Contents

1 Introduction

Voice 1[1]
You know, I don't know how it's done. I don't plan everything ahead. Some-
times, I don't know what kind of task they should do in the end. I just start
and we do something and I try to make them speak and then we'll see where
we end up. What is written in the books is just not always how reality is. You
can't pre-plan everything. I have never worked like that. I also think it's not
necessary. It's important to be close to the children, to know what they find
interesting. The most important thing for me is to make them speak ad hoc.
I just ask myself, 'How can I make my children speak?', and then you have
to value and appreciate what the children offer and help them to speak more.
Anna – 2015

This is a translation of one of the comments from a teacher in the research
project in which this research study is embedded. It summarises several aspects
that are relevant in this research study and thus presents a good starting point
because it: (i) illustrates the importance placed on teachers' opinions in this
research project; (ii) indicates the well-known tensions between theoretical and
practical insights into teaching; (iii) foreshadows the focus of this study, namely
tasks in English as a foreign language teaching (EFLT) in primary schools (PS);
and (iv) hints at what is important in early EFLT (eEFLT), namely enabling chil-
dren to use English as a means of communication. In the following, I explain
why these aspects are important, how they are interconnected, and in which
sequence I will address them in this book.

1.1 Tasks, teachers, their teaching practice and research

Even though task-based language teaching (TBLT) has been widely researched
(Samuda & Bygate, 2008), used within the (inter)national EFLT context for dec-
ades (Candlin & Murphy, 1987; R. Ellis, 2003; Hallet & Legutke, 2013a, 2013b;

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1   Some of the voices are based on audio recordings. Those are presented in a transcript
     style (see Appendix C).

Keller, 2013; Nunan, 1989, 2013b), and recently proclaimed a valuable teaching approach for teaching (modern foreign languages) in German PS (HKM, 2010, 2011), there is still no agreement on what exactly TBLT in primary schools involves. A task forms the basic element of TBLT (J. C. Richards & Rodgers, 2001) and can broadly be defined as an activity in which language is used for executing communicative situations within a meaningful context for learners (Bygate, 1999; Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001). This however provides little help for teachers planning tasks for implementation in the early English as a foreign language classroom (eEFLC). Little research has been conducted into the use of pedagogic tasks within eEFLT (Cameron, 2001; Carless, 2002, 2003, 2004; Samuda & Bygate, 2008), yet teachers are now required to use tasks in the eEFLC, and in doing so face problems. This research study investigates the use of learning tasks for the eEFLC. This refers to learners between the ages of 6 to 10 years attending PS Grades 1 to 4 in Germany. In the present study (learning) tasks refer to tasks developed for and used in German eEFLCs that focus on the development of (language) skills of the learners and use English as a means of communication as opposed to tasks used for assessing language skills or second language acquisition research (SLA) (Bygate et al., 2001). More precisely, the focus of this qualitative-explorative collaborative study lies on how tasks may be defined and what aspects are crucial in their enactment.

The investigation in this study is based on two assumptions: first, I follow Breen (1987) and others who proclaimed that there is a difference between a theoretical task conceptualisation (task-as-workplan) and its actual implementation (task-in-action) within a classroom setting (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). I agree with Breen (1987) who stated, "(…) the actual *task-in-process* (…) which generates typically diverse learning outcomes, and the quality and efficacy of any task must be traced directly to its use during teaching and learning" (p. 25). This research study will show that the enactment of an eEFL task in the investigated schools involves teachers 'doing a lesson' (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005; Bloome, Puro, & Theodorou, 1989) within four dimensions related to (i) teachers' organisational skills in classroom management (Kounin, 2006), creating a positive learning environment, and cooperation with students (Kennedy & Kennedy, 1996; Kenny, 1996; Williams & Burden, 1997); (ii) teachers' teaching practices establishing ways in which students can contribute to the overall lesson and task to share their experiences or something personally relevant with classmates and the teacher (Bruner, 1987; Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013; Kohonen, 1992; D. Kolb, 1984); (iii) vocabulary teaching practices that help students build a vocabulary and (iv) learn the discursive practices to use language for communication (Cameron, 2001). Therefore, it seems correct to argue,

(…) what matters most is the nature of tasks-in-action in classroom contexts, in in-
teraction with other pedagogical phenomena. For this to be possible, it is important
for research to be able to access pedagogical processes within classroom contexts
(Samuda & Bygate, 2008, p. 261)[2].

