Becoming a (Better) Teacher

A Case Study on Classroom Action Research as an Instrument for Professional Development in Foreign Language Teacher Education

Nora Benitt, M.A.
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I certify that the research described in this dissertation has not already been submitted for any other degree. I certify that to the best of my knowledge all sources used and any help received in the preparation of this dissertation have been acknowledged. For this research project, ethics approval has been obtained by the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference: 5201200807, see Appendix I), Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia, and by the Justus Liebig University, Gießen, Germany.

Nora Benitt
August 5, 2014

The following publications have emanated from this study:


Abstract

The education and professional development of foreign language teachers is a challenging endeavour – for the (student) teachers themselves, as well as for the teacher educators and institutions involved. In particular, the meaningful integration of theory and practice is central to the ongoing discussion as to how to conceptualise and implement foreign language teacher education. In this thesis, I investigate a cohort of 12 (student) teachers enrolled in the M.A. programme ‘E-LINGO – Teaching English to Young Learners’ in the form of a qualitative-interpretative case study with the aim to explore if, how and under what circumstances classroom action research, a core component of the programme, can foster professional development. The participants have different educational and cultural backgrounds and various levels of professional experience in the field of language teaching.

Over a period of two years, I collected data from multiple sources (semi-structured group interviews, learning logs, portfolios and observation notes) and afterwards triangulated and interpreted the data to elicit indicators for professional development in the form of critical learning incidents. The data analysis was methodologically guided by the Documentary Method as developed by Bohnsack (1989). The findings suggest that classroom action research can foster professional development on different levels. On an affective level, it can lead to increased professional confidence and a growing understanding of teacher roles. On an interpersonal level, action research can enhance cooperative development through successful teamwork, commitment to the shared task and adequate support structures. On a cognitive level, it may lead to increased theoretical and methodological knowledge, depending on the quality of the input as well as on the (student) teachers’ commitment towards their learning. As the findings further indicate, these levels are closely interconnected and are strongly influenced by various socio-cultural factors of the teaching and learning context as well as the (student) teachers’ biographies.
### List of Abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AR</td>
<td>action research</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACQUIN</td>
<td>Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute</td>
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<td>CARP</td>
<td>classroom action research project</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLI</td>
<td>critical learning incident</td>
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<td>CLIL</td>
<td>content and language integrated learning</td>
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<td>CTD</td>
<td>cooperative teacher development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECTS</td>
<td>European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a foreign language</td>
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<td>E-LINGO</td>
<td>M.A. ‘E-LINGO – Teaching English to Young Learners’</td>
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<td>EPOSTL</td>
<td>European Portfolio of Student Teachers’ Learning</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a second language</td>
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<td>FLTE</td>
<td>foreign language teacher education</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>intercultural communicative competence</td>
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<td>LTED</td>
<td>language teacher education by distance</td>
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<td>NCATE</td>
<td>National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education</td>
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<td>OLTE</td>
<td>online language teacher education</td>
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<td>SLA</td>
<td>second language acquisition</td>
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<td>TBLL</td>
<td>task-based language learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>TBLT</td>
<td>task-based language teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages</td>
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Many thanks are due to all the participants of the GCSC Research Colloquium as well as the ‘Tech AG’ at Justus Liebig University for making Tuesday evenings informative and enjoyable! Moreover, I thank Marita Schocker, Vivienne Mellor-Schwartze and Heike Bechthold, who supported me in conducting my study on E-LINGO and made my research visits in Freiburg very pleasant and memorable. Very special thanks go to all of the participating E-LINGO (student) teachers for sharing their thoughts and experiences with me in the scope of this study. I have learned a lot from them and consider myself very lucky to have gotten to know parts of their exciting stories!

Also, I thank all of my friends and colleagues, especially Ilse Braun, Vera Schenderlein, Dinah Leschzyk, Patricia Sojka, Kirsten Schmidt, Diana Köblös, Julie Choi, Constanze Dreßler, Nicole Mutlow, Susana Catalina Prat, Ursula Ibaraki, Ulrike Garde, Susann Clifton-Smith, Beate Müller, Susanne Binder and Jennifer Heward for their support in the form of encouraging words, postcards, coffee breaks, and lovely meals in the final phase of my PhD. Moreover, I thank my friend Tanja ‘Methodenkönigin’ Prokopowicz for her invaluable feedback on an earlier draft of my methodology chapter. Lastly, I owe particular thanks to Verena Fries who has accompanied me all along the way as a critical reader, peer investigator and – most importantly – as one of my closest friends. Queen’s ‘Don't stop me now' (1978) is just one of many inspirations I owe to her and has become a motivational hymn for me whenever I felt discouraged.

I am enormously grateful to my family, Maren, Jörg, Kim, Ole and Paul Benitt, for welcoming me home several times within the last years. They always managed to take my mind off the dissertation for a while and helped me stay sane (mostly by mocking my insanity to do a PhD). Last but not least, I thank my partner, Stefan Ruhs, for continuously settling my jumpiness with his calm and loving nature and for being my ideal counterpart.
Towards the end of writing my dissertation, I stumbled upon the statement above from Beatrice Avalos and realised that it precisely expresses the quintessence of my work. It shall therefore be the point of departure for exploring the notion of professional development in foreign language teacher education (FLTE). In this thesis, I will elaborate on (student) teachers’ learning and professional development through the cooperative involvement in classroom action research projects and will argue that this form of critical engagement with teaching practices and theoretical constructs may lead to professional development processes on affective, cognitive and interpersonal levels. By presenting and contextualising the findings from a qualitative-interpretative case study, I aim at making a small contribution to the research on FLTE and professional development. In this regard, the M.A. programme investigated, ‘E-LINGO – Teaching English to Young Learners’ (E-LINGO), adapts a very promising approach by systematically incorporating cooperative action research into teacher education.

The thesis title ‘Becoming a (Better) Teacher’ reflects two core aspects of my study. First of all, it mirrors the heterogeneity of the participants – some of them are newly entering the teaching profession, i.e. are ‘becoming teachers’, whereas others already have several years of professional experience and are ‘becoming better teachers’ through engaging in cooperative action research. Secondly, both versions of the title deliberately imply the notion of development or growth, as the results of my study suggest that the involvement in action research may trigger various

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1 In this thesis, the term ‘foreign language’ is used to refer to both ‘foreign language’ and ‘second language’. Accordingly, the term ‘foreign language teacher education’ (FLTE) is used to refer to ‘foreign language teacher education’ and ‘second language teacher education’.

2 The term ‘student teacher’ is usually used to refer to pre-service teachers only. In the M.A. programme E-LINGO, teachers with various educational backgrounds and different levels of professional experience were enrolled, as I will discuss in detail in section 5.3. Therefore, the group of participants will be referred to as ‘(student) teachers’.
development processes for the (student) teachers involved. However, a multitude of factors is responsible for the type, intensity, form and direction of these development processes as I will debate in the following chapters.

This thesis does not aim at defining what a 'good' teacher is, nor does it claim to have the ultimate answer as to how to become a 'better' teacher. The expression 'better' merely emphasises the prevalence of ongoing professional development and lifelong learning (e.g. Day 1999; Appel 2000). In agreement with Wallace (1991: 58), who uses the metaphor of “a moving target or a horizon”, I understand 'becoming better' (in contrast to 'being good or better') as the overall goal of professional development. 'Becoming better' has – and should have – different implications for every individual teacher and does not mean that what teachers do is not good enough, but rather that professional development is a natural and vital part of their profession. As Edge (2002: 10) formulates, addressing his readership of language teachers: “[T]he best way for you to teach is exactly the way that you do teach, provided only that you are committed to the development of your teaching in ways you believe to be sensitive to the needs of your students and yourself.”

The study being a qualitative-interpretative case study involving 12 (student) teachers provides only a snapshot of the vast and complex issue of teacher education and professional development. Furthermore, this type of inquiry entails a high degree of subjectivity as I will further discuss at various stages of this thesis. In order to make transparent the viewpoint of this text as well as the qualitative-explorative nature of this study, I make explicit use of my voice as a researcher using the first person singular pronoun 'I' in reference to myself, and thereby mean to emphasise “the centrality of the human story to qualitative research in terms of what the story is and how the story is told” (Nunan & Choi 2011: 222). However, since the systematic data analysis procedure applied to this study makes allowance for drawing conclusions that are generalisable and transferable to a certain degree, I hope that the what and how of my story might eventually become relevant for others.

In the following, I will briefly outline the area of my research interest and discuss those issues in the field of foreign language teacher education research which have become particularly pertinent for this study (see sections 1.1 and 1.2). I will then define the niche for my research in the field and explain how my work aims at

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1 See Nunan and Choi (2011) for a concise overview of the most important phases of qualitative research and the emergence of ‘voice’ over the past 40 years.
making a small contribution to the current debate on language teacher education and professional development (see section 1.3). Finally, I will briefly comment on the conceptual approach I chose for the presentation of this study and provide a structural overview of the chapters (see section 1.4).

1.1 Why Language Teachers Matter

“Teaching itself always has some effect in terms of enhancing the life chances of students or of maintaining existing constraints to students’ access to opportunity.” (Zeichner & Tabachnick 2001: 83)

As Zeichner and Tabachnik accurately express, teachers may have the power to influence students’ “life chances” and “access to opportunity” (ibid.). Not only do teachers function as multipliers of knowledge and skills in their respective fields of expertise, but they also have the potential to co-create personalities and shape attitudes and mindsets through interacting and engaging with their students. Edge (1992: 12) emphasises that “teachers are not just bundles of teaching functions to be employed in the classroom” and calls for more respect for them and self-respect within the teaching profession. Several studies (e.g. Wayne & Youngs 2003; Lipowsky 2006; Hattie 2009) – and uncountable anecdotes based on personal experiences that are being told all over the world – support the assumption that teachers can have a strong influence on students’ achievements and their life choices.

Language teaching takes on a special position within the teaching professions, as languages are tied to identity, community and power (e.g. Kramsch 1998; Hawkins & Norton 2009; Norton & Toohey 2011). According to Byram and Grundy (2003b: 1), language learners are “social actors in specific relationships with the language they are learning, relationships which are determined by the socio-political and geopolitical circumstances in which they live.” Similarly, Johnson (2009: 25) explains that language use – and also language learning – is understood as social practice, which is always “situated in and drawing meaning from broader social, cultural, and historical contexts”. Gee (2004: 13) therefore explicitly speaks of ‘social languages’ and argues that language varieties are used to enact “a specific socially-situated identity” and that language users are always involved “in a specific socially-situated activity.”

4 Emphasis (italics) in original.
entails implications for language teachers. As Hawkins and Norton (2009: 32) accurately point out, the responsibility of language teachers is defined by the very subject matter of their teaching. Particularly in contexts of second language teaching, in which speakers of other languages form a minority group within the community, language teachers bear a lot of social responsibility:

Because language, culture, and identity are integrally related, language teachers are in a key position to address educational inequality, both because of the particular learners they serve, many of whom are marginalized members of the wider community, and because of the subject matter they teach – language – which can itself serve to empower and marginalize. (ibid.)

Hawkins (2004b: 105f.) describes the task of teachers and teacher educators as providing learners with access to their identities and thereby facilitate their entry into the social communities of their choice. For the successful fulfilment of these responsibilities, the language teachers’ personality and identity as a product of their own language learning history need to be taken into account. As Harbon and Moloney (2013: 1f.) point out, “[l]anguage teachers’ very individual personal development has been shaped by their acquisition of their languages, variously through study, exchange, immigration, heritage or family background”. Furthermore, Scarino (2014: 386) explains that the work of language teachers is always shaped by various aspects of their community or communities:

Teachers enact the teaching of particular languages in their local context as members of distinctive multilingual and multicultural communities. They bring their own particular repertoires of language, cultures, and histories of experiences that shape their frameworks of knowledge, understandings, values and practices.

Consequently, becoming aware of their identity, their role in the foreign language classroom and the influence they exert on students is of utmost importance for language teachers’ reflectivity and professional development (see section 2.1). This is mirrored in the data of this case study, as the following example aptly illustrates. Patricia⁵, one of the (student) teachers participating in the study, describes a critical learning incident while reflecting on her first classroom action research project

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⁵ The names of the study’s participants have been changed in order to ensure their anonymity in accordance with the requirements of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) as well as the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2013 [2007]).
(CARP), which dealt with the prevalence of gender stereotypes in her kindergarten group. In her portfolio, she states:

> The research results of [the] first CARP were very important to me because it proved how much influence teachers have on the opinions and behavior of their students. Teaching material and tasks have to be chosen carefully. (Patricia, Portfolio, July 2012)

This and other data examples highlight the central importance of reflective practice for professional development, as I will further explore in this thesis. Considering the socio-cultural complexity of a language classroom (e.g. Appel 2001; Johnson 2009), it becomes very obvious that language teacher education is indeed a very challenging endeavour – for (student) teachers as well as for teacher educators. Ideally, teacher education, i.e. pre-service and in-service teacher education, is supposed to fulfil two tasks: on the one hand, it shall prepare future teachers for their profession and help them become teachers, and on the other hand, it shall constantly support in-service teachers in their professional development. However, professional development is “not something that is done to [foreign language] teachers” (Johnson 2006: 250, cf. also Johnson 2009). It goes without saying that the (student) teachers themselves bear great responsibility for their own learning and professional development in this endeavour, as will become particularly evident in the scope of this study’s findings discussed in Chapter 7. Therefore, Johnson (2006: 250) rightly calls for teacher education to comprise

externally sanctioned as well as internally initiated and controlled professional development experiences that [foreign language] teachers engage in for their own purposes and are, by they own design, appropriate for their contexts. A reclaiming of professional development for teachers, by teachers, recognizes that they have not only a right but also a responsibility to develop professionally throughout their careers.

With the shift in FLTE towards a focus on the ‘activity of teaching itself’ (Freeman & Johnson 1998: 397) and towards a focus on the teacher and her\(^6\) practice (see sections 2.1 and 2.2), teachers’ voices have become more prominent in literature on matters of teacher education (e.g. Bailey & Nunan 1996). Yet, the crux of the matter seems to be that teachers as well as teacher educators and researchers still struggle

\(^6\) All those involved in this case study – teachers, tutors and researcher – are female; therefore, feminine personal pronouns are being used in this thesis to facilitate readability, but refer to male and female individuals whenever used in general contexts.
with establishing and/or strengthening meaningful links between research and theory on the one hand, and teaching practice on the other hand, as I will further discuss in the following section.

1.2 The Same Old Story: Theory versus Practice

"Whenever you ask experienced teachers or student teachers, they will complain about the gap between theory and practice."

(Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-von Ditfurth 2004: 11)

Researchers and practitioners in the field of language teaching and learning have been discussing the missing or unstable links between theoretical and practical aspects of teacher education for decades. The persisting dichotomy between theory and teaching practice is still a very prevalent topic – not only in the literature, but also in the daily lives of (student) teachers and teacher educators, as the introductory quote implies. Yet, their meaningful integration seems of particular importance in the context of educating educators, as they function as multipliers of knowledge, attitudes and mindsets. Hence, the statement by Müller-Hartmann and Schocker-von Ditfurth (2004: 11), who claim that experienced and inexperienced teachers likewise “complain about the gap between theory and practice”, raises the question of whether or not our teacher education lives up to the task of preparing future teachers for their profession and of constantly supporting in-service teachers in their professional development. Why do teachers and (student) teachers constantly complain about the gap between theory and practice? What exactly makes it so difficult to overcome the theory–practice discrepancy in foreign language teacher education? What has been done and what needs to be done in order to succeed in doing so? These questions, which had already concerned me in the context of my M.A. thesis (cf. Benitt 2009), in which I dealt with experiential learning opportunities for student teachers in a graduate university course, were the starting point for this case study. The body of literature on innovative methods in foreign language teacher education is huge and constantly growing; yet the classroom reality seems to remain largely unaffected, as Hattie (2009: 2f.) states:

There are thousands of studies promulgating claims that this method works or that innovation works. We have a rich educational research base, but rarely is it used by teachers, and rarely does it lead to policy changes that affect the nature of teaching. It may be that the research is written in a non-engaging style for teachers, or maybe when research is presented to teachers it is done in a manner that fails to
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acknowledge that teachers come to research with strong theories of their own about what works (for them). Further, teachers are often very “context specific”, as the art for many of them is to modify programs to fit their particular students and teaching methods – and this translation is rarely acknowledged.

Hattie (ibid.) sees the basic problem in the fact that research has no or little relevance for teachers and their daily practice. Consequently, he questions the overall value of research for teaching by provocatively asking:

How can there be so many published articles, so many reports providing directions, so many professional development sessions advocating this or that method, so many parents and politicians inventing new and better answers, while classrooms are hardly different from 200 years ago? [...] Why does this bounty of research have such little impact? (Hattie 2009: 3)

I align myself with Kubanyiova (2012: 3) in saying that I will definitely not be able to answer these questions in the scope of this thesis, which “tackles no more than just a fragment of the immense complexity of educational change in classrooms and schools around the world.” Yet I will address some central aspects of pre-service and in-service teacher education that are, in my understanding, of critical importance for eventually bringing about a change in view of the malfunctioning relationship between theory and practice.

With regards to pre-service teacher education, researchers see one basic problem in the discrepancy between the subject matter of university education (theory) and the actual teaching profession (practice). Tarone and Allwright (2005) as well as Johnson (1996, 2006) state that the content of teacher education programmes simply does not match the classroom reality student teachers encounter after their training. Farrell (2009: 182) also assumes that “teacher education programs are unable to reproduce environments similar to those teachers face when they graduate”. The result is a ‘reality shock’ (e.g. Farrell 2008b; Flores & Day 2006), i.e. when first starting to teach, inexperienced teachers face situations they have not been prepared for and struggle to adjust to classroom reality. Varah, Theune and Parker (1986) use the metaphor of a ‘sink-or-swim-experience’ to describe the daunting nature of the first year of teaching. In order to prevent novice teachers from these unpleasant experiences and make them aware of the challenges of their chosen profession at an earlier stage, a lot of effort is being put into connecting theory and practice systematically by creating opportunities for practical experiences in teacher preparation programmes, such as the practical school training (practicum) for
student teachers in Germany and elsewhere. However, any practical experience only provides helpful insights into the activity of teaching if meaningfully integrated and reflected upon in the educational programme (cf. Schocker-von Ditfurth 2001: 53ff.; Legutke & Schocker-von Ditfurth 2009: 213), which is sadly still not the case in many educational contexts (Gabel 1997; Elsner 2010). As Zydatiß (2012: 211) strongly emphasises, current teacher education programmes\(^7\) do not prepare teachers sufficiently for the social and affective aspects of learning, e.g. the dynamics among different learner groups and their complex role as educators of individuals with different strengths, weaknesses and needs. Zydatiß (ibid.) consequently calls for a fundamental reform of the teacher education system in Germany. However, as Freeman (2002: 11) argues, “the notion that pre-service teacher education can fully equip a teacher for a career in the classroom is erroneous.” Even though I agree with Freeman in that it is impossible to prepare student teachers for all possible scenarios they may encounter in their careers, I argue that it is possible to equip them with helpful tools, such as action research (cf. section 2.3), which can help them make sense of various teaching and learning situations and learn how to manage them.

The missing links between theoretical and practical aspects in teaching are not only being discussed in the context of pre-service teacher education. In in-service teacher education, the theory–practice discrepancy may be manifested in the so-called ‘wash-out effect’ as described by several educational researchers (e.g. Lortie 1975; Veenman 1984; Zeichner & Liston 1987), meaning that in-service teachers (successively) abandon the theoretical knowledge acquired during their university studies and fall back on their knowledge from their ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie 1975), i.e. their experiences with their own teachers. This is also reflected in the data, as the following example from an interview illustrates. One (student) teacher, Elisabeth, provides the following rationale for enrolling in E-LINGO, when asked where on a scale from 1 to 10, with one being a novice and 10 being an expert teacher of English to young learners, she would position herself before and after the course\(^8\):

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\(^7\) Zydatiß (2012) focuses on the German context, but discusses many aspects relevant for foreign language teacher education in general.

