, see Hülmbauer 2011: 143–149, 2013: 51–67) or multilingual idioms and metaphors (see Pitzl 2018a: Ch. 7), an approach that is anachronistic and misinformed from an ELF perspective.

The discursive representation of plurilingual practices in the EPOSTL described above is reminiscent of the portrayal of misunderstanding in the CEFR, where a similar syntactic pattern can be observed (cf. Pitzl 2015: 107–108).

In this context, Pitzl (2015: 108–109) argued that the way misunderstanding has been handled in the CEFR may have to do with the history of teaching methodology, more specifically, different conceptualizations of errors and mistakes that came with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Learning (TBLT). CLT and TBLT include communication and appropriateness as foci in language teaching and learning and no longer solely concentrate on accuracy, which seems to have caused some empirically unsupported specifications for misunderstanding in subordinate clauses in the competence descriptions provided by the CEFR (Pitzl 2015: 108–109). With regard to the EPOSTL, the rather hesitant and cautious acknowledgment of students' plurilingual repertoire implied in the EPOSTL descriptors may occur for analogous reasons. The backlash against grammar-translation method was to ban linguistic resources other than the target language more or less from the classroom in the Direct Method and audiolingual methodologies (Cook 2009: 148). The more communicatively oriented approaches of CLT and TBLT now leave the role of the L1 and other linguistic resources unmentioned altogether (Cook 2009: 148), while language education policy strongly advocates plurilingualism (cf. Council of Europe 2001: 2). It follows that LEP's commitment to plurilingualism clashes with the unspecified approach to a plurilingual repertoire in CLT and TBLT as also suggested by Ull and Agost (2020: 55–56). This ambivalence towards plurilingual practices might thus explain the restrictions introduced in the subclauses of the EPOSTL descriptors (13)–(16).

4 Normativity in language pedagogy

4.1 Uncoupling the English language classroom from established norms

The analysis of these descriptors reveals how the directives given in the EPOSTL are difficult to reconcile with concepts and findings provided by ELF research. It follows that the EPOSTL descriptors represent a rather conservative view of what language learning means and could therefore benefit from innovative ELF reasoning. To move beyond the normative approaches in ELT revealed by the EPOSTL, ELF research has proposed several models for pedagogic implementation that meet the trends and patterns observed in Sections 3.1 and 3.2, and that teachers need to be made aware of during teacher formation. One of these frameworks that could provide particularly appropriate guidance for English language teachers today is the concept of translingual awareness understood as

“a reflective *awareness* of the potential of language resources and the negotiation of meanings, transcending the limiting monolingual and normative ideologies of society or classroom” (Canagarajah 2013: 188–189, italics in original). The notion of translingual awareness seems apt for pointing teachers towards the value of a plurilingual repertoire and establish a non-normative conceptualization of plurilingual languaging practices contrary to the one represented by the EPOSTL. Such an unbiased approach to plurilingual resources in the (English) language classroom then also resonates with second language acquisition research on the bilingual nature of language learning (see e.g. Cook 2009) and applied linguistic work on the educational value of translation (see e.g. Cook 2010; Widdowson 2020b: Ch. 17). It is also consistent with the concept of multicompetence (see e.g. Brown 2013), calls for social justice for multilinguals (see e.g. Ortega 2019) and conceptualizations of polylingualism (see Jørgensen 2008) and translanguaging (see García and Wei 2014).

Likewise, ELF research addresses the notion of culture in ELT. Arguments were put forward to move beyond Byram’s (1997) dominant concept of cultural awareness and, instead, introduce the concept of transcultural awareness to cover intercultural communication through ELF (cf. Baker 2011: 202).¹⁰ The concept of transcultural awareness provided in ELF research recognizes the situatedness of intercultural communication, captures the independence of a language like English from communities of native speakers as well as the liminal and flexible nature of culture in lingua franca encounters (Baker 2011: 202). The notion of *transcultural* – contrary to *intercultural* – awareness also takes into account that “it is not at all obvious what ‘cultures’ communication through ELF is ‘between’” (Baker 2015a: 14, italics in original). That is, the notion of transcultural awareness recognizes that cultural frames of reference are dynamic, that interactants’ orientations to them are variable and that transcultural communication evolves “‘through’ and ‘across’ rather than ‘between’ cultures as implied in *intercultural*” (Baker 2015a: 14, italics in original). It is concepts like these that need to be picked up in student teacher learning, so the pedagogic significance of ELF becomes recognized by ELT.

