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# The making of ‘good citizens’: German courses for migrants and refugees

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## ABSTRACT

Newcomers to Austria and Germany are obliged to learn German, as both of the nation states define themselves as monolingual – although millions of citizens speak more than one language. The demand to learn the national language is promoted by the shaky promise that it is an entrance ticket to the labour market and also a *sine qua non* to be respected by German and Austrian citizens. The main research questions of this qualitative study on language courses for migrants and refugees in Germany and Austria are as follows. Which normative knowledge is conveyed to students? How is it conveyed? How do students resist, and sometimes even subvert the (hidden) endeavours of the courses? Through participatory observation, interviews with teachers and a discourse analysis of the state accredited teaching materials, I demonstrate how Eurocentric norms are reproduced and stabilized. The first results highlight the reproduction of mainstream norms and the production of three different interwoven subject types: a) the economic subject who responds appropriately to the needs of a national neoliberal labour market; b) the submissive subject who agrees to norms and rules without the power to fully politically participate; c) the othered subject who forms the pleasing ‘constitutive outside’ of the national body.

## KEYWORDS

Integration; refugees; language courses; subject formation; normalization

## Introduction

“Every relationship of ‘hegemony’ is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, between various forces of which the nation is composed, but in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilisations” (Gramsci 1999, p. 666)

‘If you want to belong – you have to learn the national language’, is quite a typical statement and it characterizes the mainstream discourse on migration in Germany and Austria – two countries that share a common national language and similar language politics. For this reason, I include them both in the following analysis. Even though millions of citizens in Austria and Germany are bi- or multilingual,

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newcomers are required to learn German because these particular nation states portray themselves as monolingual. State-subsidised German courses, so-called 'Integrationskurse' (Integration Courses) in Germany are always supplemented by an 'Orientation Course' (Orientierungskurs), meanwhile in Austria refugees are obliged to take a 'Values Course' (Wertekurs). Both courses aim at conveying societal rules and the imagined values of the dominant society. The state offers courses with the assumption that subjects with a non-European citizenship, and even more so acutely when they are from so called Muslim countries, do not share the same values as German and Austrian citizens. Straight away it is presumed that they follow different social rules and therefore need a kind of citizen education in order to be transformed into democratic subjects. Of course, there is no agreement about which values exactly should be counted as national values, but there is a sort of consensus about imagined national values, for example, an agreement on gender equality and freedom of speech. The concept 'Leitkultur', which can be translated as 'defining culture', coined by the German law scholar and expert in Islam Bassam Tibi (1998), had a curious career in the 2000s, when it started to play a central role in the conservative migration discourse. The term is currently almost as powerful as the 'nation', another invented idea (cf. Anderson 1991). 'Leitkultur' intends, rather absurdly, to outline an unambiguous Germanic cultural identity and defines what newcomers must believe in, trust in, and also be able to perform, if they want to belong to German/Austrian society. The outline of 'Leitkultur' is not only based on key ideas of the Enlightenment, such as emancipation and democracy, but also on a discourse, which still sees European philosophical and political ideas as peerless. Parting from these general observations, I argue that German language courses are part and parcel of a fairly authoritarian migration regime that resembles the civilizing mission during colonialism. I do not claim that there is a tidy continuity from colonial discourses to those on integration and value, but without doubt, we will find discursive fragments which can be understood as 'colonial discourses in disguise'. For example, it is interesting to know that German courses subsidised by the German and Austrian governments are not publicised as language courses, but rather are included as part of integration and value courses. The point then seems to be less the improvement of communication skills, and more so what I call a 'hidden agenda' at work that is woven into the national migration regime. Following this argument, I seek to show that language courses are a vital part of a strategy of acculturation and assimilation that aims to portray the European nation state as welcoming newcomers, while at the same time safeguarding and stabilising a very scary nationalistic idea of the state. This is why it is important to ground the analysis of German courses in a hegemony analysis with a focus on subject formation. My research will illustrate how very specific subjects are formed and produced to inhabit a space that we might call 'inside-outside'. A space which seems to be within society, but which, when one takes a closer look, is actually located at the outer margins of society. There are three categories of subject formation that I will focus on: a) the economic subject that responds aptly to the needs of a national neoliberal labour market; b) the submissive subject that agrees to norms and rules without the power to fully politically participate; and c) the othered subject, which forms the 'constitutive outside' of the

national body. There cannot be a national body without defining what is within and what is outside of it. The outside – the other – is therefore constitutive. I agree here with Chantal Mouffe, whose theory is an important source of inspiration for the hegemony analysis presented in this paper:

I have found the notion of the ‘constitutive outside’ particularly useful [...] because it unveils what is at stake in the constitution of identity. [...] The aim to highlight the fact that the creation of an identity implies the establishment of a difference, difference which is often constructed on the basis of hierarchy, for example between form and matter, black and white, man and woman etc (Mouffe 2005, p. 15).

These are some of the thoughts that guided my research on German courses for migrants and refugees in Austria and Germany. The research does not so much focus on content and didactics, but critically analyses language courses as spaces of adult education that are seeped in by migration regimes. One of the research aims is the description of the kinds of subjects that are produced in spaces, which we could call ‘contact zones’, to use a concept from postcolonial theory (Pratt 2008 [1992]). Contact zones are spaces where migrants, refugees and national citizens enter into a dialogue outside of the dominant administrative sphere. These are normative zones of encounter, criss-crossed by power, but which nevertheless offer pedagogical chances while bringing to the surface the agency of students who do not always agree to the ‘civilising efforts’ made by state officials.