\(^8\) The transcription followed the guidelines of a simple transcription system (cf. Dresing, Pehl & Schmieder 2013: 27ff.). The guidelines for the transcription can be found in Appendix F.
I had 20 years of experience before [E-LINGO] and I think quite a good teacher training for English and as I really love English, I always had a stress on this. But as routine comes up and you forget things which you learned and I think in the end of this twenty years, I was only 59, I think, and with E-LINGO [...] and the aspects we were made aware of, these things I think they improved my view to the lessons and to the methods I use, and I think it's something like updating of my knowledge (laughs). (Elisabeth, Interview, February 2012)

The ‘wash-out-effect’ Elisabeth describes (“as routine comes up and you forget things which you learned”) and the impact of one’s ‘apprenticeship of observation’ seem particularly problematic, if teachers unconsciously reproduce aspects of teaching which they themselves experienced in negative ways, only because they are familiar with them. Teachers may as well adapt aspects they considered particularly helpful in their own learning process; in that case, the effects may not be negative at all. Either way, a critical reflection on one’s own experiences as a learner and as a teacher, including positive and negative experiences, is conducive to teacher learning and the development of an individual professional identity (cf. Schocker-von Ditfurth 2001; Caspari 2003; Flores & Day 2006; Schocker-von Ditfurth & Legutke 2006; Legutke & Schocker-von Ditfurth 2009).

A further issue in in-service teacher education arises from the fact that many practitioners are not involved in educational research, which is considered a major problem in view of the theory–practice discrepancy among scholars (e.g. Richards & Nunan 1990; Nunan 1997, 2006; Hancock 2001). One promising approach to achieve a meaningful integration of practical experience and theoretical contents that has recently become more prominent in the context of foreign language teacher education is action research (AR).10 When engaging in AR, teachers become critical investigators of their own practice. Since the 1980s, numerous studies, guidebooks and teacher narratives have shown that the approach helps teachers better understand the connection between theoretical concepts and their daily teaching practice (e.g. Kemmis & McTaggart 1988; Nunan 1990; Altrichter & Posch 2007; Burns 1999, 2009a, 2010; Noffke & Somekh 2009a), as I will discuss in detail in section 2.3. This study makes a contribution to the growing body of literature on action research in teacher education by empirically exploring if, how and under what circumstances the professional development of (student) teachers can be fostered

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9 Elisabeth is referring to the scale from 1 to 10 that I brought as a visual impulse (see Appendix D).
10 Other terms synonymously used in the literature are teacher research, practitioner research or classroom research. I will use the term action research (AR) and classroom action research projects (CARP) in the context of this study.
through cooperative engagement in classroom action research, as I will further specify below.

1.3 Relevance of Study

As indicated in the previous section and as I will further explicate in course of this thesis, action research has the potential to establish and/or strengthen the link between theory and practice in teacher education. However, since access to a teaching environment is a precondition for being able to engage in classroom action research, the approach is predominantly being used in in-service teacher education. Only a few empirical studies (e.g. Warneke 2006; Ulvik 2014; Cabaroglu 2014) exist which examine the implications of action research for pre-service teachers. The question is whether the concept of action research is suitable as an instrument for professional development for pre-service and in-service teachers and under what circumstances the involvement in action research may lead to professional development. This is exactly where the study presented here ties in with current research, as it features experienced as well as inexperienced foreign language teachers cooperatively engaging in classroom action research. The focus of the study is not only on the individual (student) teacher’s personal and professional development, but also considers the notion of cooperative teacher development, which plays an important role according to the findings of my study. Moreover, I took a holistic view at the participating (student) teachers. Presenting the analysis of selected data (see section 6.3), I will touch upon various external aspects impacting on a teacher’s professional development, such as the overall organisation of the teacher education programme, the (student) teachers’ cultural and educational background, their individual personalities, their current life circumstances, future goals, etc.

The case study aimed at finding out if, how and under what circumstances (student) teachers of different levels of professional experience and various cultural and educational backgrounds develop – individually and/or cooperatively – through cooperatively engaging in classroom action research projects in a blended-learning teacher education programme, called ‘E-LINGO – Teaching English to Young Learners’ (see Chapter 3). The study features a heterogeneous group of twelve (student) teachers. The participants differ in their level of professional experience in teaching English to young learners (between nil and over 20 years of teaching experience),
their cultural and educational background (born in six different countries) and their native languages (four different native languages). Over a period of two years, I conducted several interviews with the (student) teachers and had access to their learning logs and their final portfolios. Based on the results of the study, which will be presented in Chapter 7, I will argue that action research is a valuable instrument for professional development independent of the level of teaching experience. It can be highly beneficial in terms of professional development for inexperienced as well as experienced teachers and it may trigger different critical learning incidents (CLIs), as the data analysis revealed (see section 6.3). However, there are a number of preconditions which need to be met in order for action research to be successful, i.e. to lead to critical learning incidents, awareness and/or identifiable personal growth and professional development. Apart from external factors, such as the overall organisation of the teacher education programme or the tutor support in the process of preparing, conducting and evaluating a classroom action research project, there is one factor that is particularly decisive in terms of allowing professional development. That is, unsurprisingly, the individual teacher. When engaging in action research, the respective teacher's motivation and commitment to teaching and reflecting on her practice plays a crucial role in the learning process. A central aspect for professional development seems to be the degree of professional confidence, as I will discuss in sections 2.2.1 and 7.4.

Having outlined the main issues that initiated this research project as well as having provided basic information on the specific research context, I will now briefly present the overall structure of this thesis and summarise the main aspects of each chapter. Furthermore, I will comment on some overall stylistic and methodological considerations embedded in the structural outline of this thesis.

1.4 Structural Outline
A first glance at the table of contents of this study shows that the theoretical and methodological-conceptual parts precede the presentation of the case study itself. However, a closer look at the structure of the individual chapters and sub-sections reveals how theoretical and methodological considerations are tied in with findings from the case study throughout the thesis. I chose a holistic approach for the presentation of this study, attempting to overcome the theory-practice discrepancy I describe in the context of foreign language teacher education within the scope of my
own contribution to this issue. As a qualitative study is hardly ever an orderly, step-wise procedure (cf. e.g. Dörnyei 2007; Freeman 2009b), in which reviewing relevant literature is followed by designing a study, collecting and analysing data, and writing up a thesis, as I will further discuss in sections 4.1 and 4.2, the micro-structure of this thesis mirrors the nature of my research process. In this case study, all the aforementioned research steps happened repeatedly, partly overlapped and at times even occurred in reversed order. My literature review inspired my data collection and analysis, and, likewise, findings and ideas arose from the data collection and analysis and inspired further review of the literature. Hence, I will not present the findings of my literature review in a separate chapter, but I will integrate them into all chapters in direct connection to the respective issues discussed. Likewise, data examples will be used to illustrate theoretical and methodological explications in order to help clarify my line of argumentation. I will now turn to short synopses of the individual chapters and will point out the key aspects of the study.

Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the shifts and turns in the recent history of foreign language teacher education (section 2.1) that led to the ‘state of the art’ of teacher education we find ourselves in today and in which E-LINGO, the M.A. programme investigated, is contextualised. Amongst other paradigm shifts, the (re)conceptualisation of teacher education (section 2.1.2), the focus on experiential learning and the activity of teaching (section 2.1.3), and the growing field of online and blended-learning teacher education will be discussed (section 2.1.4). Also, different research foci in the field which have developed recently will be explored in order to approach the complex term of ‘professional development’ (section 2.2) in the context of this study. Particular attention will be devoted to the role of action research in language teacher education (section 2.3), which is the central object of investigation in this thesis. In Chapter 3, the specific research context, i.e. the M.A. programme ‘E-LINGO – Teaching English to Young Learners’, will be introduced in detail. I will briefly explain the origin of the programme, present the structure and organisation and will illustrate the contents with the help of selected examples. In section 3.5, I will especially focus on the classroom action research projects, as they are a core component of the programme and the central object of investigation of this case study. Subsequently, in section 3.6, I will introduce the main research questions as well as their genesis.
Chapter 4 outlines the overall methodological framework of the study. First of all, I will discuss basic issues of qualitative research in general (section 4.1) and case study research in particular (section 4.2). After elaborating on the role of the research questions (section 4.3), I will introduce various methods of data collection, i.e. the use of learning logs, portfolios and semi-structured group interviews (see section 4.4). Finally, I will present the method of data analysis used in this study, the Documentary Method as developed by Bohnsack (1989), and explain its particular suitability for this research project. Chapter 5 provides a close-up of the present case study and links the theoretical and methodological considerations established in Chapter 4 to the practical research context. After a careful reflection on my role as a researcher in the process of gathering and analysing data (section 5.2), I will introduce the participants of the study (section 5.3) and explain the crucial role of data, method and investigator triangulation in the scope of the research project (section 5.4). I will then explain the particular challenges involved in preparing and conducting semi-structured group interviews and comment on ethical considerations underlying the research process.

Chapter 6 contains detailed insights into the data analysis procedure. I will outline the process of organising the data (section 6.1), present the overall topical structure of the semi-structured group interviews (section 6.2) and will explain the process of selecting interview sections and topics for the detailed comparative analysis. With the help of various data examples, I will demonstrate the analysis procedure aiming at identifying critical learning incidents (section 6.3). In Chapter 7, I will present the findings of my study. After summarising the indicators for professional development that I elicited in the form of critical learning incidents through the data analysis (section 7.1), I will present the three different dimensions of teacher development that evolved in the course of the in-depth single case and cross-case analysis (sections 7.2–7.4) and will discuss the relevance of the finding with reference to current research. In Chapter 8, I will summarise the main findings and discuss the relevance of the study in the scope of FLTE (section 8.1). Afterwards, I will propose a number of topics that might be of interest for further research (section 8.2). My final remarks (section 8.3) are reserved for concluding thoughts on the project.
2 General Research Context: Foreign Language Teacher Education

“Current trends in [foreign language] teacher education have helped to re-examine, re-conceptualise, and redesign how [foreign language] teachers are prepared for their work.” (Johnson 2009: 26).

In order to outline the broad context of this study, I will provide an overview of the major developments and paradigm shifts in the recent history of foreign language teacher education (FLTE) below. A number of comprehensive volumes on key issues in FLTE and professional development have been published in the last decades (e.g. Richards & Nunan 1990; Bailey & Nunan 1996; Bausch et al. 1997; Bausch, Königs & Krumm 2003; Richards & Farrell 2005; Burns & Richards 2009a). In particular, the discrepancy between theory and practice has been one of the major issues in FLTE and will be a recurring theme within this chapter.

Educational systems and the formats of teacher education vary significantly internationally and even within one country; organisational frameworks, contents and methodological conceptions of teacher education programmes are diverse. Even though the recent debate on standards and measuring competencies in the field of foreign language teaching and learning has not omitted the area of FLTE, and different teacher standards have been developed (e.g. TESOL/NCATE standards), there is no such thing as a transnational set of standards for educating foreign language teachers (cf. Katz & Snow 2009). Given these circumstances, it is a very challenging task to describe foreign language teacher education on a global level. The teacher education programme featuring in this case study was developed and implemented in Germany; however, the language of instruction is English. Therefore, I will focus on general aspects of language teacher education discussed in the German and Anglophone literature in this field of research.

11 According to Burns and Richards (2009b: 7), the whole standards movement has been criticized as not being suitable for the field of education at all. However, Katz and Snow (2009: 74) argue that standards can, if implemented meaningfully, foster (student) teachers’ professional development.

12 TESOL = Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, NACTE = National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

13 Lütge (2012) rightly highlights that the existing standards in pre-service teacher education in Germany are in need of further development and differentiation in terms of competencies in different subject areas. She also points out that the area of in-service teacher education has been widely neglected in the discussion of teacher education standards in Germany (Lütge 2012: 186).
Burns and Richards (2009b: 3) state that FLTE in general consists of two major components: a practical component focusing on pedagogical and methodological skills in teaching, and a theoretical component focusing on the foundations of these skills, i.e. academic knowledge about the teaching and learning of foreign languages. However, when it comes to how these two elements are organised within an educational programme, numerous questions arise. How much emphasis is put on either of the elements? How much time is dedicated to building up the theoretical foundations and how much time is spent on practical training? Does practice follow theory or are the two components integrated systematically? What defines the knowledge base of FLTE? In the following section, which focuses on major shifts and changes in the field of FLTE, I will provide an overview of how these questions have been addressed in the last decades.

2.1 Shifts and Turns in Language Teacher Education

“The nature of teacher learning [...] is viewed as a form of socialization into the professional thinking and practices or a community of practice.” (Burns & Richards 2009b: 2)

At different stages within the last 40 years, the questions of how to organise teacher education programmes in order to prepare student teachers for the complex demands of their profession were addressed in various ways. Different models of teacher education have evolved and shall be briefly discussed below as a starting point to explore various shifts and turns in the field (section 2.1.1). The overall conceptualisation of teacher education, as well as definitions of teacher knowledge (section 2.1.2), have tremendously changed within the last decades. Furthermore, the role of experiential learning in teacher education and the ‘activity of teaching itself’ have gained more importance (section 2.1.3). At the same time, a strong research focus on the teacher and her practice (section 2.1.4) has developed, acknowledging the fact that the teacher herself is a central figure in the language teaching learning process. Moreover, the mode of teacher education has been (and still is) subject to change – traditional modes of teacher education recently have started shifting towards blended-learning and online formats of language teacher education (section 2.1.5), attempting to meet the growing demand for English teachers around the globe. In the following sections, I will discuss central characteristics of these shifts and turns in FLTE.
2.1.1 Toward a Reflective Model of Teacher Education

The development from the ‘craft model’, via the ‘applied science model’, toward a ‘reflective model’ of teacher education, as described by Wallace (1991) shall be my point of departure for exploring some of the major shifts and changes in FLTE. The craft model, which had been a widely-used model in different fields of education until the end of the Second World War, is characterised by its simple and linear structure (Wallace 1991: 6). The model suggests that an experienced master is responsible for passing on knowledge and skills to an apprentice (cf. ibid.). As the name ‘craft model’ indicates, the model seems appropriate for the professional training of craftsmen, e.g. cabinet makers. There is a certain set of knowledge, skills and techniques involved in building a table, a chair or a wardrobe. Undoubtedly, the profession of a cabinet maker involves a high level of creativity, knowledge and skill as well as willingness to continuously learn about new designs, building materials, etc. However, the profession is by no means comparable to that of a language teacher. Here lies the weakness of the model in view of language teacher education: for teachers, there is no fixed set of knowledge, skills and techniques that can be transmitted from one person to another. The field of FLTE is constantly being reshaped by new research findings – knowledge and beliefs about language learning and teaching are constantly changing (cf. Wallace 1991: 15). Approaches and methods to teaching languages went from the classical grammar-translation method, via the audio-lingual and the audio-visual methods in the course of advancing technology in the 1960s and 1970s to more recent approaches following the communicative turn in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as for example content-based or task-based instruction.14 Therefore, the knowledge base of teacher education, as I will further discuss below, requires a different, more sophisticated model.

The succeeding model, the ‘applied science model’, was established to enlarge the knowledge base of the craft model. Here, scientific findings are transferred or rather applied to practical situations (cf. Wallace 1991: 8f.). A point of criticism Wallace brings up is that the model only allows for a one-way, linear transmission of knowledge (cf. ibid.: 9), and in this regard is very similar to the craft model. This strongly conflicts with modern socio-constructivist views of teaching and learning (cf. Vygotsky 1978), in which learning is considered a co-creation of knowledge and

14 For a concise historical overview and descriptions of different approaches and methods in language teaching of the last decades, see Richards and Rodgers (2007).
meaning, as I will further discuss in the subsequent section 2.1.2. The applied science model also implies that practice always follows theory. This does not hold true as (student) teachers are being considered “legitimate producers of knowledge” (Golombek 2009: 159; see also Johnson 2006: 239), as I will further discuss in section 2.3, focusing on action research. Furthermore, various researchers (cf. Johnson 1996; Freeman & Johnson 1998; Freeman 2004, 2009) argue that theories of applied linguistics alone are not a suitable knowledge base for teachers. The reason for that is anchored in the fact that linguistic theory cannot be applied to all practical problems that language teachers are confronted with. Johnson (1996: 766) explains that teacher educators must realise that theory often fails to inform practice because the problems that arise in practice are generally neither caused by nor the results of teachers’ lack of knowledge about theory. Instead, the problems that teachers face are generally caused by constraints imposed on them within the social, cultural, economic, and educational contexts in which their practice takes place, namely the school and the classroom. This being the case, one cannot assume that theory does, or can ever, fully and completely inform practice.

Moreover, as Johnson and Freeman (1998: 402) explain, the growth of theoretical knowledge may not always lead to professional development, a statement which the findings of this study support (see Chapter 7). Therefore, the recognition of learning to teach as embedded in a social situation has gained importance:

We recognize teaching as more than the accumulation of research knowledge because it is evident that giving more research knowledge to teachers does not necessarily make them better practitioners. Learning to teach is a long-term, complex, development process that operates through participation in the social practices and contexts associated with learning and teaching (Freeman & Johnson 1998: 402).

Freeman and Johnson (1998: 402) further argue that learning in “social practices and contexts” is the key to developing as practitioners. The notion of cooperative development within a community of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991) will be further discussed in section 2.2.4 and in Chapter 7. While researchers agree that theory of applied linguistics is an important and viable part of FLTE, the demand for experiential learning and a stronger focus on the activity of teaching has been growing (see section 2.1.3).

Not incorporating the social dimensions of teaching and learning, the applied science model does not seem applicable for the context of FLTE either. On these grounds, Wallace proposes a reflective model of teaching. The main goal of this approach is that (student) teachers are trained to become reflective practitioners, a
term forged by Schön (1983), as I will further discuss in section 2.2.2. According to the reflective model, the (student) teachers’ learning processes are twofold. On the one hand, they learn through observing experienced teachers and, on the other hand, through putting the theoretical knowledge gained into practice while constantly reflecting on their learning processes and their own teaching performances. Through this form of experiential learning (see section 2.1.3), a direct link between theory and practice is established, which is the basis for professional development, a concept that will be further discussed in section 2.2. Moreover, through the implementation of the reflective model, the linear and one-way structure from theory to practice and also from ‘master’ to ‘apprentice’ is overcome. Wallace’s model, which is depicted below, is still often referred to in the literature on FLTE and will be described in more detail in the following.

The model consists of two stages. Wallace describes the first stage as the pre-training stage, i.e. the stage prior to a person’s enrolment in some kind of professional training. The trainee may be either new to the field or already working in the profession (Wallace 1991: 48). This notion is also of great importance when looking at the teacher education programme this study is based upon, as the (student) teachers enter the programme at different levels of professional experience and theoretical knowledge (see section 5.3). The second stage is the phase of professional education or further development. In this stage, received (theoretical) and experiential (practical professional) knowledge are meant to be linked. This combined knowledge is implemented into the reflective cycle, where it is put into practice accompanied by a constant process of reflection. Finally, the two stages lead to “(increased)
professional competence” (ibid.). The term ‘professional competence’ as proposed in the reflective model can be understood in different ways, as I will further explore in section 2.2, along with clarifying other key terms relevant in describing a teacher’s professional development at different stages in her career. In the following section, I will explore the knowledge base of FLTE and the shifts it has undergone recently.

2.1.2 (Re)conceptualising Teacher Education – Re(de)fining Teacher Knowledge

“The knowledge-base of teacher education must account for how individuals learn to teach and for the complex factors, influences, and processes that contribute to that learning.” (Freeman & Johnson 1998: 107)

While coming to understand that FLTE is a complex and challenging task, educational researchers in the field of FLTE started questioning the overall conceptualisation of teacher education and its knowledge base. Freeman and Johnson (1998: 398) “argue that teacher education has been done much but relatively little studied.” With the development towards a reflective model of teacher education (see section 2.1.1), the methodology of FLTE has changed considerably during the 1990s. Language teacher education “included not simply what teachers needed to learn, but increasingly how they would learn it” (Freeman 2009a: 13); thus it is considered the “hidden side” (Freeman 2002) of teachers’ work. As Ball (2000: 246) further argues, a teacher's knowledge and her behaviour in the classroom need to be understood and studied in a more holistic manner. She (ibid.) explains that teaching integrates reasoning and knowing with action. Our tendency to focus either on its cognitive demands (teachers’ knowledge, reasoning, decision making, reflection) or on its actions (teacher behavior) is yet one more recent form of fragmentation in teacher education, and in particular, in our efforts to help teachers acquire usable content knowledge.