The concepts of translingual and transcultural awareness provide ways to overcome the prevalent default conceptualization of English as a foreign language (EFL) in ELT, or put differently, to “deforeignize” (Widdowson 2020a: 39) the subject ‘English’. Traditionally, ‘English’ has been considered the property of its native speakers, which renders it ‘foreign’ to all other language users and has been

10 The original proposal for the model used the term “intercultural awareness” (Baker 2011: 202), with the prefix ‘trans-’ introduced in a subsequent discussion of the concept only (cf. Baker 2015a: 14). To make a clear distinction between Byram’s conceptualization of intercultural awareness and Baker’s, this paper uses the modifier ‘transcultural’.

viewed as ‘foreign’ like any other modern language in the context of language pedagogy (cf. Seidlhofer 2011: 54–55). Thereby, the tenet that the sole aim of language education is to enable students to communicate with native speakers of the language has been upheld, which may explain why a native speaker orientation remains intact in ELT (cf. Dewey 2015: 121; Jenkins 2012: 487; Seidlhofer 2011: 41; Widdowson 2015: 369). A foreign language approach in language education, however, quite clearly precludes an awareness of how language is used for lingua franca purposes and therefore stands in contrast to proposals for pedagogies of ELF, most notably an ELF-informed rationale. This would require language pedagogy and teacher formation to question native speaker norms and to address the communicative processes at work in language use rather than to focus on language forms (cf. Seidlhofer 2011: 205, 2015: 23). It is easy to see the concepts of translingual and transcultural awareness as compatible with this call. It follows that their introduction in the English language classroom would be a first step in leaving behind established norms and reflecting the pedagogical significance of contemporary ELF use.

4.2 Beyond normative approaches in student teacher learning

Moving on from suggestions for methodologies in ELT that can overcome current norms in language learning, it becomes necessary to engage with LEP’s conceptualization of student teacher learning revealed by the EPOSTL. The portfolio favors a synthesis of teacher training and teacher development as approach to teacher formation. Teacher training instructs prospective teachers about the canon of educational theories, pedagogic terminology, and teaching methodology (Mann 2005: 104). In doing so, teacher training equips student teachers with a rather static set of pedagogic skills that merely provides them with “solutions to a set of predictable problems and sets a premium on unreflecting expertise” (Widdowson 1990: 62). By contrast, the notion of teacher development is more exploratory and focuses on “the experience of being a teacher, initiation into the teaching community, action research, personal development, teacher cognition, and beliefs” (Cook 2013: 14). At best, teacher development refrains from providing teachers with a static knowledge base and instead fosters in teachers a dynamic awareness of language teaching and learning that helps them to make autonomous decisions and enables them to develop innovative pedagogic practices themselves (Tomlinson 2003: 2). At the same time, however, Tomlinson cautions that teacher development is prone to promote reflection only within the established, pre-defined system of language pedagogic concepts (Tomlinson 2003: 2),

which may reinforce the entrenchment of covert norms concerning language and its teaching.

For one thing, the EPOSTL's outcome-oriented view on classroom practice that the portfolio conveys through a ready-made set of can-do statements and, hence, its reliance on established conventions indicates a training perspective, as defined above, on student teacher learning. For another thing, reflective approaches – such as the one facilitated by the EPOSTL – are generally associated with the notion of teacher development (cf. Cook 2013: 14–15). Both of these frameworks, however, conceptualize pedagogic practice within the actual context of teaching, instead of uncoupling it from actual practice for applied linguistic theorization (Cook 2013: 14–15). That is, they evolve to a considerable extent at a remove from theory and so do not include critical appraisal of concepts. It so happens that these concepts, much as the LEP approach represented by the EPOSTL, stand in contrast to the notion of teacher education, which is conceptualized as the acquisition of abilities to adjust to unpredictable circumstances that may not match established solutions, but require adapted ways of thinking and approaches (cf. Widdowson 1990: 62). Hence, teacher education, as defined by Widdowson (1990), focuses on an evaluation of theoretical constructs so student teachers are enabled to adjust these concepts to whatever conditions they may encounter.

The EPOSTL, however, while claiming to be a tool for teacher education and to encourage reflection, does not favor such a critical appraisal of theories informing language teaching. Instead, it is easy to see how LEP's understanding of teacher formation revealed by the EPOSTL reflects the following paradox:

[W]hile teachers are supposed to become empowered and liberated from restrictions imposed by abstract theories through engagement in reflection and finding solutions to their classroom problems themselves, they are required to reflect the way researchers and academics have specified, and any other mental activity directed at performance improvement not sanctioned by the academia is doomed to oblivion. (Akbari 2007: 200)

As the analysis of the can-do statements indicates, the kind of reflection facilitated by the EPOSTL is one within a clearly defined policy-approved theoretical scope, which precludes alternative and innovative theoretical orientations available for language pedagogy, most notably recognition of the pedagogical implications of ELF research. Newby (2012a: 212, 2012b: 15) also concedes that the EPOSTL is – through its explicit connection to the CEFR – certainly not an undogmatic reflection kit. The fact that there is no recognition of ELF or the need to reflect on its significance makes it quite clear that the EPOSTL descriptors are meant to be conformed to rather than critically reflected on. For that reason, accounts of the EPOSTL describing it as “a GPS wherein destination coordinates are plugged in and a roadmap appears in the form of descriptors” (Schauber 2015: 131) become an

issue. As prospective teachers are instructed by means of conformity to a set of established can-do statements, the LEP approach to teacher formation represented by the EPOSTL becomes essentially normative.