First, I will give a succinct description of the courses that are analysed and present my theoretical framework. Secondly, I will describe my research questions and method. This is then followed by the presentation of some initial results. The research is ongoing, which means that the presented material and results are a work in progress.

### **German language courses for migrants and refugees: a focused description**

The research focuses on two different categories of language courses: one is completely under state control, and forms a component of integration and value courses, respectively. The other courses are offered by volunteers and thus escape the far-reaching surveillance by governmental bodies.

Registration and admission to courses offered by the state is entirely under governmental rule. Most migrants and refugees take a language course on their own initiative, although some are obliged to do so by administrative orders. The courses, which are offered throughout Germany and Austria, are free of cost or available at a subsidised price. Once registered, the participant is monitored by state officials, who randomly visit the courses to verify that participation is correctly recorded. The lists of participants have to be filled out carefully by the teachers. The lists are necessary in order to receive for the refund of the attendance fee from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. The institutions therefore rely on the careful recording and monitoring by the language teachers, who become agents of surveillance (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) 2017).

The way in which the courses are presented to newcomers on the website of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Germany is telling:

If you are obliged to attend an integration course, please promptly register with a course. It is also vital that you actually attend the course. *Your benefits may be reduced if you fail to do so.* You are exempt from the costs of the integration course (BAMF 2016b, emphasis A. H.).

One very important point, which Birgit zur Nieden makes, is that while traditionally institutes of adult education were by law independent of state curricula, they now are liable to the state (zur Nieden 2009). This is highly significant because adult education, as well as cultural education, in Germany were given autonomy due to the intervention of the allied forces after the Second World War. It was understood that state intervention into adult education should be minimal. That was a crucial strategy to achieve the so-called re-education of the German and Austrian populations, aiming to establish a democratic nation state after the end of the Nazi regime. This means that there are important historical reasons for the fact that public institutions of adult and cultural education in Germany – even the Goethe Institute, which is the most important government-funded institute for preserving and distributing German language and culture – are not under direct state control.

The most important principles for the organization of [Adult Education] AE, which are generally contained in all AE Acts, are:

- A secure institutional structure of AE, created through institutional support and recognition in accordance with certain criteria of continuous work of proven quality;
- Organizational autonomy, i.e. separation from societal organizations such as trade unions, employers' associations and churches, and autonomy in syllabus planning and appointment of staff;
- Qualified staff, and provision for their inservice training;
- Cooperation with other commune and land educational institutions;
- Open access for all persons and groups in the population (Nuissl and Pehl 2004, p. 21; emphasis A.H.).

It is therefore particularly remarkable that students who attend German courses not only have to show their passports when they register, so that their legal status and entitlement to the course can be proven, but even their regular attendance is surveilled. Moreover, the teaching material is accredited by the state and only courses which use the accredited material may be subsidised (BAMF 2016a). This is a considerable state intervention and undermines the autonomy of institutes of adult education.

The general framework of German language courses for migrants and refugees can be described as repressive and also humiliating while at the same time, it is alleged by official state bodies that to learn the national language guarantees a quick inclusion into society *and* the labour market. Consequently, it is common sense to argue that refugees and migrants should be obliged to learn the national language. This is especially interesting in comparison to the migration regimes of the 1950s, 60s and 70s

when there were only very few possibilities for migrants as low-skilled labourers to take German courses. Although offering language courses to newcomers can be viewed as a step in the right direction, it fails to be an instrument of inclusion because of the state's systematic approach. For one, the promise of becoming a respected citizen is bound to a few strict conditions. For example, migrants who do not achieve speaking competence on the level of a 'native-speaker' will always be confronted with a devaluation of their competencies in general (Dirim 2010). According to the mainstream discourse, those who fail to master the national language deserve the discrimination that they face in the labour market and in everyday life (Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes 2013, p. 219). People who speak with a 'foreign' accent and grammatical errors, which might reveal that the person learned German as a second language, will always be marked by the dominant society as 'not fully belonging'. Following this kind of reasoning, experiences with racism become a matter of personal efforts: If newcomers work hard enough then they will be rightfully included into society. If not, it's understandable that society will reject them. One's ability to learn and speak the national language of one's receiving country becomes a litmus test for one's viability as a citizen, thus making racism the responsibility of the victim. Participation in language courses seems to be a *sine qua non* for the inclusion of migrants and refugees into German/Austrian society. Having said that, it is worthy to note that the courses are only offered up to level B1, as by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF<sup>1</sup>). B1 is described as follows:

[Students] [...] can produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. They can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans (Glaboniat 2010).

Hence, a B1 level enables the students to express themselves in a very limited way, or to put it more ruthlessly: most of the newcomers only acquire a language level, which qualifies them for jobs at the lower sector of the labour market. Few students are privileged enough to have access to a B2 course – while employability in the neo-liberal service economy depends on strong language skills.