In this regard, the progress from linear models (craft model, applied science model) to a cyclical model of teacher education (reflective model) is linked to a different perception of teacher learning and teacher knowledge. According to Burns and Richards (2009b: 2), in traditional approaches to FLTE, teacher training or pre-service teacher education was distinguished from teacher development or in-service teacher education. In these approaches, theory and practice were mostly separated: teacher training or pre-service training focused on theoretical elements, whereas
practical experience was mostly gained after the formal teacher education through working as a teacher and taking part in various continuous education programmes. However, as they further explain, this distinction is not as clear-cut anymore. Meanwhile the “nature of teacher learning […] is viewed as a form of socialization into the professional thinking and practices or a community of practice” (Burns & Richards 2009b: 2). This socialisation already starts in pre-service teacher education in which (student) teachers become part of the ‘community of practice’ (Lave & Wenger 1991) during their studies. The notions of ‘socialisation’ and ‘community’ play a central role for the study at hand, as the (student) teachers were involved in cooperative learning formats, as I will further discuss in the course of this thesis.

Accordingly, an important shift in FLTE is characterised by the understanding of teaching as a social and cultural activity. Miller (2009: 172) describes “a theoretical and methodological shift from traditional cognitivist SLA perspectives on language teaching to a more nuanced critical and sociocultural framing.” Lantolf (2007: 693) summarises the three fundamental propositions of sociocultural theory relevant for the field of language teaching and learning as follows:

- Human mental activity is always and everywhere mediated; mediation develops through internalization of socially constructed activity; instruction, development, and assessment are inseparable processes dialectically unified in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Within the broader framework of sociocultural theory and socio-constructivism, teachers are no longer considered as mere conveyors of applied linguistic knowledge (see section 2.1.1), but as participants in a socio-cultural situation in which learning is mediated or negotiated among those involved. The notion of mediation is anchored in Vygotsky’s construct of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is central to understanding that an individual’s learning and development takes place in a certain space and through support of a more expert individual (cf. Vygotsky 1978). Taking the implications of the ‘sociocultural turn’ (Johnson 2006) addressed above into consideration, an important aspect of the language teaching profession becomes clear: in a language classroom, teachers are being confronted with a complex social situation with its own dynamics influenced by various contextual factors. They encounter numerous students (and sometimes also their parents) who individually differ in terms of age, prior knowledge, cultural background, language proficiency level, etc. Through language teaching, a teacher can make a lasting impact on her
students’ lives and thus bears a lot of responsibility (see Chapter 1). Johnson (2009: 25) finds the right words to describe the exceptional nature of teaching a language as follows:

Since language is both the medium of instruction and the object of teaching and learning, understanding language as social practice, as enacting identities and as situated in and drawing meaning from broader social, cultural, and historical contexts, reorients how [foreign language] teachers must come to think about and teach language.

Not only the socio-cultural nature of the language learning context, but also the language teacher and her personal history, contribute to the particularity of the language teaching profession. A language teacher’s personal and professional development is always shaped by her own language learning experience and her particular circumstances, which is mirrored in her daily practice (Harbon & Moloney 2013: 1f.). This understanding has changed the definition of teacher knowledge in FLTE. As Freeman and Johnson (1998: 401) state:

We now recognize that learning to teach is affected by the sum of a person's experiences, some figuring more prominently than others, and that it requires the acquisition and interaction of knowledge and beliefs about oneself as a teacher, of the content to be taught, of one’s students and of classroom life. We therefore have to acknowledge that the process is a socially negotiated one, because teachers’ knowledge of teaching is constructed through experiences in and with students, parents, and administrators as well as other members of the teaching profession. We recognize this learning process as normative and lifelong; it is built out of and through experiences in social contexts, as learners in classrooms and schools, and later as participants in professional programs.

Taking these aspects into consideration when conceptualising language teacher education and teacher knowledge, it once more becomes apparent that the ‘craft model’ as well as the ‘applied science model’ presented in section 2.1.1 simply fall short of meeting the complex demands of the teaching profession, especially with regards to foreign language teaching, as they do not take into consideration the socio-cultural dimension of language teaching and learning (cf. Wallace 1991: 6f.). As Scarino (2014: 396) rightly states, the knowledge of teachers is constantly changing and influenced by various aspects:

The scope of knowledge is dynamic and expansive and, as such, is challenging. Its process of development also constitutes a major challenge because it requires
engaging with teachers’ preconceptions and their frameworks of knowledge, understandings, values and practices.

Freeman and Johnson (1998: 407) emphasise that FLTE is “primarily concerned with teachers as learners of language teaching rather than with students as learners of language.” They make a strong point for putting the teacher and the activity of teaching in the centre of FLTE and argue that

for the purpose of educating teachers, any theory of SLA\textsuperscript{15}, any classroom methodology, or any description of [the] English language as content must be understood against the backdrop of teachers’ professional lives, within the settings where they work, and within the circumstances of that work (Freeman & Johnson 1998: 405).

In their well-known model of the knowledge-base of FLTE (see Figure 2) they depict the interplay between teacher learning, the contexts of schools and schooling and the activity of teaching and learning as a process of socialization into, participation in and creation of communities of practice:

Figure 2: Framework for the Knowledge Base of FLTE (Johnson & Freeman 1998: 406)

However, Freeman and Johnson (1998: 405) clarify that “[b]y arguing in favor of personal and social context, we do not mean to ignore conventional notions of theory or to replace them simply with knowledge of and from practice.” As noted in section 2.1.1, the importance of applied linguistic theory in FLTE is still acknowledged and indisputable within the field.\textsuperscript{16} Yet, for preparing language teachers for their

\textsuperscript{15} SLA = second language acquisition.

\textsuperscript{16} For a concise overview of the knowledge base change in FLTE from the 1970s onwards, see Freeman (2002).
profession and to offer ongoing support in the course of their professional development, Freeman and Johnson rightly demand “a broader epistemological framework [of FLTE] that is more connected to the activity of teaching itself” and acknowledges the importance of “perceptual knowledge (known as practice)” next to conceptual knowledge (known as theory)” (ibid.).

Similarly, Schocker-von Ditfurth (2001) also pleads for a reconceptualised knowledge base of teacher education. She suggests a model (ibid.: 63), which includes four competence areas for foreign language teachers and formulates the basic questions constituting the respective areas: 1. Self-competence (How do (student) teachers learn to teach a foreign language? How do they acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills? Which role do their prior language learning experiences and their biographies play?); 2. Situation competence (What are the characteristics of the social context of the language classroom? How can the school as a socio-cultural context be included in the learning process?); 3. Subject-matter competence (What kind of subject knowledge, attitudes and skills do future foreign language teachers need?); and 4. Language competence (What role does the foreign language play in the classroom? Which language competencies are required?). As objectives of such a knowledge base, Schocker-von Ditfurth (ibid.) sees the reflective adaption of relevant knowledge areas, as well as the development of professional competence. These goals are achieved “through reflective experiential and inquiry-based learning” (ibid.), which can be fostered through the engagement in action research (see section 2.3).

In sum, learning how to teach and ongoing professional development is a complex process that entails much more than just learning about applied linguistics theories. Therefore, FLTE and its knowledge base should be conceptualised accordingly and consider not only theoretical knowledge about language teaching and learning, but also the socio-cultural aspects influencing the teaching context. Furthermore, the understanding that teacher education and professional development is not only done to and for teachers (Johnson 2002, 2009) but also by teachers themselves needs to increase. As Bartels (2007: 29) aptly formulates,

[t]o achieve expertise, teachers need to invest time and energy actively trying different ways of accomplishing their practice, honing their skills, and adding to their knowledge of activities, materials, and techniques. Knowledge is not understanding

17 My translation.
18 My translation.
As indicated in this section, educational researchers in the last decades have pointed out that the type of knowledge FLTE needs is both – practical and theoretical. In the next section, I will discuss approaches of practical or experiential learning and of focusing on the activity of teaching.

2.1.3 Focus on the Teacher and the Activity of Teaching

“An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory, simply because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance.” (Dewey 2007: 121 [1916]).

(Re)conceptualising FLTE and re(de)fining teacher knowledge, as discussed in section 2.1.2, has put the ‘activity of teaching itself’ (Freeman & Johnson 1998) into a central position within the discussion about ways of educating foreign language teachers. In this regard, Ball (2000: 244) suggests a focus on the central aspects of teaching:

To improve our sense of what content knowledge matters in teaching, we would need to identify core activities of teaching, such as figuring out what students know; choosing and managing representations of ideas; appraising, selecting, and modifying textbooks; and deciding among alternative courses of action, and analyze the subject matter knowledge and insight entailed in these activities. This approach, a kind of job analysis of classroom teaching focused on the actual work that teachers do, could provide a view of subject matter as it is used in practice.

Freeman (2002; 2009a) explains that the individual teacher and her development throughout her career rather than knowledge and skills from the pre-service education have come to the fore in FLTE during the 1980s. Freeman (2002) further states that two central terms of this time are ‘teacher-learner’ (Kennedy 1991), which implies that being a teacher goes hand-in-hand with lifelong learning (cf. Day 1999; Appel 2000), and ‘teacher knowledge’ (Ball 2000), which indicates that teachers require and acquire a specific type of knowledge in their professional lives. As outlined in section 2.1.2, this knowledge should be rooted in the practical, socio-cultural context of the teaching activity. Kurtz (2011: 92), in his review of the central issues of FLTE in Germany in the past 30 years, further calls for a stronger subject perspective, i.e. a clear focus on the teacher as a human being and the cognitive, affective and social aspects involved in the process of teaching and learning to teach. As I will explain in more detail in section 2.2, recent research in the field has focused
on a more complex picture of the teacher and her practice, considering concepts such as professional identity, teacher cognition and cooperative teacher development. The question is, how exactly the ‘activity of teaching itself’ can be made a central element in FLTE. This is closely connected to experiential learning theory, which also has become one of the key concepts in FLTE. Kolb (1984: 41) explains that “experiential learning theory defines learning as the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience.” However, Edge (2002: 15) provocatively states: “Everyone has experience. Not everybody learns very much from it.”

Thereby, he implies the importance of reflective practice, as I will further discuss in section 2.2.2. Kohonen et al. (2001: 22) further clarify that the term experiential learning is used to refer to a wide range of educational approaches in which formal learning (in institutional contexts) is integrated with practical work and informal learning in a number of settings [...].

Additionally, they highlight that interaction and learning from one’s own and other learners’ experiences, as well as getting involved in the learning process not only cognitively but also affectively, are key elements to learning (cf. Kohonen et al. 2001: 23; cf. also Gebhard, Gaitan & Oprandy 1990). Similarly, Appel (2001: 189) argues that experiential knowledge is always ‘social knowledge’ and that research on experiential knowledge must include the cultural contexts in which knowledge is acquired, and hence considers the language teaching and learning context as ‘culture’ (ibid.: 201). The concept of experiential learning plays a major role as a foundation of action research as I will further discuss in section 2.3. Furthermore, the different levels of professional development within the integrated model, which was generated based on the results of this study, are strongly influenced by the socio-cultural context of the (student) teachers’ learning processes, as I will further explore in section 7.4.

Schocker-von Ditfurth and Legutke (2006) also argue that practical experiences play an important role not only for language learners, but also for language teachers, as they foster the development of teaching routines. In reference to Wallace’s model of professional education (see section 2.1.1), they state:

[I]t is [...] important that [(student) teachers] develop their experiential knowledge in authentic practical contexts, so that they gain the opportunity to develop appropriate

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19 Emphasis (italics) in original.
routines and to put their personal practical theories to the test putting them through a continuous cycle of action and reflection as this model suggest. (Schocker-von Ditfurth & Legutke 2006: 516)

Most teacher education programmes include opportunities for practical experience, which focus on the activity of teaching. One of those opportunities in the German FLTE context is the teaching practicum, which is of great importance for the (student) teachers’ learning processes (cf. Legutke 1997, 2003a; Schocker-von Ditfurth 2001, 2005; Gebhard 2009). However, as Legutke and Schocker-von Ditfurth (2009: 213) argue, the practicum is only valuable if the experiences gained are meaningfully integrated and reflected upon into the educational programme (cf. also Gabel 1997; Elsner 2010).

Not only teaching experiences, but also language learning experiences, form part of a language teacher's knowledge base and contribute to a teacher's professional identity. Through studying and/or teaching abroad, (student) teachers can gain insights into cultures of the target language. Not only does a semester abroad help students become aware of their own responsibility in the language learning process (cf. Möllering 2012), research also has shown that a stay abroad, for example taking part in a language assistant programme (cf. Ehrenreich 2004) or being involved in a student exchange (cf. Grau 2005), is a formative stage in the personal and professional biography of language teachers. Olmedo and Harbon (2010: 86) further propose that not only language teachers but also language teacher educators should engage in various forms of international education and cooperation in order to be prepared for the demands of their profession:

> International education is an important extension of multicultural education. By engaging in these kinds of professional dialogues, we can better prepare future teachers for the broader cultural challenges that they will experience given international immigration patterns and globalization.

Since intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is one of the main goals of language teaching and learning in Europe (cf. Council of Europe 2009: 43) and beyond, (student) teachers of languages can benefit in many ways from a stay abroad. Especially experiencing and becoming aware of one’s own and other cultures is central in the process of language teaching and learning, as Scarino (2014: 391) explains:

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In language learning, interpreting and creating meanings involves an intercultural act of decentering as learners examine phenomena and experience their own cultural situatedness while seeking to enter into the cultural worlds of others. It requires an act of engagement in which learners compare their own cultural assumptions, expectations, practices, and meanings with those of others, recognizing that these are formed within a cultural context that is different from their own. The learner is not simply situated in one culture and observing another; the learner is an intercultural participant, interpreter, and mediator.

Given the challenges entailed by language learning addressed above, there is no doubt that language teaching and language teacher education are at least as challenging. Therefore, the focus on the teacher and the activity of teaching, as discussed in this chapter, seems meaningful in attempting to understand the complex processes in a language classroom. It has become clear that not only theories of applied linguistics, but also various types of experiential knowledge, form part of a teacher’s knowledge base. In the following section, not the content and methodology, but the modes of FLTE shall be explored.

2.1.4 New Ways of Foreign Language Teacher Education

According to Wallace, parallel to the development of the reflective model as a predominant model in teacher education, there also has been a shift from ‘lecture mode’ to ‘group mode’ (cf. Wallace 1991: 34f.). That means that the traditional teacher-fronted and one-way mode of communication in a learning environment was supplemented by more interactive forms of learning, such as cooperative learning formats in task-based learning environments and project-based learning. The MA programme ‘E-LINGO – Teaching English to Young Learners’ incorporates manifold cooperative learning opportunities, as I will explore in detail in section 2.2.4 and in Chapter 3. The notion of a ‘community of practice’ (Lave & Wenger 1991) becomes particularly relevant in this context, as will be further discussed in section 7.1 in reference to this study’s findings.

Another important mode shift is the development from traditional educational settings towards online and blended-learning formats of teacher education. In the last decade, numerous online and blended-learning teacher education programmes have been evolved and opened new possibilities in terms of accessibility of educational

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20 The headline of this section is inspired by Marja Zibelius’s (2013) thesis title.
21 For detailed discussions of task-based/task-supported instruction, see Ellis (2003); Nunan (2004); Müller-Hartmann and Schocker-von Ditfurth (2011); van den Branden (2006); Willis and Willis (2007).
programmes worldwide. At the same time, they put teacher educators as well as (student) teachers in front of new challenges related to structuring and organising of course content, communication, time management and self-discipline.

Particularly in the field of TESOL this trend is observable (Hall & Knox 2009; England 2012; Garton & Edge 2012; Murray 2013). E-LINGO also follows this trend. It is organised in a blended-learning format, combining online studies with regular on-campus sessions. The growing need for online teacher education programmes stems from the increasing demand for English language education worldwide. As Murray (2013: 17) states,

> the enormous growth in the use of English as a global language has led to a demand for more English language teachers, and therefore the need to train more English teachers worldwide. Just as e-enabled learning has developed in other fields, so, too, its potential for meeting this growing demand for more English teachers has been recognized at all levels of society.

In the literature, the terms distance learning, e-learning, online learning, blended learning or hybrid learning are frequently used to describe teacher education programmes with an online component. Hall and Knox (2009: 219) use the term distance learning and language teacher education by distance (LTED) referring to teacher education programmes “where there is no or relatively minimal requirement for students to physically attend the institution where they are studying.” In Murray’s study (2013: 20), the term online language teacher education (OLTE) is used and defined

> as any professional development opportunity (PDO) in education for teachers of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) where at least 80% is delivered online. These PDOs may include professional development courses, certificates, diplomas, and/or degree programs delivered by for-profit organizations, professional organizations, and colleges/universities.

E-LINGO is commonly referred to as a blended-learning teacher education course (cf. Landesstiftung Baden-Württemberg, Legutke & Schocker-von Ditfurth 2008) as the online phases are complemented by regular on-campus sessions (see section 3.1). Even though the programme would also qualify as a distance or online learning programme according to the definitions above, I prefer the use of the term blended-learning, because it does justice to the importance of the face-to-face meetings in view
of the communication between the students and the tutors and the exchange of experiences about the course content (cf. Bäcker 2008b).

The shift towards an online mode of FLTE bears potential advantages as well as disadvantages. The advantages are rather obvious: the educational content is made electronically accessible for students from all over the world and the distribution of materials is easy and inexpensive (cf. Hall & Knox 2009: 220). Therefore, many logistic and organisational barriers in global teacher education can be overcome. However, online learning also entails numerous challenges. As Murray (2013: 41) states: “The literature indicates that many students underestimate the amount of time they need to commit to online learning.” This issue also plays a role in E-LINGO, as many students enrolled are working part-time or even full-time and experience time management difficulties (see section 3.1 and 6.3). Furthermore, Murray explains that many students in online learning environment experience a sentiment of isolation (ibid.: 43). As Zibelius (2013: 192) points out:

> While partners in face-to-face contexts have recourse to a multitude of channels through which they can retrieve information about each other (e.g. facial expressions, paralinguistic features, such as accent, small-talk during breaks, interaction in other shared contexts), many of these channels are not available for virtual teamwork.

In this context, the on-campus sessions or face-to-face meetings become important in creating a ‘community of practice’ (Lave and Wenger 1991) among the (student) teachers, as well as in fighting isolation and demotivation (Bäcker 2008b; Zibelius 2013). An important goal of online education programmes is therefore to create a sense of community and belonging among the learners, as well as to foster interaction and cooperation (Zibelius 2013). This is a rather difficult task as Murray points out: “Achieving an interactive, learner-centered environment requires developing trust among students, teachers, and the technology itself” (Murray 2013: 35). This was confirmed by Zibelius (2013: 192f.), who found that (student) teachers develop certain strategies to overcome their ‘digital invisibility’ and create group cohesiveness as I will further explore in section 2.2.4 on cooperative development.

According to Hall and Knox (2009: 219), the field of distance teacher education is still under-researched with only a few empirical studies published on this issue so far. Murray (2013: 97) also calls for
rich research that explores the following issues: (1) instructor attitudes and experiences; (2) participant attitudes and experiences; (3) technical support staff attitudes and experiences; (4) peer-peer interaction; (5) instructor-participant interaction; (6) learning outcomes; (7) cost effectiveness; and (8) washback of online pedagogical strategies to classroom practice.

With regards to cooperative learning in virtual cooperation, Zibelius (2013: 197) suggests to focus further research on the strategies adopted by teacher learners “which may facilitate and support the telecollaborative dealings of virtual teams – in particular referring to synchronous communication media in, and outside, online learning environments.” The benefits and challenges of online or blended-learning teacher education will have to be reviewed after sufficient empirical research has been done within the field. As Cullen, Kullman and Wild (2013: 432) rightly state:

The emergence and rapid development of online technologies over the past 20 years has created exciting possibilities for collaborative learning, possibilities that will inevitably go on expanding [...] However, no technology guarantees collaboration, and collaboration in itself does not guarantee learning.

They further argue that “guidance and sensitive interventions from the teacher may also be needed, not just to maintain levels of collaboration but to scaffold and support learning processes (ibid.). With regards to their latter point, i.e. that “collaboration in itself does not guarantee learning” (ibid.), the present case study provided interesting insights into the quality of teamwork of the E-LINGO (student) teachers, as I will further discuss in sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2.