It is quite clear that policy-informed programs (e.g. teacher formation programs building on the EPOSTL) – since they serve an institutional purpose – are bound to take training and development perspectives to get teachers to conform to policy-approved principles and so do not want to encourage reflection about possible alternative ways of thinking. Teacher formation programs institutionalizing the reflection tool, for instance by introducing the use of the EPOSTL as a prerequisite to pass a methodology class, oblige language teacher candidates to commit – wittingly or unwittingly – to the principles implied in the portfolio through reflection without getting student teachers to explore their theoretical rationale. It stands to reason that reflection may have become a mechanism exploited by language policy to implement its tenets of language, learning, and teaching under the guises of empowerment and autonomy. This way teacher learning programs might become complicit in language policy implementation, thus making teacher formation considerably politicized. Certainly, policy enactment, as the study by Maguire et al. (2015) indicates, is an intricate process relying on multiple factors like for instance policy (en)actors' uptake of policy guidelines, to mention just one aspect. As for the EPOSTL, teacher educators', course designers' and student teachers' agency will also be crucial factors influencing the implementation of the LEP framework. Still, what needs to be made explicit is that the reflective spectrum the EPOSTL creates, derives from a language policy agenda that favors a dogmatic EFL orientation to language in ELT, as discussed in Section 4.1. Prospective teachers might thus be covertly socialized into foreign language ideologies and this may also explain why native speaker norms remain well-entrenched in English language classrooms. It follows that the existing normative framework for teacher formation provided by LEP in the form of the EPOSTL needs to be adapted as it clashes with proposals for (ELF) teacher education and pedagogy.

5 Conclusion and outlook

This paper has sought to make explicit the conceptualizations of language teaching and student teacher learning informing the EPOSTL. The can-do descriptors in the student teacher portfolio present a rather traditional view of language and focus on the 'foreignness' of English from a largely monolingual ideological position. This, in turn, may sustain native speaker norms and might

render it difficult to accommodate an awareness of English in its function as *lingua franca*. That is, the reflective processes that the EPOSTL proposes to encourage unfortunately conceptualize the subject as ideally monolingual and monocultural, which is rather unlikely to recognize the communicative potential inherent in plurilingual repertoires, and the essential transculturality of the communicative use of the language. There is reasonable possibility that teacher learning programs informed by the reflection tool might not fully implement the proposed implications of research into ELF communication, and *lingua franca* communication more generally. The models of transcultural and translingual awareness were proposed as potential ways to move beyond normative orientations to language and learning.

While the EPOSTL seeks to encourage critical reflection, it might give directives without getting student teachers to explore their theoretical rationale if the reflection tool is applied prescriptively. This indicates that the EPOSTL as an institutional policy instrument considerably focuses on what is general – English is like all other foreign languages – and what is administratively convenient as a common framework, based as it is on the CEFR. This is rather unlikely to trigger the kind of critical reflection about validity and relevance to local conditions that teacher education would seek to promote. Thus, it seems difficult to reconcile the reflection tool with ELF research and its significance for language pedagogy and teacher education. Future research focusing on the use of the EPOSTL in particular teacher learning programs might investigate teacher educators' scope of action in implementing the LEP framework and how normative application of the portfolio can be counteracted.

Based on the prescriptive tendencies in the LEP-informed approach to teacher formation and teaching, there are suggestions to be made, though tentatively, that have implications for further research into the pedagogic implementation of ELF research. This present enquiry into the EPOSTL points to the need to turn to principles inherent in the conceptualization of teacher education, as opposed to teacher training. By its very nature, this would, for instance, involve critical engagement with language education policy, most notably, policy-informed teaching resources such as the EPOSTL. The purpose would be to make the norms implied in teaching aids much more explicit to avoid student teachers being unwittingly socialized into particular ways of thinking about language use, teaching and learning. This would enable language teachers to adapt concepts, methodologies and materials. This way, major steps could be taken in responding to the challenge of ELF and in educating language teachers as reflective, well-informed practitioners.

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