In addition to state-subsidised language courses, there are courses offered by volunteers. Unfortunately, most of the volunteers are not trained language teachers. For that reason, they lack pedagogical training as well as the necessary linguistic expertise. For newcomers, who cannot afford private courses, they are unfortunately the only possibility to learn German without being monitored by the state. That is why undocumented migrants and refugees often make use of these courses. The spaces opened up by volunteers enable newcomers to get in touch with German/Austrian citizens, while simultaneously immersing themselves in the language. Courses offered by volunteers have become a very important inclusive space for all those who have no chance to enter the regular state-subsidised courses. Having said that, one must admit, that the risk, among other things, lies in a lack of pedagogical reflexivity. The missing expertise and the randomness of approaches might render it impossible for newcomers to gain the level of language skills that they desire. It is a double bind: while, on the one hand, the state-controlled courses offer mostly a fairly good quality of

language teaching, they subdue the learning subjects to the rules and norms of the state. On the other hand, courses led by volunteers offer the chance to stabilize the agency of newcomers as they are mostly critical of the migration regimes, but often fail to offer a satisfying language course.

### **Language courses as ‘contact zones’**

There are many ways to approach language courses, or for that matter, adult education in general, I here propose a hegemony analysis informed by postcolonial theory. One of the concepts that I find very compelling and useful for the description and analysis of the classroom is the theoretical concept of ‘contact zones’. Mary Louise Pratt (1991) coined the concept in the 1990s to describe a site of linguistic and cultural encounters, wherein power is negotiated.

I use this term to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today (Pratt 1991, p. 34).

If we understand language courses for migrants and refugees as contact zones, we directly shift our focus to the power structures inside of the classroom. It is then possible to have a closer look at the nationalistic discourses that frame them and to analyse the very essentialist idea of culture that haunts these courses and runs through the teaching material. Since the courses are directly interwoven with state led integration efforts, the classrooms have to be unravelled not just as spaces where language learning takes place, but also perceived as zones of encounter where knowledge, national codes and so-called cultural values are negotiated. Supplementing Marx’s third *Theses on Feuerbach*, which states that ‘the educator has to be educated’, with the idea of the classroom as a contact zone, calls for scrutinising the eminent power relations flowing through the classroom. It is imperative that one looks at the different dynamics in the classroom as well as the complexities of knowledge production. It will then be possible to deconstruct the different norms conferred and the contingencies produced by the ‘coercive choice’ to learn the national language.

In her book *Imperial Encounters* Pratt writes:

Sunday school missionary stories built the color line into our imaginations. That was part of their job, to create us as subjects of empire, [and] give us our place in the order (Pratt 2008 [1992], p. 3).

This translucent description gives us insight into the production of the colonised as well as the imperial subject. Simply by repeating stories and narratives of difference, the line between the ‘us’ and the ‘other’ is drawn and powerfully stabilised. It is a line that separates human beings by their skin colour, nationality and/or cultural identity. Through these stories, some subjects are positioned in the sphere of the imperial and come to believe that their very particular way of living should be universalised. Meanwhile, it is deemed understandable that the *othered subject*, to put it callously, can starve, or die in the Mediterranean Sea in search for a better life. In the same way, the colonial subject is produced through ideologies that even out the idea



of the ‘West and the Rest’. As Stuart Hall powerfully writes, despite the ‘many internal differences, the countries of Western Europe began to conceive of themselves as part of a single family or civilization (Hall 1992, p. 197)’. They formed the ‘West’ which he describes as follows:

First it allows us to characterize and classify societies into different categories [...]. It sets a certain structure of thought and knowledge in motion. Secondly, it is an image, or set of images. [...] It represents in verbal and visual language – a composite picture of what different societies, cultures, peoples and places are like. It functions as part of a language, a ‘system of representation’. [...] Thirdly, it provides a standard or a model of comparison. It allows us to compare to what extent different societies resemble, or differ from, one another. Non-Western societies can accordingly said to be ‘close to’ or ‘far away from’ or ‘catching up’ with the West. It helps to explain difference. Fourthly, it provides criteria of evaluation against which other societies are ranked and around which powerful positive and negative feelings cluster. (For example, ‘the West’ = developed = good = desirable; or the ‘non-West’ = under-developed = bad = undesirable.) It produces a certain kind of knowledge about a subject and certain attitudes towards it. In short, it functions as an ideology (Hall 1992, p. 277).

The subjects produced by these discourses are positioned at the margins of society and often agree to it by surrendering to the universalised norms and rules. The othered subjects start to believe that the margins are habitable, and that resistance against discrimination and exclusion is senseless.

### ***Civilising mission in disguise***

Another important theoretical concept, which directly connects to Pratt’s ‘contact zones’ is the ‘civilising mission’. The civilising mission legitimised colonialism and the imperial rule. The colonial powers argued that the colonised were inferior and had to be civilised (Fischer-Tiné and Mann 2004). Integration and value courses, which frame the analysed language courses for refugees and migrants, resemble the strategies and tactics of the civilising mission.