The second assumption is that eEFL teachers may find it helpful to have the
key features of eEFL tasks identified. Further it may be helpful to teachers to
know how those features can be enacted in classroom situations. It is as-
sumed that these features and enactments could function as guidelines for the
teachers and their daily teaching routines or provide them with new ideas of
how to look at their practices from a new perspective to further reflect upon
their teaching.

   This study is part of a research project funded by a German federal state
Ministry of Education (MoE). It is set in a multi-cultural city in central Germany
in one of the sixteen federal states. The project setting allowed for a PhD student
(myself) position to work as a research assistant under the supervision of a
senior researcher. Primary and secondary school teachers from 12 schools (seven
primary and five secondary schools), delegates of the MoE and of the city school
board (CSB), and the research team collaboratively examined a number of EFLT
aspects, one of which was the use of tasks in Grades 1 to 5 (see Chapter 2). The
project group met monthly to share different members' perspectives on eEFL
tasks and to gain a better understanding of the different traditions for the the-
oretical investigation of eEFLT (academic discourse: researchers' perspective)
and practical teaching experience (practical / experienced-based discourse:
teachers' perspective) on tasks. The research project operated under the as-
sumption that only a group of equals working collaboratively can provide fur-
ther insight on what a task looks like in eEFLT and how it can be taught (All-
wright, 2003; Allwright & Hanks, 2009; Clarke, 1994; Schön, 1987).

   It is crucial to examine eEFL tasks from several perspectives (i.e., theoretical
and practical). Teachers are meant to follow the curriculum guidelines and start
teaching tasks (HKM, 2010, 2011) without necessarily having been trained in
TBLT. Zhang (2005, 2007) illustrated that what political guidelines demand of
teachers is often not comparable to what teachers actually do in their classrooms.
Therefore, simply investigating the theoretical perspective and dismissing the
TBLT practices taking place in classrooms will contribute little to a better un-
derstanding of the nature and enactment of eEFL tasks. The PS curriculum in
this federal state offers competence descriptions combined with a few short

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2   All quotes in this book are presented in their original emphasis otherwise a change is
     marked.

examples to illustrate the task approach, but no clear definition, content illustrations or ready-made materials are provided. Teachers feel frustrated and unsupported, and continue teaching eEFL tasks based on their general teaching experience and former education. Hence, it seems not only logical to include the opinions and ideas of teachers who implement the curriculum on a daily basis, but also a duty to learn from the practical insights they have gained (Clarke, 1994). In addition, my personal experiences in teaching eEFL (see Chapter 2) and working with foreign language teachers in Germany and Great Britain also played a role. As my experience and research studies (e.g., Hattie, 2009) show, teachers potentially have a strong influence on students' learning outcomes. Teachers often (un)consciously decide what and how to teach and how to implement the curriculum (Adamson, Kwan, & Chan, 2000).

During my time teaching eEFL I 'experimented' with different teaching methods and styles. My own understanding of these aspects changed due to new experiences and further studies in psychology, education, and didactics. Additionally, my observations of other teachers' lessons influenced my own teaching practice. During university lectures, we discussed curriculum and national standard issues. I then talked about these developments with my colleagues and observed their lessons to get a better understanding of what it meant exactly to teach eEFL. I recognised that the teacher's understanding was important to how she[3] teaches. When I began working in the project context I re-traced my experiences, and realised there was no other logical conclusion but for me to focus on teachers' task concepts. I was further encouraged to include teachers' understanding of tasks as the literature showed teachers' voices have often been neglected in research in general (Clarke, 1994) and in TBLT in particular (Samuda & Bygate, 2008).