This study features a blended-learning teacher programme, and throughout the following chapters I will address various aspects related to the educational format as well as the benefits and challenges entailed by it (see section 6.3). Yet the blended-learning format of E-LINGO is not the main focus of the case study.22 The emphasis will be on the role of the classroom action research projects (CARP) as professional development instruments, as I will further explain in sections 3.5 and in Chapters 6 and 7.

2.1.5 Overview and Summary
This brief overview of shifts and turns in FLTE is by no means exhaustive and only covers certain aspects of the wide-ranging discussion on FLTE in the last decades.

22 For a discussion of telecollaboration and computer-mediated communication in E-LINGO, see Bäcker and Zibelius (2008) and Zibelius (2013), Chapter 3.
However, it provides an overview of some issues that have been central in the debate on how to prepare future teachers in the field of foreign language teaching and learning for their profession. The aspects I touched upon in this section can be systematically summarised as follows:

1. Educational models have developed from linear towards cyclic models, such as the reflective model of teacher education, which assumes that learning takes place in a dialogic manner.

2. The distinction of pre-service (theoretical) and in-service (practical) teacher education has given way to a more holistic approach to conceptualising teacher education and teacher learning.

3. Teaching and teacher education are considered socio-cultural activities. Experiential learning and the activity of teaching are considered central elements of FLTE.

4. The teacher as well as her personal and professional development has become a central subject of interest in educational research, acknowledging the important role of the teacher in the teaching and learning context.

5. The mode of FLTE is slowly shifting from traditional lecture mode (one-way) to a group mode (interactive), in which learning takes place through joint co-construction of knowledge. At the same time, FLTE is developing from traditional university education to blended-learning and online formats of teacher education.

Having outlined the major shifts and turns in FLTE, I will now have a look at those two areas in detail, which are of particularly high relevance for E-LINGO, the M.A. teacher education programme and specifically for the case study conducted in this very context. These are the focus on the teacher and her professional development (see section 2.2.) and in particular the notion of reflective practice and action research (AR) (see section 2.3). As many researchers, most recently Hattie (2009) in his meta-study, suggest, the teacher is of utmost importance in the learning process. Therefore, the shifting view in FLTE towards the teacher is more than appropriate. The focal point of the following sections will be on key terms and concepts that have evolved in the discussion about the teacher, her learning and her practice.

2.2 Becoming a (Better) Teacher: Professional Development

With the teacher moving into the centre of attention in modern language teaching and learning research, the interest in the teacher's mind became very prominent. How do
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teachers conceptualise their practice? How do teachers learn and develop professionally? As mentioned previously, development is not merely “done to and for teachers” but also by teachers themselves (Johnson 2009: 25, cf. also Bailey, Curtis & Nunan 1998: 554). As Edge (2002: 11) states, development processes do not necessarily follow trends in current research, but are and should be characterised by the individual teacher’s personal and professional development:

As well as an external model approach to the continuing professional development of teachers, we need an internal growth approach. This approach extends trust and respect to those fellow professionals who are working on their own development as educators, in context-sensitive directions that they judge to be appropriate, whether or not these directions mirror the fluctuating fashions of TESOL orthodoxy.23

In order to approach a definition of the term ‘professional development’ for the context of my study, I will discuss a number of definitions and conceptualisations of the term as used in the current literature. Different terms, such as “teacher change, teacher learning and teacher development [...] broadly referring to the process whereby teachers come to alter aspects of their cognitions and practices in response to their encounter with new input”, are being used in the literature (Kubanyiova 2012: 7). However, in this thesis I will predominantly use the terms development and learning as in my understanding it captures best the notion of personal and professional progress. Tsui (2007: 1055) comprehensively explains that the factors that play an important part in shaping teachers’ conceptions of teaching and learning include their personal background and life experiences, their disciplinary training, their teaching and learning experiences, and their professional training, if they have any. These conceptions have a powerful influence on the way teachers make sense of their work. They may be changed or modified as teachers gain experience or as they encounter critical incidents that challenge them. They may also be very resistant to change. The interaction between teachers’ conceptions of teaching and learning and their world of practice is an important dimension that should be taken into consideration in understanding teachers’ professional development.

Hence, a language teacher’s professional development is linked to her personal background, her experiences and, if applicable, her professional training. In the framework of this study, the concept of ‘critical incident’ or ‘critical learning incident’ (CLI) within the teachers’ ‘world of practice’ and how this incident is dealt with and reflected upon has proven to be decisive in view of the teachers’ development

23 Emphasis (italics) in original.
processes (see section 2.2.2 and Chapter 6). Richards and Farrell state that the overall goal of professional development is to “facilitate growth of teachers’ understanding of teaching and of themselves as teachers” (2005: 4). This understanding involves:

- Understanding how the process of second language development occurs
- Understanding how our roles change according to the kind of learners we are teaching
- Understanding the kinds of decision making that occur during lessons
- Reviewing our theories and principles of language teaching
- Developing an understanding of different styles of teaching
- Determining learners’ perceptions of classroom activities (ibid.)

As discussed in section 2.1.2, the distinction between pre-service and in-service teacher education, or between teacher training and development, seems to become unnecessary in view of professional development (Burns & Richards 2009b: 2). Teacher learning or professional development can be conceptualised in different ways. As Richards and Farrell (2005: 6f.) suggest, it can be understood as skill learning (developing skills and competencies), as a cognitive process (developing beliefs and thinking processes), as a personal construction (developing self-awareness) or as a reflective practice (developing through experience) or as a combination of several conceptualisations. Kubanyiova (2012: 9) further states that there is clearly a need to conceptualise the kind of teacher change that teacher education should strive to bring about. From what we know about how teachers learn to teach and what impacts their practice, it appears that teacher education programmes should aim to foster change that is conceptual and generative as well as significant and worthwhile.

Conceptual change refers to an alteration of a teacher’s existing belief systems and generative change entails gaining new knowledge and understanding through taking an inquiry-based stance towards one’s own practice (cf. ibid.). This is central to the action research approach, as I will further discuss in section 2.3. Significant and worthwhile change refers to the differences made in student learning into a “valued direction” (ibid.). The question is, who is ultimately responsible for bringing about this development or change. In many definitions of professional development, the notion of imposing development onto someone and ‘make her develop’ still seems prevalent, as previously discussed in section 2.1.2. Without doubt, teacher education programmes should aim at fostering, facilitating and supporting a teacher's
professional development; however, in my understanding the teacher herself plays an active and central role in this process. As Day et al. (2000b: 8) appropriately conclude:

The choice of redefining professionalism cannot and should not belong only to those who do not teach. Teachers themselves have to be active in creating the work conditions, the opportunities and the spaces in which competence, creativity, risk taking and learning may thrive. This cannot be done in isolation. A professional community has to be built upon the shared insights and the collective experiences of those from within the community.

In the following sections, I will investigate several key concepts in the discussion revolving around the teacher and her practice, such as professional competence, teacher cognition, professional identity, teaching expertise and cooperative development. I will conceptualise various forms of teacher learning and change under the umbrella term ‘professional development’, even though it may take place on different levels, at different stages, and in different styles, as the data analysis examples in section 6.3 will further illustrate. Central to a teacher’s professional development is her individual cognition and identity. The way teachers perceive themselves is shaped through a number of factors as I will discuss below. In this regard, the relatively new concept of ‘professional confidence’ seems to be a particularly important factor for development processes.

2.2.1 Cognition, Identity and Professional Confidence

“What teachers know and do is part of their identity work, which is continuously performed and transformed through interactions in classrooms.” (Miller 2009: 175)

Having defined the reflective model (Wallace 1991: 58) as the current model in modern foreign language teacher education, the terminology Wallace uses shall be the starting point to discuss the teacher and her practice. Wallace (ibid.) defines professional competence as the goal of his reflective model of education (see section 2.1). The term ‘professional competence’, however, remains somewhat vague. According to Wallace, the term can be understood in different ways. It can relate to formal achievements, e.g. a particular certificate, or it can be understood as “a moving target or a horizon, towards which professionals travel all their professional life but which is never finally attained” (ibid.). The latter description is rather abstract and leaves room for interpretation as to what exactly “the moving target” is and how the
journey towards it is characterised. The human mind is still widely considered a ‘black box’, but the areas of research concerned with teachers’ knowledge, beliefs and attitudes are growing, aiming at producing knowledge that helps us understand how teachers develop over time. In this section, I will focus on the concepts of teacher cognition and professional identity in current research, before exploring how these concepts may change in the course of a teacher’s career (section 2.3.2). Also, I will be looking at the notion of cooperative development (section 2.2.3); this concept is of high relevance for this study as the (student) teachers engaged in cooperative action research projects which, according to the results of the study, had a tremendous impact on their individual learning processes (see Chapter 6).

Amongst others, Borg (2003) is using the term ‘teacher cognition’ to describe what teachers know about teaching and how this knowledge affects their practice. He defines teacher cognition as “the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching” (Borg 2005: 190) and explains that it comprises a teacher’s “beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, assumptions, conceptions, principles, thinking and decision-making” about everything that is relevant to the context of teaching and learning, including the persons involved (teachers and learners), the curriculum, topics, activities and the learning context in general (Borg 2006: 283). Similarly, the term ‘professional identity’ or ‘teacher identity’ (Duff & Uchida 1997; Flores & Day 2006; Norton 2000; Norton & Toohey 2011; Miller 2007, 2009) entails various aspects of a teacher’s personality. According to Miller (2009: 174), different definitions in the field of FLTE have in common the description of teacher identity as “relational, negotiated, constructed, enacted, transforming, and transitional.”24 She speaks of ‘identity work’ and highlights that identity is constructed through negotiation with others (ibid.). Thus, how a teacher’s professional identity evolves and changes over time is closely linked to people and relationships in the respective teacher’s life, be they of a private or professional nature. Miller (2009: 175) states that

> the identity resources of the teachers may be tested against conditions that challenge and conflict with their backgrounds, skills, social memberships, use of language, beliefs, values, knowledge, attitudes, and so on. Negotiating these challenges forms part of the dynamic of professional identity development.

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24 The discussion on the role of identity in foreign language teaching and learning is vast and complex and can only be touched upon briefly here. For an overview of the trends recently discussed in the literature on identity, see Miller (2009).
Particularly for a language teacher’s professional identity, her first language, which is tied in with their socio-cultural background, plays an important role. As Harbon and Moloney (2013: 1f.) formulate:

Language teachers’ very individual personal development has been shaped by their acquisition of their languages, variously through study, exchange, immigration, heritage or family background. They have chosen to place that investment in language and culture as the focus of their professional role.

Another aspect that needs to be taken into account when talking about a teacher’s identity is the question of when and where it is developed. Miller (2009: 177) emphasises “the low impact of preservice programs and the high impact of workplace conditions in shaping identities and practices.” In E-LINGO, there is no clear-cut distinction between pre-service and in-service teacher education. Some (student) teachers had been teachers for years and others had no professional experience when they first started the course. It is exactly this heterogeneity of the studied group which makes it interesting to explore the notions of teacher identity and professional development (see Chapters 6 and 7).

The effects of being a native or a non-native speaker of English on a teacher’s identity (Miller 2009: 177; Burns & Richards 2009b: 5) and their teaching practice (Murdoch 1994; Richards et al. 2013) are highly interesting. Murdoch (1994: 254) assumes that “non-native English teachers’ language proficiency will always represent the bedrock of their professional confidence.” This issue was a recurrent topic during my data collection phase, as only two of the (student) teachers I queried were native speakers, whereas the others were speakers of English as a foreign language. The data analysis revealed that, amongst other factors, being a non-native speaker of English is sometimes considered a disadvantage in the field of TEFL and may interfere with the (student) teachers’ perceptions of self and their confidence within the professional environment. According to the findings of my study, a central aspect of a teacher’s professional development is the notion of confidence in her abilities of being a teacher of English. The concept of professional development is still under-researched in the field of foreign language teacher education (Freeman 2014). Even though affective factors, such as anxiety, have been found to play a crucial role in the language learning process (Scovel 1978; Oxford 1999) and have inspired the evolution of humanistic approaches to language teaching (Moskowitz 1999; Rinvolucri 1999), the notion of affect has not been discussed extensively in the context of FLTE. In other professional
fields, especially in medicine, nursing and occupational therapy, the concept of professional confidence is widely used and discussed in the literature and yet “it is an emerging or immature dispositional concept, as it currently appears to lack a meaningful definition. Neither its characteristics, nor its preconditions, outcomes, or boundaries are clearly defined [...]” (cf. Holland, Middleton & Uys 2012). In the research on FLTE, the term professional confidence is not yet established as a concept. However, we frequently read about the closely related concept of ‘self-efficacy’, i.e. "belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura 1997: 2). A person’s self-efficacy is influenced by various factors. First, the cultural and ethnic background of students, as well as their gender, appears to have an impact on students’ expectations of success, their self-perception and self-efficacy (Santiago & Einarson 1998). Secondly, the teacher’s modelling of content impacts the students’ expectancies and confidence (Schunk 1998). Particularly the latter aspect is of great interest in educational settings, as I will further discuss in the course of this thesis.

In the following, I will use the term ‘professional confidence’ in order to refer to (student) teachers’ feelings of self-efficacy related to their professional context. I distinguish the term professional confidence from self-efficacy, as it is related to belief in one’s capabilities within a specific context – here, teaching English as a foreign language. As the data analysis revealed, a language teachers’ professional confidence is related to beliefs about teaching expertise (experiential knowledge), theoretical knowledge and language proficiency. Given the exceptional nature of language teaching and learning as a socio-cultural activity, in which the language is the medium and the object of instruction at the same time (Johnson 2009: 25), the confidence of the teacher in her language proficiency as well as in her teaching skills plays an important role, as I will further discuss in Chapter 6.

The question is, how teachers can foster the self-efficacy of their learners, and, even more importantly in the context of this study, how teacher educators can foster professional confidence of (student) teachers. According to Pajares (1996: 569; cf. also Brophy 1998: 60; Dörnyei 2001: 57ff.), this can be achieved through providing learners with experiences of success:

to increase achievement, educational efforts should focus on raising students’ feelings of self-worth or of competence. This is usually accomplished through programs that emphasize building self-beliefs through verbal persuasion methods. Social cognitive
theory shifts that emphasis and focuses on a joint effort to raise competence and confidence primarily through successful experience with the performance at hand, through authentic mastery experiences.

An empirical study in the field of science and engineering education revealed that graduate students’ self-efficacy is closely linked to the teaching and learning context, in particular to the teacher and her behaviour in the classroom:

Our findings indicate that faculty efforts in the classroom indeed have important influences on student self-perceptions. Students’ gains in confidence, motivation, responsibility, and intent to persist were influenced more by teaching practices than by the students’ background characteristics. Both male and female undergraduate students’ gains in self-perceptions can be fostered in the classroom by frequent interaction with and feedback from the instructor, by opportunities to work collaboratively with peers, and by clear instructions and structure from the instructor. (Colbeck, Cabrera & Terenzini 2001: 185f.)

Through a systematic analysis of how the concept is used and what the term relates to in the field of occupational therapy, Holland, Middleton and Uys (2012: 219) found that “there appear to be four components to professional confidence, namely affect, reflection, higher cognitive functioning, and action.” They explain that the “affective component is encapsulated in feeling at ease and comfortable in a situation, while the reflective component is evidenced in looking within and reflecting on practice and feedback received” (ibid.). They further argue that the affective and the reflective components “imply a level of intellectual insight and higher order cognitive functioning” which trigger a change in action and behaviour (ibid.). In their understanding, professional confidence may increase, but also decrease in contexts of “transitional periods, change, and stress” (ibid.). Based on their findings, they propose a model of the attributes of professional development and how they interact. The model includes the four components described above (action component, reflection component, cognitive functioning component, affective component), which are influenced by several aspects:
The attributes are all transferable to the context of foreign language teacher education, as the results of my study suggest. Affective as well as cognitive aspects contribute to a teacher’s professional confidence and development. Also, feedback from others is a central factor for the participants of my study. Based on the results of my study, I propose a model of professional development in FLTE, which integrates three dimensions of professional development, i.e. affective development, cognitive development and interpersonal development. I will argue that professional development takes place through an interplay of factors from the different dimensions and is always embedded in the socio-cultural setting of the teaching and learning situation (see section 7.4).

The professional confidence model above (Holland, Middleton & Uys 2012: 219) as well as my data analysis suggests that reflectivity is a central principle of professional practice and development. The way teachers reflect on their practice as well as their learning processes is decisive in regards to their self-perception on the one hand, and their professional development on the other hand (cf. Johnson 1996). In the following, I will briefly introduce the principle of reflective practice, before exploring how this concept influences a teacher’s professional development and supports her process of lifelong learning (see section 2.2.3).
2.2.2 The Principle of Reflective Practice

“When teachers and teacher educators honestly and openly engage in deliberate reflection on and critical inquiry into their own experiences and practices, they become open to true learning [...]” (Johnson 2000b: 4)

The notion of ‘reflection’ or ‘reflective practice’ has become an important key word in the field of teacher education. The term originally goes back to Schön (1983) and his seminal book *The Reflective Practitioner*, in which he distinguishes between ‘reflection in action’ and ‘reflection on action’ and encourages teachers to reflect during and after the activity of teaching on their experiences in order to be able to improve their practices. Reflection on teaching is to be distinguished from merely thinking about teaching. Mezirow (1990: 5) states that “[r]eflection is generally used as a synonym for higher-order mental processes.” Many definitions of reflection are to be found in the literature. One that seems very suitable as it incorporates cognitive as well as affective factors is suggested by Boud, Keogh and Walker who define reflection as “a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation” (Boud, Keogh & Walker 1985: 3, cited in Mezirow 1990: 5). The concept of reflective practice has been widely discussed in the literature on foreign language teacher education and is well-established as a means for professional development. It is represented in current models of teacher education (Wallace 1991), as discussed in section 2.1, and plays a central role in the practice of action research, as I will further explain in section 2.3. As Burton states, “[b]eing reflective assists teachers’ lifelong professional development, enabling them to critique teaching and make better-informed teaching choices” (Burton 2009: 298). Zeichner and Tabachnick (2001: 83) distinguish three types of reflection related to the activity of teaching:

Reflective teaching, like any teaching, is a social activity. Either reflective teaching looks back at social interactions and tries to make sense of them in order to plan for future teaching, or it looks forward to social interactions of teaching and learning that have not yet taken place and attempts to shape these, or reflective teaching is within the process of teaching and learning, in which ideas and behaviour interact to shape one another.

25 For a discussion of the difference between the concepts ‘reflection’ and ‘reflexivity’, see Finlay (2002: 532f.).
In addition to Schön’s (1983) distinction between ‘reflection-in-action’ and ‘reflection-on-action’ in retrospection, Zeichner and Tabachnick (2001: 83) add a third level describing the reflection of “social interactions of teaching and learning that have not yet taken place and attempts to shape these”. Farrell (2007: 6) calls this type of reflective practice ‘reflection-for-action’ and explains that its purpose is to “guide future action” (ibid.). Whether reflection is related to a past, present or future action, its objective is to critically and systematically analyse a situation and learn from it. As Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985: 3) emphasise, reflection does not necessarily lead to change, but rather to “new understandings and appreciation.” Thus, reflection may lead to increased awareness and learning. Acknowledging a problem in a teaching situation is as equally important as becoming aware of a well-functioning practice or of one’s own abilities and skills, as I will argue in the scope of exploring the notion of professional confidence in the context of this study in section 6.3.3.

The question is, how exactly reflective practice is exercised in the everyday teaching practice of foreign language teachers. Farrell (2007) concisely and comprehensively describes several reflective practices for language teachers, which include engaging in action research (see section 2.3), writing teaching journals, participating in teacher development groups, establishing critical friendships, etc. In view of the concept of professional development, reflective practice and its various forms is essential to personal and professional growth. On a critical note towards Schön’s model of the reflective practitioner, Convery (2001: 133) argues that it has “limited application for resolving teachers’ difficulties”. He criticises Schön’s model as too simplified as it “offers professionals the illusion of independent self-improvement” (Convery 2001: 137). He highlights the importance of collaboration with other teachers in order to be able to discuss, analyse and change selected aspects of the teaching and learning situation (ibid.). I strongly agree with this view and will introduce and discuss the notion of cooperative development as a central concept in the context of this study in section 2.2.4.