One of the most important myths, which is still alive, declares colonialism to be a burden taken up by Europe to bring civilisation to the ‘uncivilised’. The postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak describes one of the strategies of the civilising mission as ‘white men saving brown women from brown men’ (Spivak 1994, p. 93) pointing precisely to the gendered nature of the mission. She refers to the British state, which claimed to save Indian women from ‘barbaric rules’ for example saving widows from immolating themselves upon the pyre of their dead husband (a Hindu rite practised in some parts of the subcontinent). In her canonical text ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (1994) she shows how the alleged desire to save the colonised woman was indeed only an astute British imperial strategy to rule the colony. In fact, the colonisers were not invested in female agency.

Nowadays, on the one hand, there is a violent discourse around the oppressed Muslim woman and the lack of human rights for queers in the Global South, which is again and again likewise mobilised to challenge the sovereignty of formerly colonised territories as well as to legitimise more and more rigorous migration regimes



(Puar 2007). The West, on the other hand, is represented as a place of moral values. As Ratna Kapur, a feminist postcolonial legal scholar, states:

the legal interventions that have been pursued in the name of human rights are perhaps the most explicit examples we have to date of how the assumptions that more law equals more equality and freedom, and that human rights is an optimistic and hopeful pursuit, are quite mistaken. In fact, the proliferation of laws in the name of human rights serves at times to remind us how our good intentions, passions and progressive ‘swords’ may have turned into boomerangs. The human rights promise of progress, emancipation and universalism, has been exposed as myopic, exclusive and informed by a series of global panics especially a panic, over national security, sexual morality, and cultural survival in the contemporary period (Kapur 2006, p. 665–666)

What Kapur rightfully points out, is the way in which the liberal project has been instrumental for the continuous subordination of the other. There is a global and a local side to it: meanwhile, the West speaks in the name of human rights when breaking the sovereignty of other states; human rights are also mobilised to incite stricter migration regimes.

German language teachers in state subsidized courses necessarily become and are perceived by the students as representatives of the nation state as they control the attendance and use teaching materials that have been accredited by the government. By doing this, they inevitably reproduce normative hegemonic ideas. In the context of German and Austrian popular culture as well as in political speeches, the narratives confront newcomers with their insinuated inability to perform gender equality, to be secular, or to secure freedom of speech. All in all, it is suggested that newcomers from outside Europe will never be fully able to live according to the rules and norms of the defining European culture. Thomas de Maizière, the present Minister of the Interior in Germany, recently published his ten theses on the ‘defining culture’ describing it as a composite of ‘unwritten rules of living together’. Already the first point can be understood as part of a racist discourse:

We say our name. We shake hands to greet others. [...] ‘Showing our face’ is part of our democratic lifestyle. In daily life it is important for us to see if our counterpart shows a friendly or sad face. We are an open society. [...] We are not burka<sup>2</sup> (de Maizière 2017; translation, A.H.).

At the end of his list, which continues in the same simplistic language, mobilising a somewhat populist and racist discourse, he concludes: ‘Is this a canon of education everyone should know and learn, for example in the hundred hours of orientation we offer in our integration course? That would be nice.’ (de Maizière 2017; translation, A.H.) There can be no doubt that the civilising mission did not end with the era of colonisation. The times of colonisation are not fully over, the main target has just switched to civilising refugees and migrants from former colonies. German language courses play a very important role here. It is in these courses that an othered subject is persistently (re-) produced through the learning of the dominant language.

### ***Hegemony and normalisation***

If we view German language courses for refugees and migrants as an eerie continuation of a European civilising efforts and understand the classroom as a contact zone,

we necessarily need a theoretical tool that enables us to analyse the inherent power relations. In my research, I turned to two key theoretical frames: hegemony and normalisation. Supplementing the postcolonial lens with a Marxist perspective and a poststructuralist approach, I particularly rely on works from Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault. ‘Hegemony’ and ‘Normalisation’ are the theoretical tools with which I scrutinise the collected material.

Theories of hegemony and especially the theory of cultural hegemony, associated with Gramsci and later Hall, assert that the dominant social group controls the system of values and norms of a society. Cultural hegemony is stabilised through the consent of those subjugated to it. ‘Hegemony’, therefore, ‘defines the limits within which we can struggle, the field of “common sense” or popular consciousness’ (Grossberg 2005, p. 163). Cultural hegemony is never monolithic and never formed by a unified system of values. Rather, we are confronted with complex social structures. The struggle to reach hegemony is paramount to the understanding of social, cultural and political power and is a battle fought by civil society. As institutions of adult education are a very important part of civil society, it makes sense to look at them by using the tool of hegemony analysis. Hegemony analyses ask how ideologies, opinions, and positions are produced and how power relations are stabilised and at the same time rendered invisible.

It is in the *Prison Notebooks* that Gramsci describes why intellectuals are relevant figures for securing hegemony. According to him, they occupy a privileged position when it comes to producing a wide and stable consensus over hegemonic power relations. Consensus in civil society is thus more important than military force (cf. Gramsci 1999). Following Gramsci’s arguments, social arrangements that keep a certain class or social group in power are constantly open to negotiation (cf. Mayo 2017, p. 36). Thus, intellectuals can speak in favour or in opposition to power. We could then say, that (language) teachers are authoritative voices that pass on the ideological common sense to the students. In the case of the researched spaces, namely German courses for refugees and migrants, the role of the teachers becomes even more acute as the newcomers do not have full access to the civil society. They are in a stage of subalternization, which makes them as vulnerable to state interventions as they are to everyday racism.