To adequately include teachers' perspectives the research topic is addressed from an integrated and multi-disciplinary viewpoint with a strong focus on the daily teaching practices of the project teachers. Practice is a term that may be used in various ways and this is reflected in this study. Practice in this study refers to:

- …the practical aspects of teaching as opposed to theoretical considerations about teaching
- …the practice of 'doing something' in order to become skilled, such as practising language skills (e.g., practising the pronunciation of a word)

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3   I use the female pronouns as an umbrella term when referring to people as a general rule in this book that should, however, not exclude the male version.

- ...something that "involve[s] repetition of the same or closely similar performance in routines" (Young, 2009, p. 1) (the teachers' daily teaching routines, general German EFLT practices) that may sometimes refer to:

  (...) repeat[ing] their own performance (...) [and other times to] a person [that] may perform a practice for the first time in their life but, through direct or indirect observation, the person has knowledge of the history of a practice in their community, and it is that history that is extended in practice (Young, 2009, p. 1).

- ...to Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA) in which practice is defined in a narrower sense (Jones & Norris, 2005b), for example, involving bodily movements combined with spoken language (holding up an apple and uttering the word 'apple' at the same time).

1.2 Focus and starting point of the study

As a consequence of wanting to include teachers' perspectives, I follow a structure guided by Goffman's (1974) question: "What is it that's going on here?" (p. 8). As such, the aim is to investigate tasks, and with it, texts and events, in their localised context. In this empirical study the research project forms the localised context that crucially influenced the overall investigation. It will be honoured by being described first (see Chapter 2). As was pointed out by different scholars in different fields of research (Bakhtin, 1981; Goffman, 1974; Gumperz, 1992; Malinowski, 1923; Vygotsky, 1978), to understand a situation, the context in which it occurs as well as wider / broader (e.g., societal) influences must be taken into consideration when trying to interpret its meanings. The research project provides the background to this present study. Thus the research project needs to be described before an analysis of the "focal event" (Goodwin & Duranti, 1992, p. 3); namely eEFL tasks in the project context, can be appropriately undertaken, and the results interpreted and understood. This assumption leads to a specific research design to answer the overall research questions (see Chapter 2):

- What is the nature of eEFL tasks (discussed in Chapters 3, 4 & 7)?

and

- How are eEFL tasks enacted (discussed in Chapters 5, 6 & 7)?

The two overall research questions are addressed in two sets and encompass the investigation of several smaller aspects prior to their results being combined in

Chapter 7. In Chapter 8, a reflection on the research study is presented. The scope of this research study lies within the eEFLT context in the project, but as Section 9.2 reveals, the results may be useful for the general eEFLT context of at least this federal state. Key features of eEFL tasks are the outcome of this study. Additionally, I will present further insights into the enactment of tasks in eEFLCs. In the following chapters, I have attempted to make explicit the links between the research context and the research approach, research questions, my background, the roles I occupied in the research project, and the relationships between the other members of the research project and me. A guiding assumption was that texts, especially an empirical study, are multi-dimensional and heteroglossic (Bakhtin, 1981) constructs of research contexts and problems. Hence researchers need to consider multiple perspectives to form an understanding of the situation in question. To honour the multiple perspectives, the chapters of this thesis are interspersed with 'voices' (Bakhtin, 1981) of teachers, researchers, teacher educators as well as my own. Moreover, the chapters deviate from the typical research study structure of presenting a literature review prior to outlining the context, methodology, and research questions.

1.3 An interdiscursive research approach

The research conceptualisation of this study follows a "multi-perspective and inter-discursive research agenda" (Candlin & Crichton, 2011, p. 9; see also Crichton, 2010)[4]. The notion behind this conceptualisation is that people, namely teachers, making use of standards, curricula, and teaching methods in their everyday life should have a say in future conceptualisations of tasks to share their experiences and insights with researchers. Then teacher education programs, curricula, and teaching practices in general can be further developed on the basis of teachers' insights and a better understanding of actual classroom processes can be achieved (Clarke, 1994; Schön, 1987). Likewise, it is assumed that categories and concepts developed outside of teaching practices sometimes fail to hold true in everyday teaching situations.