As mentioned above, reflective practice may occur in different forms. Through the data analysis procedure, the ‘critical incident technique’, a term coined by Flanagan (1954), came to the fore. I found that the (student) teachers’ descriptions of their experiences with classroom action research, i.e. the orientation frameworks in which they dealt with different topics (see section 4.5.2), were mostly related to
critical learning incidents (CLIs) on cognitive, affective and interpersonal levels (see Chapter 6). In order to operationalise the term ‘critical learning incident’ in the context of this study, I contemplated definitions of the term in the literature, focusing on the field of teacher education. According to Shapira-Lishchinsky (2011: 649), the term critical incident is often used to refer to an “undesirable situation”, but she clarifies that

[i]n the educational system, critical incidents are not necessarily sensational events involving a lot of tensions. Rather, they may be minor incidents that happen in every school. Their classification as critical incidents is based on the significance and the meaning that the teachers attribute to them.

Tripp (2011: 24f.) has a similar understanding of critical incidents in the context of teaching and learning and explains that most critical incidents are not at all dramatic or obvious: they are mostly straightforward accounts of very commonplace events that occur in routine professional practice which are critical in the rather different sense that they are indicative of underlying trends, motives and structures. These incidents appear to be ‘typical’ rather than ‘critical’ at first sight, but are rendered ‘critical’ through analysis.

The critical incident technique also plays a role in action research (see section 2.3), which often starts with a “problematic situation” (Burns 2010: 2). Shapira-Lishchinsky (2011: 649) states that it is important to identify and analyse CLIs, because “[t]hey may be detrimental to teachers’ professional development as they may lead them to prefer one action over another when encountering similar situations.” Schocker-von Ditfurth (2005: 425) further argues that critical incidents or critical periods and their systematic reflection are central to the development of a teacher’s professional identity.

In sum, reflection in its various manifestations is central to a teacher’s learning and development process. One possibility is analysing critical learning incidents, as I will further explain in the scope of my data analysis (see section 6.3). In the following section, I will take on the notion of ‘reflection’ and will discuss the terms ‘novice’, ‘expert’ and ‘lifelong learning’ in the context of FLTE. Moreover, I will illustrate the conceptualisation of these terms with data from the present case study.
2.2.3 From Novice to Expert: A Process of Lifelong Learning

“I’ve been an English teacher before the course [...] and I would never say that I’m an expert. NEVER!” (Nicole, Interview, February 2012)

Numerous researchers (e.g. Berliner 1988; Farrell 2009; Tsui 2003, 2009) consider ‘teaching expertise’ as the goal of professional development. Berliner (1988: 2f.) describes five different stages in the development of expertise (1. Novice, 2. Advanced beginner, 3. Competent, 4. Proficient, 5. Expert) and argues that these stages correspond with the time of teaching experience. Even though the stages throughout this continuum of growth and development may vary from individual to individual, Berliner’s concept seems relevant in the scope of this study, as the participants entered E-LINGO at various levels of professional experience. In this context, the (student) teacher’s self-perception and their professional development through the cooperative engagement in action research was of interest. In the third and last interview (see section 5.5, Appendices C and D), I used a scale from 1 to 10 (1 representing the novice teacher, 10 standing for the expert teacher) and asked the students to self-evaluate before the first semester and after the third semester of E-LINGO. As expected, the number they chose in self-assessing their development from novice to expert gave rather little information about their expertise, but their comments on their perceived gradual development from novice to expert teacher were highly interesting, as the summary of the research findings will illustrate (see section 6.3).

When Tsui (2003, 2009) speaks of ‘teaching expertise’ as the goal of foreign language teacher education, she explains that experienced teachers differ from inexperienced teachers with regards to their understanding and perception of their professional field. Richards and Farrell (2005), referring to the work of Tsui (2003), list the following skills and abilities that experienced teachers have in comparison to inexperienced or novice teachers:

- A richer and more elaborate knowledge base
- Ability to integrate and use different kinds of knowledge
- Ability to make sound intuitive judgements based on past experience
- A desire to investigate and solve a wide range of teaching problems
- A deeper understanding of students and student learning
- Awareness of instructional objectives to support teaching
- Better understanding and use of language learning strategies
- Greater awareness of the learning context
Greater fluidity and automaticity in teaching
(Richards & Farrell 2005: 7f.)

But when does a teacher become an expert? What exactly is enough experience? The question is, how teachers and (student) teachers move up the scale from novice towards expert teachers and, more interestingly, how this advancement is perceived by the (student) teachers themselves and how it can be observed through research. Levin (2003), who undertook several longitudinal case studies (15 years), concludes that teachers need continuous support during their career. She lists three main aspects that should be taken into account:

- First, teachers need ongoing support in order to continue to develop their pedagogical understanding and to remain in the classroom.
- Second, teachers need opportunities that encourage and allow them to continue to be learners if they are going to develop their pedagogical understandings over time.
- Third, teachers need to be reflective if they are to continue to develop. They also need to develop the ability to think metacognitively about teaching and learning, and about their behaviour and development.
(Levin 2003: 276)

From Levin’s summary, it becomes obvious that several aspects play a role in teacher development. Not only is the teacher herself responsible for professional development, but other factors, such as “support from friends, family, colleagues, or mentors” (Levin 2003: 277) play an important role, as already outlined in section 2.2.1 when discussing the concepts of teacher cognition and professional identity. All these aspects become apparent in the data of this case study. From the participants’ utterances, it becomes clear that personal and professional relationships are of utmost importance for their self-perception, as well as their development and growth. For example, Elisabeth states that

it was partly a great challenge to come along with the course and finally to complete it. It was a challenge as regards time management and competent use of the foreign language. However, I feel quite proud and satisfied that I succeeded. At this point I want to express my gratitude to my husband who had to spend the evenings alone while I was working on the course tasks and the Master’s Thesis. He accepted my need for privacy every day and tried in his way to support me when I felt down. I could not have made it if he were different. (Elisabeth, Portfolio, July 2012)
Acknowledging her partner’s support openly in her portfolio indicates that Elisabeth values the support structures within her private life. The support of others also played a role in the process of planning, carrying out and evaluating the CARPs (see sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2). The notion of development, as well as how this is perceived by the (student) teachers of this study, will be explored in the following. On the one hand, I will refer to relevant literature and, on the other hand, I will exemplarily incorporate voices of the (student) teachers who participated in this study as they illustrate how terms like ‘expert’ and ‘professional development’ are conceptualised differently by individual teachers.

The introductory quote, in which Nicole, one of the case study participants with over 10 years of teaching experience, states that she would never call herself an expert, illustrates a key issue in teacher learning: the principle of lifelong learning (e.g. Day 1999; Appel 2000; Hof 2009). At the same time, it indicates that the term ‘expert’, is an ideal to Nicole, which she cannot achieve. For her, it is indeed “a moving target or a horizon, towards which professionals travel all their professional life but which is never finally attained” as Wallace (1991: 58) puts it. Comparing Nicole’s statement to the other (student) teachers’ responses, most of the participants had a similar attitude towards the concept. All of the (student) teachers who took part in this study, whether they had no, one, five or ten years of professional experience, stated that there is room for further learning and development. Only one participant, though, Patricia, who also had over 10 years of professional experience before starting E-LINGO, considered herself an expert, rating herself at 10 on the scale before the first semester and after the third semester of E-LINGO. She commented on her choice as follows:

I think I didn’t change as a teacher, I was always like that […] But what changed – but this is not my quality as a teacher in class – I think what changed is how I can actually think about theory and what is behind it. So, it was good what I did, but now I know why (laughs). (Patricia, Interview III, February 2012)

Patricia’s statement shows that her concept of an ‘expert’ is different from Nicole’s understanding of the term. Hence, the distinction between novice and expert teacher might differ from individual to individual. However, what all (student) teachers in this case study agreed upon is the fact that, independent from their level of professional experience, there are always new things to learn about foreign language teaching and
learning. This is reflected in the literature as well. Richards and Farrell (2005: 1) describe the necessity for ongoing teacher learning as follows:

Opportunities for in-service training are crucial to the long-term development of teachers as well as for the long-term success of the programs in which they work. The need for ongoing renewal of professional skills and knowledge is not a reflection of inadequate training but simply a response to the fact that not everything teachers need to know can be provided at preservice level, as well as the fact that the knowledge base of teaching constantly changes.

A term often used as an umbrella term for different forms of teacher learning is ‘professional development’. The term ‘development’ in general implies a process that entails the notion of change or growth. Assuming that the (student) teachers in E-LINGO have undergone some kind of change during the course of their studies, the term professional development seems suitable to describe this change. What exactly is professional development? (How) can it be observed and which indicators can be interpreted as evidence for development? In the context of FLTE, Richards and Farrell (2005: vii) define professional development in the widest sense as an “update [of teachers’] professional knowledge and skills.” They describe teacher development as “a process that takes place over time rather than an event that starts and ends with formal training or graduate education. This process can be supported both at the institutional level and through teachers’ own individual efforts” (ibid. 3). Fullan (1991: 326) defines professional development as “the sum of formal and informal learning experiences throughout one’s career from pre-service teacher education to retirement.” Both definitions have in common that they entail formal (institutional) learning and informal (individual learning). Day (1999: 2) states that professional development is largely private, unaided learning from experiences through which most teachers learn to survive, become competent and develop in classrooms and schools; as well as informal development opportunities in school and the more formal ‘accelerated’ learning opportunities available through internally and externally generated in-service education and training activities.

Throughout their book, Richards and Farrell (2005) suggest and illustrate a number of strategies and activities, for example action research, that enhance professional development:
Looking at the content, structure and organisation of E-LINGO (see Chapter 3), it becomes obvious that the programme incorporates all of these aspects. However, as mentioned above, the preconditions created in formal learning environments such as E-LINGO, are only one factor that can influence individual teacher development. The other factor, the individual teacher, is the more important one as I will argue based on the results of my case study (see Chapter 6). Richards and Farrell also highlight the importance of the individual teacher's learning and perception by stating that teacher development serves a longer-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of teachers' understanding of teaching and of themselves as teachers. It often involves examining different dimensions of a teacher's practice as a basis for reflective review and can hence be seen as "bottom-up" (Richards & Farrell 2005: 4).

Of course, teacher development has institutional implications as well (cf. Joyce 1991), but the focus here will be on the individual teacher. Richards and Farrell (2005: 9f.) identify the following six areas of professional development for English foreign language teachers:

- **Subject-matter knowledge.** Increasing knowledge of the disciplinary basis of TESOL – that is, English grammar, discourse analysis, phonology, testing, second language acquisition research, methodology, curriculum development, and the other areas that define the professional knowledge base of language teaching

- **Pedagogical expertise.** Mastery of new areas of teaching, adding to one's repertoire of teaching specializations, improving ability to teach different skill areas to learners of different ages and backgrounds

- **Self-awareness.** Knowledge of oneself as a teacher, of one's principles and values, strengths and weaknesses

- **Understanding of learners.** Deepening understanding of learners, learning styles, learners' problems and difficulties, ways of making content more accessible to learners

- **Understanding of curriculum and materials.** Deepening one's understanding of curriculum and curriculum alternatives, use and development of instructional materials
• **Career advancement.** Acquisition of the knowledge and expertise necessary for personal advancement and promotion, including supervisory and mentoring skills.\(^{26}\)

In pre-service as well as in in-service teacher education, the concept of professional development is strongly connected to the notion of self-development, a phenomenon described by Gebhard (2006). He suggests the following ways and strategies for teachers to enhance their own self-development and to explore their teaching systematically:

- Read journal articles and books about teaching and learning.
- Read teacher narratives.
- Attend professional conferences.
- Establish a mentoring relationship.
- Put together a teaching portfolio.
- Learn another language.
- Do action research.
- Do self-observation.
- Observe other teachers.
- Talk with other teachers.
- Keep a teacher journal.

(Gebhard 2006: 15)

These aspects tie in with what Richards and Farrell (2005) suggest with regards to teacher development. However, these personal and professional development activities suggested by Gebhard (2006) refer to very different aspects of teaching learning and should be weighted differently, as I argue. For example, action research is a complex procedure (see section 2.3) and may involve several of the other self-development activities listed above, e.g. self-observation, observing other teachers, keeping a teacher journal. Hence, it becomes clear once more that professional development entails many different aspects.

Having defined and explained professional development as well as selected strategies to enhance it, the more difficult question is now how to observe and describe it. In this case study, I examined (student) teachers who used learning logs during their studies and put together a reflective portfolio at the end of their studies. Furthermore, I conducted several semi-structured group interviews in order to elicit indicators for professional development. However, the process of professional development is complex and entails many different aspects. Therefore, the data

\(^{26}\) Emphasis (italics) in original.
obtained needed to be systematically interpreted in order to find indicators for professional development in the form of critical learning incidents (CLIs). The Documentary Method as developed by Bohnsack (1989), an analysis method for qualitative-interpretative research mainly applied in social and educational research, turned out to be a very suitable tool to elicit exactly that indirect or intuitive knowledge which provides clues for professional development (see Chapter 4). Another aspect that needs to be taken into account with regards to the professional development of the (student) teachers in E-LINGO is that all classroom action research projects were prepared, conducted, evaluated and presented to the peer students and tutors in teams. Therefore, another term of particular importance is the notion of cooperative development, as the next section will explain.

2.2.4 Cooperative Teacher Development

“Self-development needs other people... by cooperating with others, we can come to understand better our own experiences and opinions.” (Edge 1992: 3)

As discussed in section 2.2.1, identity formation and teacher development is always closely linked to others. The concept of cooperative or collaborative development (e.g. Johnston 2009; Edge 1992, 2002) has been gaining more importance in the field of FLTE and plays a vital role in this case study as well, as (student) teachers cooperatively prepare and reflect on classroom action research projects (CARPs) and engage in discussions on their findings with their fellow students and tutors at the respective face-to-face meeting. In this section, I will discuss the concept of cooperative development, before embarking on exploring a particular form of teacher collaboration – action research – in section 2.3.

Learning can only take place through ‘situated practice’ (Lave & Wenger 1991) in a meaningful context. This context includes various socio-cultural factors of the teaching and learning environment as I have argued in section 2.1. The notion of community entails the idea of learning together and learning from each other (Johnston 2009). Hence, the concept of cooperative teacher development suggests that learning and personal development is enhanced through cooperation. The term cooperative or collaborative teacher development (CTD) has many facets and may entail different forms of collaboration. According to Johnston (2009: 242),

27 In this thesis, the terms ‘cooperation’ and ‘collaboration’ are used interchangeably.
Collaborative teacher development is any sustained and systematic investigation into teaching and learning in which a teacher voluntarily collaborates with others involved in the teaching process, in which professional development is a prime purpose.

As Johnston (ibid.) further explains, CTD can take place in different forms. A teacher may collaborate with a) another teacher or several other teachers, b) with a researcher, c) with students, or d) “with others involved in teaching and learning – administrators, supervisors28, parents, material developers” (Johnston 2009: 243). As Avalos (2011: 17f.; cf. also Freeman 2002: 12) in her review of several studies on professional development in teacher education explains, cooperative teacher learning or ‘teacher co-learning’ manifests itself in different forms and in different ways and depends on the socio-cultural contexts of learning and teaching:

The road starts with informal exchanges in school cultures that facilitate the process, continues in networking and interchanges among schools and situations and is strengthened in formalised experiences such as courses and workshops that introduce peer coaching or support collaboration and joint projects. In whatever way, the lesson learned is that teachers naturally talk to each other, and that such talk can take on an educational purpose.

However, Avalos (ibid.) also demands more systematic forms of teacher cooperation and co-learning. In the scope of this project, several forms of CTD play a role. First of all, the (student) teachers collaborated within tandems (see section 3.5) in order to prepare, conduct, evaluate and present their classroom action research projects. Secondly, they collaborated with their tutors (see section 3.4), who monitor, accompany and support the individual (student) teachers’ learning processes. Thirdly, they collaborated with me, a researcher (see section 5.2), in that they agreed to explore aspects of their professional development through action research in this case study. Fourthly, the (student) teachers collaborated with each other as an entire cohort at the on-campus sessions, including the tutors and me, the researcher. Within this ‘community of practice’ (Lave & Wenger 1991), they had a professional platform to articulate, discuss and exchange ideas and experiences with action research, as I will further examine in Chapter 7. According to Edge (2002: 21), it is exactly the notion of ‘articulation’ which characterises learning with and from others: “Cooperative development focuses on the power of learning through articulation.”

28 See also Bailey (2009) and Malderez (2009).
Edge (ibid.) defines three interacting dimensions of learning: through intellect, through experience and through articulation. Johnson (1996: 767) further explains that articulation of justifications will eventually lead to development:

When teachers articulate their justifications for why they teach the way they do, when they reflect on theory within the context of their own classrooms, and when they talk about their justifications with others, it fosters the kind of sense-making that enables teachers not only to change what they do but also to change their justifications for what they do.

The integrated model of language teachers' professional development I have developed based on the findings of this study suggests a very similar conceptual framework of teacher development, as I will further discuss in section 7.4. Johnston (2009: 246) also makes a strong point for integrating cooperative learning opportunities for teachers into FLTE by stating that “[c]ollaborative teacher development is not an add-on luxury for rare cases, but a vital component of any healthy, forward-looking educational setting.” This has proven to be true for the E-LINGO students as I will show in section 6.3 with the help of different data examples. However, CTD is subject to challenges and constraints. As Johnston (2009: 245) notes, there are internal and external challenges. “The internal challenge is the inherent power balance in a great many collaborative relationships, especially teacher–researcher partnerships” (ibid., cf. also Bevins & Price 2014). As Zigo (2010) suggests in this regard, teacher–researcher collaborations should be reciprocal in nature and help balancing the power hierarchy of those involved, for example by sharing classroom tasks in the context of classroom research. She explains:

It can be hoped, then, that a researcher’s contributions to the labor needs found within a research site might therefore contribute toward equalizing the traditional power differentials between researcher and participants. If the researcher is able to negotiate and genuinely follow through in such a collaboration, it is likely that the researcher will, at times, be in a subordinate power role among the participants. Fully sharing in “collaborative labor” (Flinders, 1992, p. 53) can bring about transformation, both in the social circumstances of participants and in the researcher’s understanding of the context. Ultimately, participants should be able to name specific benefits they received through the researcher’s more direct involvement, benefits as worthwhile and satisfying as those experienced by the researcher (Zigo 2010: 354).

However, as Zigo (ibid.) further states, only certain research endeavours and contexts allow for such involvement. As I will further explicate in section 5.2, my involvement as a researcher was negotiated with the tutors and the participants of the study and
was neither characterised by power imbalances between me and the participants, nor did it impose additional work on the (student) teachers.

Johnston (2009: 246) further argues that external challenges may be caused through a lack of support by the institution involved: “Wherever it is done and whatever form it takes, CTD requires resources and also significant investments of time and energy on the part of the overworked teachers.” He calls for “logistical and financial support” as well as “moral support” (ibid.) and states:

The latter, moral support, is if anything even more important: Principals, directors, chairs, and administrators generally need to recognize the worth of CTD, to understand the importance of what their teachers are doing and to accept the consequences (ibid.).

In the context of this study, institutional constraints played a role for a number of (student) teachers, who had difficulties with justifying and setting up their classroom action research projects, as I will further discuss in section 6.3. Zibelius (2013), in her study on tele-collaboration within the context of E-LINGO, found that cooperative learning and development in blended-learning settings greatly depends on the form of the cooperation within the teams (tandems or tridems). Amongst other factors, she identifies self-disclosure, i.e. sharing personal information within the team, as a vital component of well-functioning teamwork and highlights the importance of addressing and discussing the following aspects among team members:

- personal efforts that a member has undertaken to improve a given situation; the acknowledgement that a member has received; the sharing of personal goals, plans and expectations, of information about one’s personal background and of instances of self-evaluation (cf. ibid.: 192).

Moreover, Zibelius (ibid.) found that the E-LINGO teams also aimed at overcoming ‘digital invisibility’ by making “aspects of their private and professional lives evident to their team partners and indicat[ing] the way in which these commitments influenced each other and the group work.” This was further achieved by strategies to build group cohesiveness, for example through “expressing gratitude, pride and praise for the group (work); articulating positive assessments of group exchanges and working styles and stressing perceived similarities and member characteristics that contribute to group unity” or by offering each other technical support (ibid. 192f.). My
findings related to cooperative or inter-personal development tie in with Zibelius's (2013) results, as I will further discuss in section 7.1.