In addition, the research project tries to make transparent the ideologies and positions that produce and secure ‘normality’. The question is: how and what kinds of norms and rules are negotiated and conveyed to newcomers in Germany and Austria? In the classroom we can analyse the battles for hegemony under a magnifying glass. Foucault (2014 [1977]) claims that discourses of normalisation are inevitably produced by mechanisms of exclusion and discipline. The power to exclude and to discipline is carried out through the medium of language. Evidently, the students learn to speak the German language, at the same time learning the norms and values represented by their teachers. Moreover, when state accredited teaching material is used, it further conveys the norms and rules and helps to produce ‘good’ German and Austrian citizens with very restricted political agency.

[P]ower is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society (Foucault 1990, p. 93).

According to Foucault, we learn to interiorise what is ‘normal’ by distancing ourselves from what is designated as ‘not-normal’. In his writings, he shows how power relations work, and how those who have the power to define are those who also frame the ‘normal’. In our case, normalizing what behaviour constitutes a ‘good’ German/Austrian citizen. The ones who are othered remain in a more powerless position and are described as deviating from the norm. Following this perspective, members of the dominant society perceive migrants and refugees as subjects must be normalised. What is described as ‘integration’ is nothing other than a way to produce normalised subjects who consent to their own subjugation.

After having summarized briefly, the theoretical perspectives that frame the research project, I will now give a short description of my methodological approach before presenting some initial results of the study.

### **Research method: critical ethnography and critical discourse analysis**

In my research project, I invert Gramsci’s assertion that every relation of hegemony is necessarily a pedagogical relation (1999, p. 666) and focus on the pedagogical arena as a space of the production and stabilisation of hegemony. The often unquestioned demands upon newcomers to assimilate to the cultural context and to learn the language quickly and flawless are inextricably linked to dubious promises. One of my main research goals is therefore to understand how the hegemonic discourses on refugees and migrants influence classroom dynamics. Moreover, I examine how normative knowledge is conveyed to the students And through which strategies and methods it is conveyed. Last but not the least, I analyse, how students resist and sometimes even subvert the (hidden) civilising undertakings.

In her introduction to critical ethnography, Sonja Madison (2011) defines the method as ‘the “doing” or the “performance” of critical theory. It is critical theory in action’ (Madison 2011, p. 16, emphasis in original). Critical theory is based on the writings of the Frankfurt School and holds on to the assertion that ‘social theory should be oriented towards critiquing and changing society as a whole, in contrast to traditional theory oriented solely to understanding or explaining it’ (Wodak and Meyer 2016, p. 6). Consequently, ‘the ethnographer has to take a clear position in intervening on hegemonic practices and serves as an advocate in exposing the material effects of marginalized locations while offering alternatives’ (Madison 2011, p. 7). This asks for a clear positioning of the researcher within the power relations that the research is examining. I position myself as female and non-white, but nevertheless privileged given that I teach in a European university, am a European passport holder, cis-gendered and able-bodied. Furthermore, although I experience racism on an everyday scale, I do not have direct experiences of exile. My position undoubtedly shapes the perspective of my analysis.

I observed 18 different language courses in Germany and Austria following the indications of critical ethnography and conducted 18 interviews with language teachers. Some of the interviews were conducted by trained students supporting the projects. The interviews helped me to verify some of the notes, which were made during the participatory observations. The participants were informed about my role and the role of the students, respectively. Still, for some, it was confusing to see me/the

students taking notes during the course. It undoubtedly influenced the class dynamics. In addition to the observations and interviews, parts of the state accredited teaching material were selected, following criterias specified beforehand, to complement the data. The whole material is analysed using the Viennese Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Wodak and Meyer 2016) method, which also is grounded theoretically in the perspective of the Frankfurt School. In CDA ‘language [is described] as social practice’ and it is stated that the ‘context of language use’ is crucial.

Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them but it also shapes them. That is, [...] it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. [...] Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people (Fairclough and Wodak 1997 cited in Wodak and Meyer 2016, p.6).

Given that one part of the research focuses on how discourses influence the content of the courses as well as the classes’ dynamics, CDA in combination with critical ethnography seem to be useful methods not only to analyse the formation of subjects, but also to show the ideological impact on the course structure and content.

In the following section, I will present initial results of the ongoing research project by rendering visible the hidden curriculum. The material shows, how German language courses are somehow framed by what I call the ‘effort to produce “good citizens”’.

### **First results: the hidden curriculum – how to be ‘good’**

The first results of the qualitative study on language courses for refugees and migrants in Germany and Austria, which I have been working on for the last two years, show how Eurocentric norms are reproduced and stabilised. Through a triangulation combining the analysis of participatory observations in the classroom with the analysed interviews and teaching material, we gain access to complex and entangled discourse fragments.