   This study investigates the nature and enactment of tasks with an inclusion of the perspectives of teachers. This is compared and contrasted with knowledge gained in other research studies and theoretical task conceptualisations to present a more detailed picture of tasks in classroom settings (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). In addition, the nature of tasks alone does not pre-define the classroom

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4   For a detailed illustration of this conceptualisation of 'doing research' see Candlin, Crichton and Moore (2017).

practices of teachers. On the contrary, as the findings of this study show (see Chapters 5, 6 & 7), the teachers' vocabulary teaching and 'doing school' practices (Bloome et al., 2005), in combination with the teachers' reactions to students' wishes to actively participate in the classroom discourse and the enablement of students to talk about something personally relevant considerably influences the overall task emergence in eEFLCs.

In order to accomplish such a multi-faceted, -layered, and -modal analysis, several aspects of the research design need to be taken into consideration. The most important of these is the 'ecological validity' (Cicourel, 2007). It refers to the idea of how:

> (…) complex organisational activities represented by aggregated data from public and private sources and demographic and sample surveys can be linked to the collection, integration and assessment of temporal samples of observable (and when possible) recordable activities in daily life settings (Cicourel, 2007, p. 736).

In this study, the 'public sources' are formed by research literature concerning TBLT, eEFLT, and general PS teaching approaches in Germany. They are compared to various types of ethnographically collected data (interviews, surveys, observation protocols, video recordings of eEFLT lessons) in a case study setting (i.e., the specific project context). This, however, forms only one part of the 'ecological validity'; the public sources and data then need to be connected to discourse[5] that is itself always influenced by the broader setting as well as "simultaneously influenced by cognitive / emotional processes despite the convenience of only focusing on extracted fragments independently" (Cicourel, 2007, p. 736). As Candlin and Crichton (2011) rightly concluded, this asks for a research program design that includes

> [t]extual and semiotic analyses of discursive performances on site; interpretive ethnographic and grounded studies of professional and organisational practices; accumulated accounts of expertise by ratified members of the communities of practice in question together with first-hand accounts of interpretations of experience by actively involved members (p. 8).

The data and findings need to be placed in a certain field, here eEFLT in Germany. Naturally, a study is to be conducted within a certain timeframe, within a limited amount of pages, and is usually a one-person endeavour. As a consequence, not all aspects could be adequately addressed and presented here. The present study, however, addresses several aspects and in order to do so the

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5 Here, the term refers to Gee's (2008) understanding of discourse not only including written and spoken texts, but also the context in which the texts emerge and the combination of "saying-doing" (pp. 2–3).

overall research program cannot follow one "single methodology, however well grounded and finely applied" (Candlin & Crichton, 2011, p. 8). This is because no single methodology will "match its descriptive, interpretive and explanatory demands" (Candlin & Crichton, 2011, p. 8). Figure 1 below is an adaptation of Candlin and Crichton's Venn diagram and illustrates the approach applied in this research study. It is supposed to be read in this way:

> Each of the overlapping circles represents a distinctive but mutually implicating an-alytical perspective, all of which are relevant to the investigation of discursive prac-tices at a particular site. The mutuality of these perspectives is indicated by their convergence at the centre of the circles. The different perspectives foreground de-scriptive, interpretive and explanatory modes of analysis that may be brought to bear in the investigation, and the overlaps between them highlight the interdiscursive na-ture of research that seeks to combine these perspectives in the exploration of a par-ticular discursive site (…) no perspective is prime. What is central is that *all* perspec-tives are necessary and mutually informing (Candlin & Crichton, 2011, pp. 9–10).

