

TEACHERS' WORKSHOP FOR ENGLISH AND GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS

Australian Tropes of Nature: Representation and Appropriation in EFL Teaching

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Influenced by cultural studies, EFL teaching has witnessed an extension of the canon beyond the dominant paradigm of DWEM, opening up to a variety of postcolonial or multiethnic texts, as Thaler (2008) and others have pointed out. Postcolonial criticism has repeatedly expressed scepticism concerning the possibility of appropriate representation of cultures and identities in their complexity and fluidity. This cultural predicament seems even more problematic when assessing cultural production in the context of school education – a system which claims authority of representation because it requires comprehensibility and testability of the teaching contents and objectives in order for young learners to be able to develop and communicate a sense of shared and learned characteristics of their own and others' cultural identity.

Influenced by critical theory's attempts at mapping cultural representation in its complexity, several didactic models have been put forward in order to provide a conceptual basis for a holistic assessment of culture and intercultural competence in an educational context. Among the most prominent ones is Michael Byram's model (1997), which promotes the ideal of "critical cultural awareness" by assessing the level of intercultural (communicative) competence along the lines of the categories "knowledge, skills, and attitudes".

Against the critical backdrop of the conflicting priorities and paradigms established above, the paper will investigate to what extent the representation of Australian nature in ELT materials captures intercultural competence in its cognitive, pragmatic and affective complexity – despite the above mentioned structural impediments inherent in the (German) school system. By taking a closer look at the presentation of Australian tropes of nature, it will scrutinize whether nature serves as a trope in which complex negotiations of cultural identities can play themselves out - and if so, along which didactic lines.

Bio

Konstanze Kutzbach holds a PhD in English Philology (*OurSelves at War: Metaphorizations of Identity on the Borderline in Twentieth-Century Anglophone Literature*. Trier: WVT, 2010). She is currently working as a lecturer of English didactics and coordinator of the MA of Education Study Program for the English Department at the University of Cologne. Her publications in the field of didactics include *Gender und Sport: Der Jugendroman zwischen pädagogisch-didaktischem und literarästhetischem Anspruch* (2011) and "From English Studies to English Didactics: An Academic Map of Transfer for a University Curriculum" (2013).