In the previous sections, I have explained various aspects related to the term ‘professional development’. In my understanding, it is an umbrella term, comprising not only the acquisition of certificates, knowledge and skills through in-service teacher education programmes, but also changes to a teacher’s cognition and identity. Therefore, I will use professional development in reference to (student) teacher learning at various stages of their career. In the scope of this study, the question arose of how this concept can be operationalised in order to allow for the description of individual and cooperative learning and development processes of the (student) teachers featuring in this study over the period of two years. In Chapter 7, with reference to the findings from the data analysis, I will answer this question for the particular context of this case study by eliciting three different dimensions of professional development (see sections 7.1 Interpersonal Development, 7.2 Cognitive Development and 7.3 Affective Development), as manifested in different forms of critical learning incidents and will propose an integrated model of language teachers’ professional development (see section 7.4).

In the following section, the concept of action research, which has been described as a tool for professional development in different professions, will be explored, highlighting its relevance for FLTE. At the core of the next chapter, I will address the question of whether action research is a meaningful instrument for professional development and which challenges are entailed by implementing the concept in in-service and pre-service teacher education.

### 2.3 Action Research – Linking Practice and Theory

“Action research empowers teachers by enabling them to become ‘agents’ rather than ‘recipients’ of knowledge.”

*Burns 2009a: 116*

This chapter is dedicated to the centrepiece of this study: the practice of action research. With the turn towards the teacher and her professional development (see section 2.2), the question of suitable instruments supporting individual and cooperative development came to the fore as well. Action research as a form of inquiry-based learning (cf. Koch-Priewe & Thiele 2009: 279) fulfils several functions.
Somekh (2006: 1) formulates the main purpose of action research as implementing and monitoring change:

> Change is an inevitable and continuous process in social situations, locally, nationally, globally... the problem is to understand the extent to which we can have any control over its nature (what kinds of things the change involves) and its direction (where it is taking us). This is particularly important when there is a deliberate attempt to introduce something new in order to bring about improvement. Because of the complexity of human experience and social relationships and institutions, it will probably always be impossible to plan changes and implement them exactly as intended, but action research provides a means of generating knowledge about the implementation of the initiative and using this to keep it on track as far as possible.

As Somekh (ibid.) points out, AR can be used to implement and monitor change, as well as to foster professional development. However, as Nunan (1993: 3) argues, professional development is only one aspect of action research:

> I believe that action research (AR) can be justified on professional development grounds. However, I believe that AR can also be justified on research grounds. In fact, I believe that there is something essentially patronising in the view that, while AR might be good for professional development, it hardly counts as research.

What exactly does action research mean, what kind of knowledge does it create and which role does it play in FLTE? At first glance, it seems logical that action research means doing research on some kind of activity. However, the individual constituent parts ‘action’ and ‘research’ are rather complex and ‘action research’ is a multifaceted term. Its meaning, its origin as well as its growing prominence in FLTE will be explored in detail below. In section 2.3.1, I will sketch out the origins of action research and approach a definition of the term with reference to relevant literature. In section 2.3.2, I will discuss different models of action research and provide examples of action research in practice in order to illustrate the nature of the practice. In section 2.3.3, I will discuss the challenges entailed by the use of action research in the context of foreign language teaching and learning.

2.3.1 Origin and Definition

Action research (AR), also practitioner research or teacher research, is a form of qualitative research, aiming at improving any kind of social situation, for example a teaching situation (cf. Burns 2010: 2). The term originally derived from the field of social psychology and was strongly forged by Kurt Lewin in the 1940s when he
explored ways to solve problems within religious and ethnic minority groups in the USA (Kemmis & McTaggart 2007: 272). Even though the initiator of the term ‘action research’ cannot exactly be retraced, Lewin is often referred to as the founder of the concept (Parsons & Brown 2002: 7; Kemmis & McTaggart 2007: 272), due to the fact that his work was quickly received within the American field of education in the 1940s, where it fitted right into the stream of ‘progressive education’, an educational movement towards democratic values and social justice (Altrichter & Posch 2007: 318f).

Ever since, the interest in AR has been growing. In the field of social science it is well-established as a legitimate approach to qualitative social research (cf. Miethe 2012). However, it took several decades for the concept to find its way into the field of education. The first educational researcher mentioning the concept within the context of teacher education was Lawrence Stenhouse (1975), who promoted teacher participation in curriculum research and thereby acknowledged the teacher’s role in the conceptualisation of teaching (cf. also Nunan 1989). A few years later, the AR was systematically adapted to the context of teacher education by Carr and Kemmis (1986) and Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). Over the last 20 years the concept of AR has gained widespread recognition in teacher education all over the world, as it empowers teachers to actively take part in analysing and (re)constructing their practice. As Nunan (1990: 62) argues,

> classroom practitioners need to play a central role in curriculum development, including monitoring and evaluation. To this end, it is crucial that teachers develop a range of skills in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own professional activities.

Meanwhile, AR is not only used as a tool for professional development, but is also widely accepted as a qualitative research approach in its own right. Parsons and Brown (2002: 4) state that

> [a]ction research goes beyond simple common sense. **Teachers as action researchers** apply the rigors of **scientific inquiry** in the context of their classrooms and classroom experience in an attempt to improve teaching effectiveness. Because action research is conducted by classroom teachers, it serves as a vehicle through which teachers investigate issues of interest and then incorporate the results into their own planning and future teaching.29

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29 Emphasis (bold print) in original.
Even though I strongly agree that action research “goes beyond common sense” and is indeed a form of “scientific inquiry” (ibid.) and should therefore “be evaluated against the same standards that are applied to any other kind of research” (Nunan 1997: 366), I argue that it is – and should be – a specific type of research which can be done by practitioners in addition to their regular roles and responsibilities as teachers. When action research is being challenged with regards to its eligibility as ‘real’ research (cf. Altrichter 1990; Nunan 1997), I believe that it is crucial to emphasise that AR does not necessarily compare to other types of research in terms of scale and duration and purpose. AR mostly only tackles a specific research question in a particular context. Yet, it well qualifies as research if the quality criteria agreed upon within the field of inquiry are met, as I will further discuss in section 4.1.

Several guide books for practitioners (e.g. Burns 2010; Altrichter & Posch 2007; Parsons & Brown 2002), handbooks on action research (e.g. Noffke & Somekh 2009a), and numerous articles in journals like Educational Action Research have been published within the last decades. Also, practitioners reflecting on their experiences with engaging in action research have contributed to the growing body of literature (e.g. Somekh 2006; Banegas et al. 2013; Parsons & Brown 2002). However, the scope of academic literature is still rather limited and many studies are based on existing literature (cf. Noffke & Somekh 2009b: 2f.). The cyclic model of AR (see Figure 4), developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), is still one of the best-known and most-referred to models of action research in the field of FLTE, even though it has been criticised as being too rigid and inflexible (Burns 2010: 8). Before having a closer look at this and some alternatively suggested models, the actual definition of the term action research shall be approached by outlining some key features of AR.

Altrichter and Posch (2007: 13f.), two distinguished scholars within the field of action research in the German and Austrian academic context, state that the general goal of action research in the field of education is improving the quality of teaching and learning, whereby teachers themselves become active in solving problematic situations in their classrooms. Here, three central aspects of action research become apparent. Firstly, it is carried out by someone who is involved in the situation, i.e. the teacher herself. Taking up a dual role and being teacher and researcher at the same time is not unproblematic for several reasons, as I will further explore in section 2.3.2. Secondly, AR derives from within a practical context and does not start with a theory applied to the situation from the outside. However, this does not mean that AR
Chapter 2 – Foreign Language Teacher Education

is not related to research findings, as the examples presented further below in this section will illustrate. Thirdly, the goal of AR aims at improving a certain situation or a particular aspect of teaching. This can be done by identifying and analysing a critical incident (cf. Flanagan 1954; Chell 2004; Shapira-Lishchinsky 2011; Tripp 2011), as I will further explore in Chapter 6. The aspects mentioned above tie in with the basic definition of the term provided by Carr and Kemmis (1986: 162), in which they describe the meaning and function of AR as follows:

Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of those practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out.

Two years later, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) offer an extended and refined version of this definition, which has become very popular within the field of FLTE and is still referred to frequently by other scholars in the field:

Action research is a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of those practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out [...] (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988: 5f.)

In both definitions, the concept of self-reflection as a central aspect in AR becomes apparent (see section 2.2.2). In contrast to the first definition (cf. Kemmis & McTaggart 1986), the latter also highlights the notion of collective inquiry. Meanwhile, AR is considered to work most effectively when undertaken collaboratively, as exchanging experiences and ideas can foster learning processes (cf. Burns 2010: 7). However, working with others is not always feasible due to institutional constraints and the busy schedules of teachers (cf. Nunan 2006: 2). The notion of cooperative teacher development and its benefits for teacher education programmes have been discussed in detail in section 2.2.4 and will also become apparent in the presentation of the findings from the present case study (see Chapter 6 and 7). The classroom action research projects, that were cooperatively prepared, carried out and presented in the M.A. programme E-LINGO, demonstrably had positive effects on the professional development of several (student) teachers as manifested in various critical learning incidents (see Chapter 6). Detailed insights into
the E-LINGO programme and the role of the integrated research projects will be provided in Chapter 3.

As mentioned above, the definitions given by Carr and Kemmis (1986) and Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) are still very popular and yet do not do the complexity of the term justice. As Nunan (2006) criticises, referring to the first definition proposed by Carr and Kemmis in 1986, the formulation of the definition is not very precise and by no means comprises all aspects of action research. Hence, more recently, the definitions and the descriptions of the relevant features of action research have become more precise and distinguish different generations and types of action research.  

Burns states that “AR involves a self-reflective, critical and systematic approach to exploring [one’s] own teaching context” (Burns 2010: 2) and thereby mentions two additional features of action research, namely that it requires a critical stance towards the given situation and that it involves a systematic approach. By being ‘critical’, Burns means focusing on a problematic situation with the intention to improve it for the future. Taking a ‘systematic approach’ refers to the collection of data. AR can only provide valuable insights into a problematic situation when based on systematically collected data (cf. ibid.). Nunan (2006: 1) takes it one step further and argues that a crucial aspect of action research is to make the results available to the public in some way, be it in the form of an academic paper or just by giving a presentation to colleagues. Not only does action research become a qualitative research approach in its own right through publishing the results, but sharing and discussing the results with others also has an impact on the learning and professional development processes of those involved, as I argued in section 2.2.4 in the context of cooperative development. Furthermore, AR is transformative and may function as an instrument to trigger and monitor change. In that sense, Kemmis and McTaggart (2007: 282) explain, action research is emancipatory, as it may “help people recover, and release themselves from, the constraints of irrational, unproductive, unjust, and unsatisfying social structures that limit their self-development and self-determination.” In the context of this study, I conceptualise AR as an instrument for the (student) teachers’ individual and cooperative professional development, as I will further discuss in Chapters 6 and 7. Drawing together what educational researchers

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30 For a detailed discussion of various generations and types of action research, e.g. participatory action research, critical action research, classroom action research, action learning, action science, soft systems approaches and industrial action research, see Kemmis and McTaggart (2007).

31 Emphasis (italics) in original.
have accumulated about action, the following key features relevant for the field of FLTE can be summarised:

**Action research**
- aims at initiating understanding and/or improving teaching practices,
- is undertaken by a person directly involved in the situation (i.e. the teacher),
- deals with a question deriving from within a practical context,
- is most beneficial when undertaken collaboratively,
- involves an interplay of action and critical reflection,
- is conducted systematically, i.e. is based on collected data,
- and its results are published in some way.

Having summarised its basic characteristics, I will now turn to the actual procedure of undertaking action research. I will outline the steps involved in an action research project, provide examples and present several models which have been developed in order to illustrate the action research procedure.

### 2.3.2 Models and Procedures

Several procedures and models to describe the AR process have been suggested. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988: 10) list the following four basic steps involved in the process of doing action research:

1. Develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening.
2. Act to implement the plan.
3. Observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs.
4. Reflect on these effects as the basis for further planning, subsequent critically informed action and so on, through a succession of stages.

As the figure below shows, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) propose a cyclical model where the four-step procedure described above (planning, action, observation, reflection) are undertaken in successive cycles, leading from a revised plan of action to the next cycle of action research:
The model has been criticised as being too rigid and simple. Burns (1999: 35) argues that teachers describe action research as a complex interplay of many different aspects, including “exploring, identifying, planning, collecting information, analysing and reflecting, hypothesising and speculating, intervening, observing, reporting, writing, presenting.” Another aspect Burns finds fault with in this model is its downward movement, which evokes a rather negative image (Burns 2010: 8).

Other models of action research are not fundamentally different from the cyclical model by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988); however, they emphasise different aspects of the process. Altrichter and Posch (2007), for example, suggest a model that has a clear focus on reflection. It is also a cyclical model consisting of the steps action, information/data collection, interpretation and evaluation (practical theory), and ideas/action strategy:
The first step (action) is followed by three more steps imbedded in the stage of reflection. Information and data are collected, interpreted and evaluated. These findings lead to what Altrichter and Posch (2007) call ‘practical theory’, i.e. knowledge gained from the practical experience. The last step of the cycle is formulating new ideas and developing strategies for the next action. Altrichter and Posch (2007) agree with Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) that action research is a cyclical and long-term process. In their model of long-term research cycles (see Figure 6), the focus is on ‘practical theory’, which is being revised and reformulated during the process of action, observation and formulation of new ideas. I consider the two models suggested by Altrichter and Posch (2007) as very suitable to describe the process of AR. First of all, they emphasise the repetitive and ongoing nature of the inquiry through its circular form. Secondly, the role of reflection is highlighted as it plays a central role in the process of data collection, interpretation and evaluation of the teaching situation. Thirdly, I regard the term ‘practical theory’ as very accurate for labelling the type of knowledge that teachers gain through the engagement in AR.

32 My translation/paraphrase of the terms used in the model.
This form of experiential knowledge, which is situated in the very socio-cultural context of the teachers’ practice, is the kind of knowledge teachers need for professional development, as discussed in section 2.1.2 and 2.1.3. As mentioned above, Altrichter and Posch (2007: 17) suggest that action research is not a short-term activity, but leads to ongoing long-term research and development cycles by triggering new ‘ideas for action’ (Aktionsideen) through ‘observation’ (Beobachtung) and the genesis of ‘practical theory’ (praktische Theorie):

As simple as the action research procedure may seem looking at these models, its practical implementation is rather complex and demanding. As mentioned before, the teacher plays a dual role: being the teacher in charge on the one hand, and an observer and researcher on the other hand. To illustrate the process of an action research project, I will make use of a classroom action research project as described by Burns (2010: 11f.), as it is an excellent example of a research topic and the procedure involved:

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33 My translation.
As part of the introduction of a new syllabus, a researcher wishes to know whether the use of group work will improve students’ ability to speak English. She first consults the literature on this area of research. She then decides on the approach and methods to be used. The researcher’s hypothesis is: *Group work will increase the development of both fluency and accuracy in oral tasks.*

She assigns one group of students in a school to an experimental group, where all classroom tasks are conducted through group work for a period of two months. An equal number of students (the control group) are taught using the same tasks through a whole-class teacher-fronted approach for the same period.

In order to ensure that the students in the experimental group are not at a higher level of language learning to begin with, the researcher first administers a test. She then assigns students to the groups on the basis of the test results. At the end of the two months, each of the groups is given a further identical test in order to see whether the use of group work has resulted in higher results for the experimental group.

The results show that the students assigned to group work have performed a higher level in relation to fluency, but that their performance on some aspects of grammatical accuracy is lower than the control group. The researcher publishes the findings of the study in a journal.

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Boxed Text 1: Action Research Topic and Procedure (Burns 2010: 11)

The example above illustrates the main steps of the research process: formulating a research question, consulting the literature, collecting data, analysing the findings and making the results accessible to the public. Further examples of action research topics conducted by the participants of this study and further explanations on the AR procedure in the specific context of this study will be provided in sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2.

In sum, for action research to be successful, i.e. to lead to increased awareness and reflectivity and ideally to an improvement of teaching practice and learning outcomes, the teacher needs to be willing and committed to engage in the process. Also, certain organisational preconditions need to be met as I will further discuss in the scope of presenting the set-up of the case study (see Chapter 5). Projects do not always go as planned and it takes some practice to put the procedure described above into practice. In the following section, challenges of implementing action research, but also the question of what a successful action research procedure entails will be further discussed.
2.3.3 Challenges

“Mention the word research to many teachers and you may encounter looks of confusion or concern and even perhaps gasps of horror! For many, the concept of research conjures images of large samples, complicated designs, and sophisticated statistical and computer analyses.” (Parsons & Brown 2002: 5)

In the previous section, I have summarised the most popular concepts and models of action research and the main findings in the field of foreign language teacher education. In general, research on action research has highlighted the benefits of the concept for teacher education (cf. e.g. Nunan 1990, 1993; Burns 1999, 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Parsons & Brown 2002). As mentioned earlier, parts of the growing body of literature includes voices from practitioners (e.g. Burns 2010; Altrichter & Posch 2007) or is even published by teachers reflecting on their experiences with engaging in action research (e.g. Banegas et al. 2013). However, only very few empirical studies on action research in pre-service teacher education (e.g. Warneke 2006; Ulvik 2014) and in-service teacher education (e.g. Rochsantiningsih 2004) take into consideration issues that may arise from the implementation of action research into different teacher education contexts. Besides numerous benefits, also quite a few challenges arise from the engagement in action research, as I will further discuss in the following.

Action research in practice is rather complex and demanding. A project may not follow one of the typical structures suggested by the literature presented in section 2.3.1. As Burns (2010: 6) states: “AR is not just a simple question of following a fixed pattern to solve a straightforward technical problem in an individual classroom. The aims and contributors of AR are multiple, overlapping, and varied.” This means that the individual teacher might even have to develop her own step-by-step procedure appropriate for the specific learning context and the particular research question. Burns herself plays devil’s advocate, asking: “Why should teachers bother to do research when, after all, they are employed and paid to be teachers and not researchers?” (Burns 2010: 1). Indeed, taking up the role as teacher and researcher at the same time is very demanding as the preparation of a research project as well as the systematic evaluation of the collected data is time consuming, especially in the beginning. Moreover, implementing action research in one’s own classroom entails various ethical implications. As the teacher is engaging in research within her regular
teaching and learning context and with her own students, notions of power and hierarchy play an important role (cf. Mockler 2014: 155). Therefore, action research has to be implemented rigorously and the teacher needs to consider ethical issues (e.g. Nunan 1997; Somekh 2009b; Mockler 2014).

Hancock (2001) argues that only a small minority of teachers is willing to engage in research activities at all. According to him the reasons for this reluctance are:

- the lack of expectation that teachers should research and write about their professional experience;
- the demanding nature of teaching which leaves little time and energy for research;
- the current lack of professional confidence and marginalisation of teachers from government change agendas;
- the mismatch between many available research methodologies and teachers' professional ways of working in classrooms. (Hancock 2001: 127)

Similarly, Nunan (2006: 6) explains why teachers neglect action research in their daily practice and lists the following reasons for them being hesitant to integrate action research into their practice: lack of time, lack of expertise, lack of ongoing support, fear of being revealed as an incompetent teacher and fear of producing a public account of their research for a wider (unknown) audience.

The reasons listed by Hancock (2001) and Nunan (2006) are highly relevant in the scope of the present case study. The notions of ‘professional confidence’ and various fears and anxieties in relation to action research shall be further explored in section 6.3. Furthermore, the statements by Hancock (2001) and Nunan (2006) suggest that research and teaching are still perceived as unrelated activities by many teachers, which is also reflected in the data of this study (see section 6.3). As Elliot (1991: 47) points out, action research is mostly initiated by academics and not the teachers themselves: “One of the interesting things about the school-based action research movement is that it has been led and sustained by academic teacher educators operating from the higher education sector.” It seems the teacher-centeredness in action research exists in theory rather than in practice. I do not find fault with action research being initiated and supported by academic teacher educators, as I am convinced that while collaborations between researchers and practitioners encompass thorough preparation, and mutual support (Bevins & Price 2014), they bear great learning potential for all those involved. However, I agree with
Mockler (2014: 156), who states that the overall perception of action research needs to change:

Conceiving of practitioner inquiry as somehow separate from the ‘main game’ of teachers’ work, an ‘add on’ or additional and different task to be undertaken alongside the ‘regular’ work undertaken in the classroom, represents a missed opportunity for classroom practice to be enriched by research processes and an ‘inquiring stance’ to be developed on classroom practice.