#### ***Heteronomativity... be a good husband and a modern father***

As mentioned before, it is currently fashionable for nation states to demonstrate their modernity by representing themselves as promoters of gender equality. For instance, in the material distributed by the Austrian Integration Fund, we find statements such as: ‘In Austria, men and women are allowed to divorce and marry again’ (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2016, p. 6). Given that in most countries divorce is legal, it seems a bit off-centre to highlight the fact that this is the case in Austria. The insinuations here clearly is that migrants and refugees, in contrast to Austrian citizens, are backward and do not comply with rules of gender equality. Within the same material, there is another highlighted red text box that states: ‘Help your partner to do the chores and do the child care together!’ (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds

2016, p. 8) and a third one saying, ‘Violence is forbidden in Austria. In families, it is also forbidden’ (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2016, p. 10, translation, A.H.).

While the first suggests that men in migrant families neither do household work, nor care for the children, it renders invisible the fact that the gendered allocation of tasks in Austrian families is still very patriarchal, as discrimination against women in the labour market is still a field of political dispute. Women predominantly earn less for the same work, and child day care is largely very expensive and poorly developed. Subsequently, the partner who earns less, most often the woman, has to take over the reproductive labor work. Having said that, it is even more revealing, that the material only make references to heteronormative couples. Same-sex couples, single parents or other non-normative life arrangements are not mentioned. Instead, a strong insinuation becomes visible: the students are represented as violent and must be reminded that being violent in and outside of the family is unlawful. This kind of imputation reminds us of Spivak’s description of the civilising mission as ‘saving the brown women from the brown men’. Furthermore, the teaching material includes short dialogues, which are followed by questions to prove the student’s level of understanding. The next example is particularly enlightening.

Ms. Sagmeister: Where is your partner Peter?

Sonja: He is still at work. Later he will pick up the kids and do the cooking. And soon he will take paternity leave.

Ms. Sagmeister: Paternity leave? Is that a possible option?

*Such a sweetheart*, this Peter.

(Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2016, p. 9, emphasis, A.H.)

The trivial text is followed by the question: ‘In Austria, men can take paternity leave and stay home with the children. Correct or wrong?’ (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2016, p. 9, emphasis, A.H.). Taking paternity leave is identified as something unique, something lovely, something which deserves to be specially mentioned. Maternity leave on the other hand is common. A mother, of course, will not be described as being ‘sweet and special’ just because she takes maternity leave to care for her newborn child. This is taken for granted, the ‘normal’ behaviour. The whole material seems to point fingers to the patriarchal migrant man, warning him to be a good partner and father, and marking him as different from European men who, of course, are civilised enough to do the right thing and being a ‘modern’ father and partner.

### ***Employability... learn more, have more***

Although mainstream discourse says otherwise, in times of demographic change migration to Europe is more a chance than a disturbance. The labour market as well as pension funds are in need of more and better-qualified workers (Kolodziej 2012). It comes as no surprise, that although the differences between Europeans and migrants and refugees from non-European countries are unceasingly accentuated,

there is also an interest in producing economic subjects that fit into the labour market. One teacher talking about her students states, in a fairly paternalistic manner:

Well, at times I should be a bit stricter, when it is about homework. As they have better chances [on the jobmarket], when they learn more. Well, I kind of think, that we are learning a lot, but somehow the people who have been fleeing, they always have been pressed.<sup>3</sup>

The mainstream discourse differentiates between ‘useful’ and ‘superfluous’ migrants (cf. Bauman 2003). While the former are those who are able to enter the labour market and earn their own money and pay into the pension fund. The latter are those who depend on social welfare without a real chance to access the labour market. Some of them work undocumented in the service industry or at construction sites. It seems obvious, that the teacher feels responsible to try to produce employable subjects. She thinks, that ‘for their own good’ they have to be disciplined so that they reach employability. At the same time, she sort of resists the call to discipline. Later in the interview, she stresses that her focus is to create a pleasant learning atmosphere. She finds herself caught in a dilemma: on the one hand, the well-being of her students and a good learning atmosphere is in her utmost interest. On the other hand, she feels a pressure to discipline them. This dilemma is expressed in her unease. Like all of the language teachers in the study, she internalizes the pressure to stick to the neoliberal efficiency discourse. And thus wants her students to become good economic subjects and ‘useful’ Austrian citizens. However, she also tries to resist this pressure by concentrating on her main pedagogical task, namely, to provide a space where students can feel safe and thrive. When working with adults, she believes, students have to be free to decide what, when and how they want to learn? The pressure coming directly with the framing of the state-subsidised courses is felt and expressed. It surely not only influences the learning environment but also the teacher-student relationship, which is filled with strong affectations of compassion and the urge to infantilise the students for their ‘own good’.

### ***Propriety... be polite, diligent, grateful and tolerant***

During one of my observing sessions in a course led by a dedicated, elderly course instructor, who has done the work for years on a voluntary basis, one student points a finger to me to call attention to the print on my shirt which reads: ‘*untragbar*’ – a pun in German meaning ‘intolerable’ and ‘not wearable’. The teacher reacts immediately and explains, that it is ‘forbidden to point fingers’. Turning to me, she explains that she wants to educate her ‘children’ into being ‘polite children’ and also ‘diligent’ as they should be. She fondly turns to the heterogeneous group and refers to the heat in the class room, located in Vienna’s centre: ‘even during African heat, these conscientious pupils come’. This openly paternalistic way of addressing the students astounded me. In addition, it was fascinating to observe how deeply the teacher has internalised the civilising discourse. She openly talked about educating the students to be polite, so that they can adapt smoothly to the dominant society, whose members supposedly are all polite. To her, this approach seems adequate as she can easily connect to an everyday discourse, which presents the other, the non-Western migrant, as

backward and uncivilised. Her motherly behaviour is recognized by the students, but sort of forgiven. One of the students told me in a short interview after the course, that the teacher somehow substitutes his lost mother and family. That way it is easy for him to pardon her paternalistic way of addressing him and the other students. Evidently, even if the students find strategies to deal with it, the paternalistic approach is very problematic.