F. 1: Venn diagram of researching the nature and enactment of eEFL tasks

The five aspects are addressed and discussed in different sections in the book. Some are highlighted in only certain chapters, others are interspersed throughout, and in particular aspects concerning the social practice can be found in other publications (see Legutke and Dreßler [forthcoming]). The model addresses four aspects, namely social practice (see Legutke & Dreßler [forthcoming]), semiotic resource perspective (see Chapters 2, 4, 6, 8; Legutke and Dreßler [forthcoming]), participants' perspectives ('voices of teachers'[6]), and social / institutional perspectives (see Chapters 2 & 5). All four aspects are positioned against the backdrop of my own perspective (see Chapter 2, 4, 7 & 8). This decision follows the well-accepted notion that within any research setting the researcher herself is a crucial influencing factor (Chereni, 2014; Cukor-Avila, 2000; Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001; Labov, 1994). Consequently, I frequently use first person singular to take the researcher's position into account. The reflection upon my position is published in Legutke and Dreßler (forthcoming).

The Venn diagram poses the focus of an inquiry situated in discursive practices, texts, and accounts. I drew on Layder's (1993) resource map for research to investigate those aspects. The map functions as a strategy to research human action and social organisation on four different interrelated layers, namely "context, setting, situated activity, and self" (p. 72). It is a model that intertwines different layers of society and research, combining influences on macro (structures in society and institutions) and micro (human behaviour and interaction) phenomena. Layder's (1993) map may also be understood by referring to research on several layers; that is, the macro layer that shows the power struggles which afford or constrain the overall research (e.g., in this case the ethics board in the MoE and the funding of the MoE) and the micro layer refers to how research participants – here the project members – experience the research endeavour and the kind of roles, positions, and ultimately identities afforded or constrained through their research participation. All of these aspects are relevant; however, not all of them are analysed in detail because: (1) the focus lies on identifying eEFL task features and eEFL task enactments; and (2) it would go far beyond the scope of any one-person study to investigate all of Layder's layers. Below, I clarify the aspects investigated and name the chapters in which they can be found.

I regard Layder's (1993) "context" layer as the structural and institutional factors influencing the project teachers. The factors refer to the values and tradi-

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6   In here, I follow Garfinkel (1964, 1967, 1996) and his ethnomethodology placing a strong focus on the perspective of people who act in the social settings under investigation.

tions related to eEFLT and PS didactics in Germany (Chapter 3), federal curricula and national standards (see Chapter 3), and what the general public thinks about eEFLT (news). It also refers to teacher education and EFLT regulations in Germany (see e.g., Section 2.2.4). The second layer "setting", impacts the project teachers in more immediate terms such as the school institution as their work place, school programs, and school curricula or pedagogical concepts followed by the respective school. It also includes the power struggles within the immediate range institutions. Here, I regard the research project (see Section 2.2) as having an influence on the "setting". Layder's (1993) third layer "situated activity" focuses on face-to-face situations. It refers to the classroom situation and the project meetings in which interactions between different parties occur (aspects are illustrated in Section 2.2, Chapters 4 & 8). The former type of interactions concerns situations between a teacher and her students (see Chapters 5 & 6), and the latter between teachers, teacher(s) and myself (see Chapter 8 and Legutke & Dreßler [forthcoming]), and teacher(s) and the research team during project meetings or school visits. The fourth layer is "self" and refers to biographical aspects concerning the teachers' qualifications, and past experiences as former students and as teachers (in R. Scollon and Scollon's [2004] term *historical body*). The researchers influence the project significantly and because they are the primary data collectors and interpreters their "selves" play a role. Hence, I provide information on my own experiences and assumptions (see Section 2.3, Chapter 8) to allow the reader to place and evaluate my analysis and interpretation of the data (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Leininger, 1994; Maxwell, 1992).

1.4 The structure of this book

The multi-perspectived and interdiscursive conceptualisation underpinning this research study leads to a non-traditional chapter structure. This is primarily in response to the challenge to not marginalise either context or language, as is often the case in research studies (Crichton, 2010). In this present study I borrow the TBLT concepts of task-as-workplan and task-as-action (Samuda & Bygate, 2008) and add a further aspect, namely task-in-reflection. I coined the last term (task-in-reflection) to indicate the focus on the different reflective and reflexive processes undertaken in this book (see also Legutke and Dreßler [forthcoming] and Dreßler [forthcoming]). Those are reflections on the processes taking place