As previously discussed, AR entails many challenges, especially for inexperienced teachers, who are usually occupied with learning how to teach and manage the classroom in the first place (Flores & Day 2006: 227). Therefore, it is not surprising that action research is perceived as an “‘add on’ or additional and different task to be undertaken alongside the ‘regular’ work” (Mockler 2014: 156). Burns (1999: 12), speaking of AR “as a realistic extension of professional practice”, does not deny the fact that action research adds on to a teacher’s practices and repertoires and may involve additional work. In order to make (student) teachers aware of the benefits of this “extension of professional practice” (ibid.), I argue, it is of utmost importance to make the purpose of AR transparent and promote the notions of agency and ownership, as I will further discuss in the scope of my data analysis. Ulvik (2014: 3) explains that even though action research should be self-initiated, (student) teachers may “need a push to get started, and could need emotional support to address the frustration they may feel” with the complexity and workload of the procedure (cf. also McKay 2009; Ado 2013).

As the introductory quote of this section and the results of my study strongly suggest, many teachers are not yet aware of the fact that action research is a practical rather than a theoretical tool. The term ‘research’ often seems to evoke feelings of aversion for (student) teachers, and yet those who have tried action research in their teaching contexts, with a “push to get started” (ibid.), report mostly positive experiences (see section 6), especially if they were able to research an area of their choice. Therefore, I argue that it is of great importance to put efforts into making (student) teachers aware of the fact that their teacher role includes a researcher role and that action research empowers them to create and own knowledge in areas relevant for their daily practice. At the same time, (student) teachers themselves are to be seen in the central position of the action research endeavour and responsible for choosing research questions and procedures tailored to their interests and needs.
Only if (student) teachers understand that “[a]ction research [...] is a mind-set as much as it is a method” (Parsons & Brown 2002: 5f.) will they be able to adopt the approach and way of thinking to their everyday practice.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the general context of my research study – the vast and complex field of foreign language teacher education. I have attempted to address the most prominent shifts and turns in the FLTE research of the last decades (see section 2.1), which are relevant for the specific context of my study. In section 2.2, I discussed recent developments in FLTE research focusing on the teacher and her role in the foreign language teaching and learning context. The term professional development as well as related key concepts, such as teacher cognition, professional identity, professional confidence, reflective practice, lifelong learning and cooperative development, were presented and discussed with reference to the case study at hand. In section 2.3, I presented an overview of the literature on action research (AR), including the most commonly referred to definitions and models of the AR procedure. Furthermore, I provided an example of a research question and respective data collection procedures in order to illustrate the processes involved in AR and emphasised the important role of agency and ownership. In the next chapter, I will turn to the specific research context of my study, the M.A. programme ‘E-LINGO – Teaching English to Young Learners’.
3 Specific Research Context:
E-LINGO – Teaching Languages to Young Learners

As illustrated in the previous chapter, the field of foreign language teacher education is vast and approaches to teacher education vary. For the purpose of this study, the M.A. programme ‘E-LINGO – Didaktik des frühes Fremdsprachenlernens’\textsuperscript{34} (E-LINGO) served as a subject of investigation. Its content is based on current research on language teaching and learning, the course is organised in a blended-learning format, and the (student) teachers engage in cooperative action research projects in order to develop reflective competence. First, some basic information on the programme’s origin and its organisational structure will be provided (see section 3.1). Afterwards, I will delineate the guiding principles of E-LINGO and comment on the important role of the tutors (see section 3.2) and briefly summarise the contents of the modules (see section 3.3). In section 3.4, I will focus on the different learning formats in E-LINGO, explaining the nature of individual and cooperative tasks and will comment on the important role of the tutors. After describing and illustrating the classroom action research projects (CARPs) in section 3.5, I will introduce the central research questions that guided and shaped this study (see section 3.6).

3.1 Structure and Organisation

E-LINGO is an M.A. degree course organised in a blended-learning format, i.e. combining online study phases and regular on-campus sessions. It was designed and is run by representatives of the \textit{Pädagogische Hochschule}\textsuperscript{35} Freiburg, the \textit{Pädagogische Hochschule} Heidelberg and the Justus Liebig University Gießen, Germany, in order to meet the increasing demands for trained foreign language teachers at pre-school and primary school level in Europe.\textsuperscript{36} Initialised, funded and administered by the \textit{Baden-Württemberg-Stiftung}\textsuperscript{37}, E-LINGO was first launched as a pilot project in 2002. Within the first years, the programme’s contents, all learning materials and the multi-media platform were developed. After this pilot phase, E-LINGO was accredited by ACQUIN (Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance

\textsuperscript{34} E-LINGO – ‘Teaching Languages to Young Learners’.
\textsuperscript{35} University of Education.
\textsuperscript{36} For a detailed description of the political and educational background underlying the genesis of E-LINGO, as well as an overview of the development phases, see Zibelius (2013), Chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{37} Formerly \textit{Landesstiftung Baden-Württemberg}, private-law foundation of the state of Baden-Württemberg, Germany.
Institute (cf. Moser & Weber 2008: 5f.). Up to now, seven cohorts of students have successfully completed the two-year programme either focusing on English or French as the target language.

The M.A. programme E-LINGO features several characteristics that make it quite unique among teacher education programmes. Firstly, as mentioned above, learning is organised in a blended-learning format. This entails different benefits and challenges, as addressed in detail in section 2.1.5. Secondly, (student) teachers enrolled in E-LINGO are required to work in fixed teams (tandems or tridems) at different stages of their studies. This cooperative element also adds certain benefits and challenges to the learning process of the (student) teachers. An overview of the different task types (individual and cooperative tasks) will be provided in section 3.4.

Thirdly, the programme implements an action research approach to teacher education, which is quite innovative in pre-service teacher education. The (student) teachers prepare, conduct and evaluate three classroom action research projects (CARPs) within the two-year programme and present their findings at the respective on-campus sessions to their fellow students and tutors. During the online study phases, various communicative means can be used to exchange ideas. Thereby, a ‘community of practice’ (Lave & Wenger 1991) is established, which is an important foundation for cooperative development as elaborated upon in section 2.2.4. Also, the presentations are evaluated by tutors and peers; the grades form part of the final degree grade. The CARPs are an integral and structuring element of the programme. Their impact on the professional development of (student) teachers will be explored in this case study. Section 3.5 is dedicated to the detailed description of the CARPs.

E-LINGO is designed in a way that allows part-time or full-time professionals to complete an M.A. degree while they continue to work. Half of the required credit points (120 ETCS) can be earned through documented evidence of prior knowledge and/or experience in the field of education (cf. Schocker-von Ditfurth 2008a: 24). The four on-campus sessions are held on Fridays and Saturdays in order not to interfere too strongly with the (student) teachers’ work schedules. The blended-learning format, as well as the comparatively low tuition fees, allow not only students from Germany, but from other countries all over the world to enrol in the programme.

38 Founded in the course of the Bologna Process; for detailed information, see: http://www.acquin.org/en/index.php (checked on 15/07/2014)
39 At the time the research was conducted, students had to pay 800 euros tuition and 108.- Euros administrative fees per semester, which is relatively low in the international comparison (cf. E-LINGO 2010).
A multi-media learning platform provides the (student) teachers with various materials, including a large database of videos of teaching practice, texts on various topics, teaching materials, study guidelines and useful links (cf. Kämmerer & Mohrkötter 2008). Also, all tasks that need to be completed for each unit including detailed task instructions can be found on the platform. In addition to that, various communication tools (e-mail, chat, forum, learning logs), as well as learning and organisational tools (calendar, glossary, FAQs, dictionary) are offered to the (student) teachers. The learning logs as one of the data sources for this study will be further discussed in sections 4.4.2 as well as 5.4.

3.2 Guiding Principles

As mentioned before, E-LINGO is unique in nature amongst teacher education programmes in Germany in view of its contents and structure. Its conception is based on recent findings in foreign language teaching and learning research. The four guiding principles of E-LINGO can be summarised as follows:

- Firstly, (student) teachers are supposed to become aware of and critically reflect on their knowledge about teaching that has evolved from their individual (language) learning biographies in order to understand their ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie 1975).

- Secondly, (student) teachers learn extending and modifying their above-mentioned experiential knowledge by relevant research findings within the field of foreign language teaching and learning.

- Thirdly, (student) teachers learn to take a theory-driven stance towards examples of teaching practice by analysing videos of good practice and assessing teaching materials.

- Fourthly, students acquire mediation competence by undertaking classroom action research projects within their own teaching context. These projects allow them to put theoretical concepts to the test and observe their own teaching (cf. Schocker-von Ditfurth 2008a: 28f.).

In sum, the structure and methodological approach of E-LINGO is based on current research in the field. Additionally, on the content level, the nine study modules

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40 For a detailed description of the learning platform, including the functions of the multi-media database and the team forum, see Zibelius (2013), section 4.2.4.
comprise the most important state-of-the-art texts and materials concerning teaching young learners, as I will briefly summarise below.41

3.3 Course Contents

During the two-year degree course, the (student) teachers work on nine modules. These modules consist of units that are again sub-divided into different tasks, comprising several steps. The organisational structure of the programme as well as the contents and the functions of the learning platform are explained to the students at their first on-campus session at the very beginning of the programme. The nine modules contain various topics as summarised below:

- **In Module 1: Classroom Action Research Project 1**, students are guided through the different steps of preparing, conducting and evaluating their first CARP (topic: ‘Texts and Types of Texts – Stories/Storytelling’). Their findings are presented and discussed at the second on-campus session.

- **Module 2: Early Foreign Language Learning: Language Acquisition and Language Teaching** is based on various texts related to the different units about issues of language teaching and learning in pre- and primary school settings. The unit topics are ‘Texts and Types of Texts – Stories/Storytelling’, ‘How children Learn Languages’, ‘Learning and Teaching Words and Structures’ and ‘Developing and Evaluating Course Materials’. Also, students learn to analyse videos of teaching examples, focusing on teacher roles, classroom dynamics and tasks in action.

- **In Module 3: Classroom Action Research Project 2**, students independently prepare, conduct and evaluate their second CARP (topic: ‘Task-Based Language Learning’). The results are presented at the third on-campus session. These presentations (as opposed to the first ones at the second on-campus session) are graded and part of the final grade.

- **Module 4: Early Foreign Language Learning: An Introduction to Teaching Approaches and Methods** is a text-based module dealing with relevant literature on methodological issues in early foreign language learning. Also, students systematically analyse videos of teaching examples, focusing on teacher roles, classroom dynamics and tasks in action. The unit topics in this module are ‘Task-Based Language Learning’, ‘Classroom Interaction – Social Interaction Patterns and Modes of Working’, ‘The Use of Media’ and ‘Integrating Skills I’.

- **Module 5: Classroom Action Research Project 3** comprises preparing, conducting and evaluating the third and last CARP (topic: ‘Short Literary Texts’). The

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41 For a detailed discussion on teaching English to young learners, see Legutke (2008); Legutke, Müller-Hartmann and Schocker-von Ditfurth (2012); Nunan (2011).
(student) teachers present their results at the fourth on-campus session. These presentations are graded and count towards the final grade.

- In Module 6: Early Foreign Language Learning: Focussing on Processes and Products, the (student) teachers focus on several texts and analyse videos of teaching examples, focusing on teacher roles, classroom dynamics and tasks in action. The unit topics in this module are ‘Intercultural Learning’, ‘Integrating Skills II – Cross-Curricular Teaching’ and ‘Assessing Young Learners of English’.

- Module 7: Study Abroad or Alternative Programme is designed to provide the (student) teachers with the opportunity to study abroad or to complete a practical training. All non-native speakers of English are required to take part in a two-week language and methodology training programme in a country of the target language. For native speakers of English, the alternative to taking part in a study abroad programme is completing a practical training in an educational institution of their choice. A report on either the study abroad programme or the practical training is part of the students’ final portfolios.

- Module 8: M.A. Thesis allows the (student) teachers to independently research an area of interest and compose a thesis. The students have three options: they can either critically analyse or develop teaching materials, or conduct and evaluate an extensive CARP, or analyse an existing project focusing on a new research question (cf. Schocker-von Ditfurth 2008b: 140f.). The thesis can be either written individually or in cooperation with the tandem partner.

- Module 9: Final Examination consists of an oral exam, in which students briefly present their thesis findings, defend their work and answer questions related to topics of their thesis and their learning portfolios.

While working on the different modules, the (student) teachers have to hand in different types of assignments on a regular basis and receive feedback on language and contents by the tutors, of which one is a native speaker of English. Through this procedure, the (student) teachers get the chance to monitor their learning progress.

Also, they are encouraged to keep a learning log, which served as a data source in this study as I will further discuss in section 4.4.2 and 5.4. The final M.A. degree grade consists of the accumulated grades for assignments and presentations, the grade for the M.A. thesis, the grade for the final portfolio and the grade for the oral exam. All in all, the workload in E-LINGO adds up to 1500 to 1800 hours and 60 ECTS\textsuperscript{42} (cf. E-LINGO 2010). Throughout their studies, the student (teachers) engage in different learning formats which I will briefly comment upon below. These learning formats become particularly relevant in the preparation and evaluation of the CARPs, which I will explore in detail in section 3.5.

\textsuperscript{42} ECTS = European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System; for further information, see European Commission (2014).
3.4 Learning Formats and Tutoring

As mentioned above, (student) teachers in E-LINGO are required to work in small teams throughout the whole study period. The individuals’ learning processes as well as the group work is constantly monitored and supported by the programme’s tutors. Depending on the size of the cohorts, work groups consist of either two or three (student) teachers (tandems or tridems). The teams are matched by the tutors before the course starts based on different criteria, e.g. prior teaching experience, language proficiency, etc. The tutors aim at creating heterogeneous groups in order to enhance peer learning, as Josephine, one of the tutors, explained in the tutor interview at the third and last on-campus session in February 2012:

In the beginning we thought of team building measures, which basically didn't work at all, so we mix teams now looking for that, we mix the different competences that they have, like native speaker and school experience, so that they can learn from each other. We believe strongly in learning from each other, sharing personal experiences [...] (Josephine, E-LINGO Tutor, February 2012)

Therefore, native speakers of English are teamed up with non-native speakers, experienced teachers with less experienced teachers, etc. Usually, these groups stay together throughout the whole programme; however, team difficulties occur at times as I will further discuss in Chapters 6 and 7. There are different types of tasks the (student) teachers have to complete – individually or as a group. Individual tasks are, for example, reflecting on the learning process or essay wiring. Group tasks are, for example, sharing personal learning experiences or preparing a presentation for the on-campus session.43 The following chart provides an overview of the different task types the (student) teachers encounter in E-LINGO:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities/tasks</th>
<th>Working formats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exploring personal experiences</td>
<td>individual task, group sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading key texts from the professional literature with individual hand-ins to tutor</td>
<td>individual task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing selected issues from the literature</td>
<td>individual task, group sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a research question</td>
<td>individual task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating a joint research question</td>
<td>group task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning a lesson (including analysis of contextual factors)</td>
<td>individual task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and documenting a lesson</td>
<td>individual task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>individual task, group sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning the presentation</td>
<td>group task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivering a presentation</td>
<td>group task/group product</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Tasks and Working Formats in E-LINGO (adapted from Legutke & Rösler 2005: 187)

43 For a detailed discussion of the concepts of task-as-workplan and task-in-process in the context of a cooperative task in E-LINGO, see Zibelius (2012).
In terms of achieving the learning goals formulated in the guiding principles (see section 3.2), the support structures offered by the programme’s tutors play a central role, as discussed in the context of online language teacher education in section 2.1.4. The tasks and responsibilities of the E-LINGO tutors are manifold and include designing tasks, giving task instructions, monitoring student hand-ins, correcting and grading assignments, giving feedback, organising and conducting the face-to-face meetings, offering technical support, guiding and supporting the teamwork and accompanying the (student) teachers’ individual learning processes (cf. Müller-Hartmann 2008: 92). In the context of E-LINGO, Müller-Hartmann (2008: 94f.) speaks of E-Tutoren/innen (e-tutors), as they are predominantly engaged in online activities. Not only do e-tutors offer administrative, pedagogical and didactic support, they also play an affective-motivational role for the learners. The latter role is of particular importance in online and blended-learning environments, in which students may experience feelings of isolation (cf. Murray 2013: 43). In this context, the important role of written feedback in E-LINGO needs to be considered. As Meier-Hafner, Mellor-Schwartze and Schielein (2008: 110) explain, the feedback in E-LINGO is individualised and personalised. It contains cognitive, metacognitive and motivational aspects, providing the (student) teachers with information on the contents of their work, giving them advice on learning strategies and reflective practices, and offering them motivational-emotional support through encouragement and reinforcement of positive aspects (cf. ibid.: 111ff.).

My observations of the on-campus sessions, as well as informal conversations with tutors and students and insights into feedback comments from the tutors, which (student) teachers included in their learning logs and portfolios, indicated that the E-LINGO tutors are involved intensively in the individual (student) teachers’ learning processes and invest a lot of time giving feedback and providing technical, pedagogic and emotional support, which is highly valued by the participants, as the data of this case study revealed (cf. Chapters 6 and 7).

Depending on the nature of the task, the (student) teachers work on them individually or cooperatively. Central to the programme are the classroom action research projects (CARPs). Preparing, conducting and evaluating the CARPs, and discussing the results with the other (student) teachers and tutors at the subsequent on-campus sessions, comprises several complex individual and group tasks, which I will look at in detail below.
3.5 Classroom Action Research Projects

The focus of this thesis is on one core component of the E-LINGO programme, i.e. the integrated CARPs. Within their team (tandem or tridem), the (student) teachers have to prepare, conduct and evaluate three different CARPs and present their findings to their fellow students and the tutors. The teams remain the same throughout the two-year programme; therefore, the semi-structured interviews were conducted in these groups, as I will further discuss in section 5.4.

Even though all (student) teachers have to do the same tasks, it is worth mentioning that the preconditions for putting the projects into practice vary for the individual (student) teachers. Some (student) teachers enrolled in E-LINGO have been teaching for years, hence they can conduct the CARP in their own classrooms with students they are familiar with. Other (student) teachers are new to the field of teaching and do not have teaching posts. Therefore, they need to find a class in order to be able to undertake their projects. Hence, the institutions, colleagues and students might be unfamiliar to them; a fact that poses additional challenges to the (student) teachers as indicated by the data analysis (cf. section 6.3). Whether or not the (student) teachers have teaching posts, the process of preparing a CARP can be very demanding, as they have to take some administrative hurdles, for example obtaining consent from the institution’s director, the regular teacher and the parents. Furthermore, (student) teachers who cannot conduct the CARP in their own classes are not familiar with the teaching and learning context (i.e. the institution, the curriculum, the learners, etc.).

As explained in section 2.3, action research follows a systematic procedure. In E-LINGO, (student) teachers are guided through the process of preparing, implementing, and evaluating the CARP according to the following seven-step procedure, outlined by Schocker-von Ditfurth (2008: 73f.):

1. Finding a research question.
2. Detecting where answers to the research question can be found and formulating hypotheses.
3. Dealing with the learning and teaching context.
4. Planning the lesson(s) and developing indicators for successful learning behavior.
5. Teaching, systematically observing classroom interaction, and collecting data.
6. Analyzing and interpreting data.
7. Cooperatively preparing the presentation of the results.
The starting point of every CARP in E-LINGO is thinking of an appropriate research question connected to the topic of the respective unit. First, every (student) teacher generates a research question by herself. Afterwards, the teams discuss the individual ideas, either face-to-face or virtually, and negotiate and agree upon the final research question. At the same time, the (student) teachers consult relevant literature on the topic of their choice and formulate hypotheses according to the research question. Once they have become familiar with their individual learning and teaching contexts (size of the learner group, learners’ age and language level, current curriculum, topic etc.) the (student) teachers develop a detailed lesson plan. With the lesson plan, the rather abstract research question becomes more concrete. At this point, the (student) teachers formulate possible indicators to prove or disprove the hypotheses based on previous experiences and/or ideas gained from the literature.