Another facet of propriety mentioned by a young female teacher working with mostly male adolescents is the gratefulness she experienced.

Whenever I provide group exercises – they thank me for each and every single working paper, they say thanks at the end of the day, they say thanks – they constantly say thank you. Ever since I am working here, I do not have to open a single door anymore.<sup>4</sup>

She portrays this rather feudal behaviour as something very positive. Opposed to the mostly negative media coverage of male refugees, she tries to represent them as polite and helpful. Nevertheless, even in moments of solidarity, there is a tricky reference made to what is a good and civilised behaviour.

Very often non-European migrants are represented as homophobic. It is interesting to observe that some teachers deliberately contest this kind of racist representation. One teacher mentions the following incident:

Well, my group is quite tolerant, too. Once [...] we made an excursion and passed by the same-sex-traffic-lights<sup>5</sup> (laughing) and then they said: 'Ah, yes, man man, in Austria no problem' and yes, I have the feeling, they are quite tolerant.<sup>6</sup>

As already pointed out, queer politics legitimise Western self-representation as liberal and modern (Kapur 2006), meanwhile, postcolonial migrants and refugees are portrayed as homophobic (for further reference Puar 2007). Not surprisingly, some countries consider the degree of a queer friendly behaviour as an indicator of a potentially good integration. The acceptance of homosexual relationships and non-normative sexual practices is seen as an excellent step towards integration. That makes it of course necessary to cover up homophobic practices in the West. To illustrate this, it suffices to have a look at the political practices of a German group called 'Anxious Parents' (Besorgte Eltern), who are concerned with sexual education in public schools and are worried about their children being turned into queer subjects by what they call a 'gay lobby'. Even Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, displayed publicly doubts about a child's well-being when raised in a same-sex relationships (Brauns 2017).

In summation, a discourse of politeness, diligence, gratitude and tolerance is very strong within the classroom. For newcomers, it is not only stressful to decode the discourse, but also humiliating to face insinuations that they have to be civilised through learning the imagined virtues of the receiving societies, even when the Europeans do not behave according to them. In respect to the teachers and their role in this special contact zone, age and experience does not seem to be very relevant. Most of them convey the same norms of propriety. Younger teachers even try to 'educate' elderly students with much more life experience, including in difficult situations that the teachers will hopefully never encounter themselves. The civilising discourse seems very robust. A few critical teachers problematise European migration regimes and the



mainstream pedagogical approaches. They focus on the classical principle of an emancipatory adult education and take a clear stand against infantilising practices. Examples for this approach are the association of 'MAIZ e.V.' in Linz, Austria and the 'Autonomous Collective – Open German courses' in Vienna (Autonomes Kollektiv – Offene Deutschkurse 2017). It is thus possible to distant oneself from the civilising machine – even if the discourse is quite aggressive.

### **Submission ... wanting to be good**

No matter how bizarre the efforts to produce 'good citizens' seem from the outside, the effects are on the one hand, that the newcomers feel coerced and at times resist the attempt to being assimilated. On the other hand, often they become submissive subjects who agree to the 'offer' made. As colonialism produced *mimic men* (cf. Bhabha 1994, p. 85–92), the integration and value courses likewise generate subjects that want to follow the rules and norms of the society that gave them refuge; a society they want to belong to. If the colonial mimicry is, like Homi Bhabha puts it, 'the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other' (cf. Bhabha 1994, p. 86), then the newcomer as Other somehow represents the desire of the German and Austrian nation states to produce reformed, but still recognizable Other citizens. 'Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which appropriates the Other as it visualizes power' (cf. Bhabha 1994, p. 85–92). One of the teachers, who works with refugees in Austria, explains how newcomers in her course adopt the idea of integration:

They interestingly enough use the verb 'to integrate' in a totally positive and value-free manner, they say 'Yes, I want to be integrated' or 'I want to, want somehow to have or do a good integration'. Thus, they use it like that: it is not coded as negative or extremely value-heavy.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, the affirmation of 'integration' could be read as a kind of mockery like that is portrayed by Bhabha (1994, p. 87) in his description of the colonial mimicry. A very subtle way to subvert the demand to become like the dominant group. The same teacher continues to describe the students' struggle to belong and to be 'good'.

Well, you learn it indirectly by listening to their stories, even of name-calling, when they were made to feel insecure, I guess, so what should they do, how should they behave, *how one can be 'good'*, how can you live 'well', or – this statement I heard quite often, too: *'I want everything, but not to do anything wrong. I don't want to do a mistake, don't want to attract attention'* [...]. Especially women said these a few times.<sup>8</sup>

In this case, students want to be 'good' to protect themselves from injurious experiences with members of the dominant society. They internalise the idea, that verbal abuses and racism are a result of their individual behaviour and therefore, paradoxically seek to adapt to the demands of a racist discourse. One could say, that submissive subjects who do not question racist practices are an outcome of not only the integration and value courses, but of a general discourse in European societies. Critical perspectives that form the basis and ground of a counter-hegemonic pedagogy may be the only hope to activate resistant subjects. For that matter, neither politeness nor tolerance should be the core content of language courses, but rather strategies of

resistance. Especially, refugees who may suffer re-traumatisation in non-sensitive classrooms, need to be empowered. Politeness is not an essential virtue, and thus it should not be on the agenda of language courses.

## Conclusions

The entanglement of hegemonic norms and structures with the pedagogical approach in language courses for migrants and refugees in Austria and Germany needs to be rendered visible. Only then will it be possible to implement pedagogical adult education approaches that resist the violent undercurrent of civilising discourses, which beset even the most well-meaning of attitudes. Migration discourses are an integral part of hegemonic ideologies that aim to produce ‘useful migrants’ and thus stabilise the status quo of actual power relations. Migration regimes can perfectly be detected and deeply analysed in language courses as contact zones as a continuation of imperialism. Migrants and refugees represent here the other, meanwhile teachers and institutional staff represent the predominant society.

I have focused on three interwoven subject types that are formed during the process of integration – the economic (employable), the submissive (polite) and the othered subject. Most of the students will sooner or later hold badly paid positions at the margins of the labour market. Submission undermines resistance towards racist structures and prevents newcomers from becoming political subjects. One can then conclude, a bit provocatively, that language courses for migrant and refugees, as part of integration and value courses, are undemocratic institutions that foster nationalism celebrating an imagined, but non-existing, monolingual nation state. As well developed in postcolonial theory, we can again show how the dominant ‘we’ needs and produces the submissive ‘other’ to stabilise its own position of supremacy, which is always precarious (El-Tayeb 2016).

Institutions of adult education urgently have to fight for their position independent of that state and to take up a clear stand against the instrumentalisation of education in the name of hegemony. Rather, their aim should be to implement an emancipatory and counter-hegemonic pedagogy that helps to form critical subjects who defy the civilising demands. In order to reach a position where an unquestioned subordination is subverted and a less-excluding, less violent future can be imagined. It is an elastic question not a solid truth, what a ‘good life’, a ‘good citizen’, and also a ‘humane society’ should look like.

## Notes

1. The CEF was formulated by the Council of Europe as a way of standardising the levels of language exams in different regions.
2. Original: ‘Wir sagen unseren Namen. Wir geben uns zur Begrüßung die Hand. [...] “Gesicht zeigen” – das ist Ausdruck unseres demokratischen Miteinanders. Im Alltag ist es für uns von Bedeutung, ob wir bei unseren Gesprächspartnern in ein freundliches oder ein trauriges Gesicht blicken. Wir sind eine offene Gesellschaft. [...] Wir sind nicht Burka.’ (transl. to English, A.H.)
3. Original: Also ich sollt manchmal mehr streng sein, wenn es um Hausübung geht. Weil sie haben mehr Chancen, wenn sie mehr lernen. Also ich find schon, wir lernen viel, aber

- eigentlich sind die Menschen, die auf der Flucht waren, die sind immer gepusht worden. (Interview ES, translation, A.H.)
4. Original: 'Ich geb' meiner Gruppe ein Arbeits- , die bedanken sich für jedes einzelne Arbeitsblatt, die bedanken sich am Ende des Tages, die bedanken – also die bedanken sich ständig. Seit ich hier arbeite, ich muss keine Tür mehr alleine aufmachen, [...]. (Interview SP, translated A. H.)
  5. In Vienna, some street lights display two men or two women crossing the street holding hands. They are the source of a heated political debate: Installed by the green party, conservative parties wanted them to be banned.
  6. Original: Also meine Gruppe ist auch ziemlich offen, [...] wir hatten mal eine Exkursion gemacht und sind an den gleichgeschlechtlichen Ampelmännchen – frauchen (lacht) vorbeigekommen und dann haben sie von sich aus gesagt, 'Ah, ja, Mann Mann, in Österreich kein Proble'und so und – also sie sind recht offen, hab ich das Gefühl. (Interview SP, translated A. H.)
  7. Original: Sie verwenden interessanterweise das Wort 'integrieren' total eher positiv wertfrei, also sie sagen so 'Ja, ich will mich integrieren' oder 'Ich will, ich will irgendwie eine gute Integration machen oder haben oder so', also sie verwenden das so, also gar nicht so, es ist gar nicht so negativ oder extremst wertend besetzt (Interview CW, translation, A. H.).
  8. Original: Also es kommt indirekt in diesen Geschichten raus, genau, oder eben Beschimpfungen, wo sie dann irgendwie verunsichert sind, glaub ich, wie, was sollen sie überhaupt machen, also wie sollen sie sich verhalten, wie ist man gut, wie lebt man hier gut, oder (...?) eben diese Aussage hab ich auch schon ein paar Mal gehört 'Ich will wirklich alles, aber nichts falsch machen.' Also ich will eh keinen Fehler machen, also ich will nicht auffallen [...]. Das haben vor allen Dingen die Frauen schon ein paar Mal gesagt auch. (Interview CW, translation, A. H.)

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