After that, the (student) teachers individually conduct their lessons. Now they have to play two roles at once: the role of the teacher and the role of a researcher. The challenges involved in taking up this dual role, especially for inexperienced teachers, have been discussed in section 2.3.3 and will be picked up in the scope of the data analysis in Chapter 6. The (student) teachers have to give instructions, organise working formats and monitor the students’ individual learning processes and at the same time observe the learners, themselves and the classroom interactions. In order to facilitate the observation and make the change of perspective possible, the lesson is videotaped (cf. e.g. Dinkelager & Herrle 2009; Mühlhausen 2012; Helmke 2012). After the lesson, the (student) teachers can look at the video data and start analysing and interpreting them by looking for the previously formulated indicators. This analysis step is done individually at first. Later, the observations are discussed and compared within the groups. The notion of being filmed or filming their own lessons played an important role for many (student) teachers of the cohort under investigation as the data analysis (see section 6.3.5) revealed. Based on the video data as well as on data obtained from other sources (e.g. questionnaires, student products, etc.), the (student) teachers draw conclusions in view of their research questions. In a last step, they present their findings to their peers and tutors at the on-campus session. The fact that the CARPs are prepared and evaluated in tandems or tridems, as well as presented in front of the whole cohort and the tutors at the respective on-campus sessions, ensures a thorough reflection of the research procedure and results and helps the (student) teachers meaningfully integrate theoretical and experiential
knowledge (cf. Minuth 2008: 81f.). In the following section, I will provide an overview of possible research topics in the framework of the E-LINGO CARPs.

3.5.1 Research Topics
The three CARPs take place at several stages of E-LINGO and focus on different topics. The topic of the first CARP is ‘Storytelling’ (semester 1, module 1). The topic of the second CARP is ‘Task-Based Language Teaching’ (semester 2, module 3) and the topic of the third CARP is ‘Short Literary Texts’ (semester 3, module 5). In the frame of these topics, the teams develop specific research questions, according to their particular interests and their research settings. For example, the (student) teachers in the cohort investigated worked on the following research questions:

- In which way can Total Physical Response in storytelling lessons support fluency in the primary classroom? (Clarissa & Elisabeth, CARP 1, Storytelling)
- How can storytelling in the classroom help overcome the fear of speaking in the foreign language? (Karen & Ursula, CARP 1, Storytelling)
- Can task-based language teaching be successfully implemented in kindergarten education? (Patricia & Simone, CARP 2, Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning)
- How can we actively involve all learners in TBLL? (Anita & Barbara, CARP 2, Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning)
- In which way can songs support both successful language learning and pronunciation respectively cultural awareness? (Rebecca & Melanie, CARP 3, Short Literary Texts)
- How can the use of songs support students’ memorizing strategies and enable them to improve their long term memory? (Nicole & Daniela, CARP 3, Short Literary Texts)

These example topics illustrate the different focal points of the individual CARPs. Even though the topic frame was prescribed in E-LINGO, the (student) teachers were allowed to choose to investigate those aspects that were relevant for their specific teaching context or of particular interest for them. The notions of choice and ownership are central to the action research approach (cf. e.g. Zeichner 2003; Nunan 2006; Burns 2010) and will be further discussed in Chapter 7. In the following, I will

44 I chose two examples per CARP in order to illustrate the different focal points of the research questions. The wording of the (student) teachers’ research questions was not modified.
present the individual steps of the CARP planning process and provide an example of a research question, hypotheses, indicators as well as research instruments.

3.5.2 CARP Example: ‘Storytelling’

In order to illustrate the general structure of the CARP preparation as well as the synthesis of research question, hypotheses and indicators, I will provide a detailed example in the following.\(^{45}\) The instructions for the first CARP are formulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester 1, Module 1, Task 3, Step 3: Deciding on a research question and developing an observation task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type: Teamwork with tutor feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please note: This step is due on [date]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Think of a research question you consider important: What would you like to observe / find out when planning and teaching a storytelling lesson? To help you with this, read our “Classroom Research Guide”, Question 1, again. Please think about Question 1 individually first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Send your suggestion for a research question to your team members and agree on one question. It is important for you to have the same question to be able to compare your experiences in different contexts of practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Now read our “Classroom Research Guide”, Question 2. It asks you to check relevant literature to help you find out more about your research question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In your team decide how you would like to observe the result of your research question. Define the indicators that tell you if your hypothesis proves to be right or wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Send your research question and your ideas for observing results to your tutor via Hand-In.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Read our “Classroom Research Guide” again. Take individual notes on Question 3.1 in your diary. You will need your notes to include your perspective on how you rate yourself in your research project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Boxed Text 2: Example Instructions for a CARP Preparation (‘Storytelling’)

As the task instructions show, the CARP preparation process is supported by the tutors and guided by materials provided. However, the (student) teachers can still choose the focus of the CARP, design their own lesson plans and decide on data collection methods. The following example from Clarissa’s and Elisabeth’s first CARP illustrates the outcome of these preparatory tasks. They developed a research question, respective hypotheses based on quotes found in the relevant literature, and indicators. Furthermore, they agreed on a number of data collection methods:

\(^{45}\) Detailed insights into an exemplary action research project that was conducted within the research cohort are provided by Benitt and Legutke (2012), focusing on task demand and task support.
Chapter 3 – E-LINGO – Teaching Languages to Young Learners

Research Question:

In which ways can Total Physical Response in storytelling lessons support fluency in the primary classroom?

Hypothesis 1:
If the learners use actions to show the new vocabulary/Phrases in story telling lessons, they will understand the vocabulary easily

Supporting Quotes
“A good way of providing highly contextualized activities can be seen in the use of Total Physical Response (TPR) where children perform physical actions in response to spoken statements. This has been found to provide high levels of comprehensible input for beginners.”
(Brewster, Joan & Ellis, Gall. (2004): The Primary English Teacher's Guide. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson)

Indicators
• The learners reproduce the appropriate action for the word/phrases
• The learners recognize the words/vocabulary in different situations

Hypothesis 2:
If the pupils are engaged physically they will engage with the story

Supporting Quotes
“TPR is a multi-sensory approach to language teaching, which aims at an intensive training of the learner's receptive capabilities.” (Brewster, Joan & Ellis, Gall. (2004): The Primary English Teacher's Guide. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson.)

Indicators
• The learners listen to the story carefully and do not get distracted
• Learners join in with the story and its follow-on tasks

Data collection methods
• Question time with children
• Interview with classroom/teacher present
• Critical discussion with teacher present

Boxed Text 3: CARP Planning Procedure (Clarissa, Portfolio, July 2012)
At the on-campus meeting in February 2011, Elisabeth and Clarissa presented the results of their research project, based on data gathered from conversations with the children, an interview with the cameraperson and a critical discussion with the teacher, who regularly teaches this class:

Boxed Text 4: CARP Results Elisabeth and Clarissa (Handout, on-campus session, February 2011)

This example illustrates how a CARP in E-LINGO is structured and how data may be gathered and analysed. As previously discussed in section 2.3, action research is a research method in its own right, yet it is mostly characterised by a relatively small or specific research question which is relevant for a particular teaching context. The (student) teachers receive constant feedback on their work from the programme’s tutors. Hence, their individual action research experience is not only supported by the
cooperation with a partner, but also guided by the tutors. Both of these aspects are very important for the majority of the study’s participants, as I will further discuss in the scope of the data analysis (see section 6.3) as well as in the presentation of the research findings (see Chapter 7).

The CARPs are the link between theory and practice in E-LINGO. My research interest, as outlined in the introduction (see Chapter 1), focuses on how cooperative action research can foster the professional development of (student) teachers at different stages in their careers and help strengthen the links between theory and practice in FLTE. In the following section, I will describe the genesis of the central research questions of this study, which emerged in the process of reviewing literature and collecting and analysing the data within the context of E-LINGO.

### 3.6 Evolving Research Questions

As outlined in section 3.1, the M.A. programme E-LINGO is rather unique among teacher education programmes. Besides its blended-learning structure and the integrated cooperative learning formats, its action research approach is innovative and appears very promising in view of overcoming the theory-practice discrepancy in teacher education discussed in Chapter 2. So far, very few studies have investigated the effects of action research on the professional development of (student) teachers (e.g. Warneke 2006; Ulvik 2014; Cabaroglu 2014). In this research context, the heterogenic nature of the group, including participants with various levels of professional experience as well as different cultural and educational backgrounds, is very promising in view of the research interest. The process of developing the concrete research questions in this context will be described below.

Arriving from a rather general research interest to a clear focus and/or specific research questions is an important part of the research journey (e.g. Schart 2001; Freeman 2009b), as I will further explore in the scope of the methodological considerations underlying this study (see Chapter 4). In reference to the journey metaphor frequently used among qualitative researchers (e.g. Schart 2001; Mackenzie & Ling 2009), I call my research questions ‘constant but changing companions’ (see section 4.3), as they have been guiding my research journey from the very beginning. In the course of this study, I reduced my initial 15 research questions down to three central questions. At the beginning of this research project, I aimed at narrowing down my research focus through an online questionnaire which was used to
anonymously query E-LINGO alumni, who had finished the programme between 2006 and 2010, about their experiences with the action research approach in E-LINGO.46 I received 33 responses to my online questionnaire, which comprised multiple-choice and open answer questions. The data gathered were used as a starting point to develop ideas for the research design of the present study. The answers given in this pre-study provided some interesting insights and helped me pave the way towards the case study at hand. The results of the pre-study will be briefly summarised below.

First of all, it became clear that classroom action research was an unknown concept to a great majority of the respondents prior to their enrolment in E-LINGO. 82 percent of the respondents of the pre-study had not heard of the concept before, including those who had completed a teacher training programme. Secondly, most of the comments indicated that the action research procedure was considered challenging and time-consuming. 79 percent fully agreed and 21 percent partly agreed to the statement “The CARPs were a lot of work”. Furthermore, 81 percent felt intimidated by the CARPs in the beginning. On the other hand, the CARPs were evaluated as very beneficial and rewarding in terms of teaching and research competencies. 64 percent fully agreed and 27 percent partly agreed to the statement “CARPs are an important instrument to develop and improve teaching competence. Also, 94 percent generally agreed to the statement “CARPs should be part of every teacher education program”.

Thirdly, it seemed as if the participants’ cultural and educational background, prior teaching experience and their particular teaching environment had a strong influence on how comfortable they felt with cooperatively engaging in action research (e.g. experienced teachers among the respondents tended to feel more comfortable with the approach than inexperienced teachers; teachers who stated to be familiar with cooperative learning formats tended to be more open to the idea of working in a small team then those teachers who were used to working on their own). One comment about the CARPs as a tool to critically evaluate one’s own teaching struck me as particularly interesting:

> You learn that it’s a strength to know your own strengths and weaknesses and being able to step back and critically evaluate your own teaching is very important. It’s not about admitting your failures but improving on your weaknesses and learning from your experiences. (Anonymous E-LINGO alumni, March 2010)

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46 The pre-study is not part of the case study.
The expressions ‘stepping back’ and ‘learning from experience’ made me curious to find out more about action research and what (student) teachers can learn from it. These first impressions and ideas gained through the pre-study led to the development of the questions guiding the research process of the case study. Given the characteristics of E-LINGO and the fact that, according to the answers given in the pre-study, the concept of action research seemed to be new to most of the (student) teachers enrolled, the first question was formulated open-ended as suggested by Freeman, asking ‘what happens’ in a specific context (Freeman 2009b: 28). At that stage, the question aimed at describing (student) teachers involved in collaborative action research in a blended-learning environment:

- **What happens when (student) teachers (of different cultural, educational and professional backgrounds) engage in action research within a blended-learning environment?**

In order to answer this question, the data collected (semi-structured group interviews, learning diaries and student portfolios) will be examined in accordance with the Documentary Method (Bohnsack 1989), which takes a step-wise, systematic approach to interpreting data, as I will further explain and illustrate in sections 4.5 and 6.3.

The second and third research question evolved in the process of data collection and reviewing literature. They relate to the concept of professional development, which has been discussed and defined for the context of this study in section 2.2. According to the pre-study as well as to existing literature on action research in FLTE (see section 2.3), action research is considered challenging on the one hand, but beneficial and rewarding on the other hand. In order to find out what this means for the context of my study, the second research question was formulated as follows:

- **Which, if any, indicators can be isolated that show that action research supports the process of professional development?**

In contrast to the first research question, this second question is more complex in nature and relates to implicit and practical knowledge (re)shaping the individual development processes. The third research question is closely related to the second question and takes into account the fact that the professional development of individual (student) teachers depends on many different aspects:
How and under what circumstances does action research foster professional development?

This question focuses on eliciting different types of professional development, as well as describing the circumstances under which action research leads to personal and/or professional development. In the context of this study, I do not aim at categorising or developing teacher types, but at describing types or rather dimensions of professional development, which are abstracted from the single cases, i.e. the individual teachers.

A look at the research questions above makes clear that the research interest focuses on practical knowledge and the experiences of the respondents with the action research approach. This type of knowledge is usually difficult to access, as it is implicit and therefore widely unconscious to the respondents (Bohsack 2010a: 103), as I will further discuss in section 4.5. For this reason, I chose to develop a qualitative-explorative research design, incorporating different data sources, such as observation, semi-structured group interviews, learning logs and portfolios, in order to be able to take a close and multi-perspective look at the (student) teachers’ learning processes. For the data analysis, I chose the Documentary Method as developed by Bohsack (1989) as it combines the analyses of single cases with an ongoing cross-case comparison. In a stepwise approach, the analysis of a text takes into consideration what is said, but also how it is said. This procedure grants outside observers access to underlying structures of knowledge, allowing for a systematic interpretation of data in three main steps and therefore ensures a transparent, comprehensible and methodologically guided analysis process (see section 4.5 and Chapter 6).

3.7 Summary

In Chapter 3, I introduced the specific research context of the case study, the M.A. programme E-LINGO. In section 3.1, I provided a brief overview of the programme’s genesis, its structure and organisational features. In section 3.2, the guiding principles of E-LINGO were outlined with reference to the literature on foreign language teacher education in order to illustrate the state-of-the art methodological approach of the programme. Section 3.3 offered information on the contents of the individual modules, which comprise various topics and tasks in different learning formats, as
specified in section 3.4, where also the central role of the tutors accompanying the programme was outlined. In section 3.5, I introduced one of the core elements of E-LINGO, the classroom action research projects (CARPs), which are prepared, conducted, evaluated and presented by the (student) teachers in E-LINGO. Examples of the research topics (section 3.5.1) as well as a detailed depiction of one CARP procedure (section 3.5.2) aimed at illustrating the tasks involved in action research. Finally, in section 3.6, I refined my research interest in the context of E-LINGO and presented my research questions for this case study. In the following Chapter 4, I will sketch out basic theoretical and methodological considerations in the context of qualitative research.
4 Methodological Framework

“Research is about creating new knowledge, whatever the disciplines – history, medicine, physics, social work. The raw material of research is evidence which then has to be made sense of.” (Gillham 2000: 2)

Research and making sense of what Gillham calls ‘evidence’ is a challenging endeavour. Often it is, metaphorically speaking, a journey with an undetermined destination. The journey metaphor is used very frequently among scholars (e.g. Schart 2001; Mackenzie & Ling 2009) especially in reference to qualitative research as it does the explorative nature of this approach justice. The way from a general research interest to precise research questions alone can be quite an adventure, not to mention interpreting and systematically interrelating large amounts of different data types, taking into consideration not only theoretical and methodological but also ethical issues. However, the findings from qualitative research can provide unique and highly valuable insights, as I will discuss in this chapter.

This study is anchored within the interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm, which aims at exploring the “subjective world of human experience” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000: 22). Therefore, qualitative data collection methods underlie this study. This chapter provides a general overview of the theoretical, methodological and ethical considerations preceding and accompanying the research project. In section 4.1 I will explore the notion of ‘quality’ in qualitative research and explain which quality criteria generally apply to it. In the subsequent section 4.2, I will outline the key characteristics of case study research, focusing on those aspects that are particularly pertinent in the context of this research project. In section 4.3, I will comment on the central role of the research questions in qualitative research and why their successive evolvement can be considered essential in the research process. In section 4.4, I will discuss the theoretical premises of the research instruments chosen for this study, before explaining the method for data analysis, the

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47 The terms paradigm, approach, and method are not used consistently in the literature on research methodology. I will use ‘paradigm’ in reference to the overall philosophical framework of research (e.g. positivism, constructivism, etc.), ‘approach’ to identify the type of inquiry (e.g. case study research), and ‘method’ in reference to specific qualitative or quantitative data collection or analysis techniques (e.g. semi-structured interviews, Documentary Method). For a concise and comprehensible overview of different research paradigms, approaches and methods, see Mackenzie and Knipe (2006). For an extensive historical overview and detailed discussion of different paradigms, approaches and methods in educational research, see Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000).
Documentary Method as developed by Bohnsack (1989), in section 4.5. A brief summary in section 4.6 will lead over to the detailed portrayal of the actual case study in Chapter 5, where the theoretical, methodological and ethical foundations outlined in this chapter will recur in the detailed depiction of the researcher role; the participants of the study; the principles of data, method and investigator triangulation (cf. Dörnyei 2007; Flick 2014a); and the process of data collection and analysis.

4.1 The Notion of ‘Quality’ in Qualitative Research

The quality of a research project will always be measured and judged against the background of a set of quality criteria. In this section, I will first describe central aspects of qualitative research which are also evident in this project and then discuss the quality criteria and standards that guided my research and safeguarded my decisions in the data collection and analysis process.

First of all, the aim of qualitative research is generating hypotheses from the data material at hand, rather than verifying pre-formulated hypotheses. Flick (2014c: 5) defines the procedure of qualitative data analysis as “the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material.” In qualitative data analysis, this is often accomplished in two main steps: an overall “rough analysis” followed by a “detailed analysis” of the material (ibid.). The data analysis steps involved in the Documentary Method applied to the data of this study will be explained in section 4.5 and applied to selected examples in section 6.3. The study at hand is a qualitative case study, a form of research that I will further explore in section 4.2. With his straightforward and very accurate description of the case study research procedure Gillham (2000: 2) not only confirms my own experiences during the research process, but pinpoint a core principle of qualitative research in general, in postulating that

you do not start out with a priori theoretical notions (whether derived from literature or not) – because until you get in there and get hold of your data, get to understand the context, you won’t know what theories (explanations) work best or make the most sense.

The ‘openness’ in view of the research process described by Flick (2014a, cf. also Lamnek 1988) is a general principle of the qualitative approach and goes back to the well-known principle of ‘Grounded Theory’, a term forged by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their seminal work The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for
Qualitative Research. Their premise originally suggested for Grounded Theory, i.e. to interpret data without attaching prior knowledge and assumptions, has been widely criticised as being impossible (cf. Kelle & Kluge 2010: 19), as every researcher undeniably has certain assumptions and expectations when designing a study, as well as prior knowledge in their field of expertise. Rather, a qualitative researcher needs to integrate empirical evidence and prior theoretical knowledge meaningfully in order to be able to develop new concepts and theories (cf. ibid.: 23). Therefore, different strands of Grounded Theory have been developed. The emergence of these different strands brought about disagreement among scholars, as to what the term Grounded Theory actually means. Miethe (2012) explains that ‘Grounded Theory’ is currently used to describe two different aspects in qualitative research today: Grounded Theory as a general approach to research versus Grounded Theory as a data analysis tool. On the one hand, the term is used to refer to a general research style or methodology. In this understanding, Grounded Theory is an overall approach to gaining knowledge, i.e. it is the “epistemological foundation for qualitative social research” (Miethe 2012: 151). Hence, Grounded Theory can be seen to lie at the core of all qualitative research.

On the other hand, the term is also referred to as a method for data analysis, which follows certain steps of coding, organising and interpreting data (cf. ibid.: 151f.). This distinction between Grounded Theory as an overall approach and Grounded Theory as an analysis tool is highly relevant in view of this case study: the research project indeed aims at generating hypotheses rather than verifying pre-existing hypotheses, and thereby was conducted in accordance with the principles of Grounded Theory – as a general approach to research. However, due to the nature of the research questions, which focus on (student) teachers’ different paths of professional development, the interpretation and evaluation of the data required an analysis tool which focuses not only on what the respondents uttered, but also on how, i.e. in which linguistic and socio-biographical framework, the utterances were made. Therefore, I chose the Documentary Method as an analysis tool, which works differently than Grounded Theory: it combines the in-depth analysis of content and linguistic form of single cases with an ongoing cross-case comparison, which finally leads to the development of a multi-dimensional typology instead of a category system. As Nohl explains, “the Documentary Method aims at not only interpreting

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48 For a concise description of the principles of ‘Grounded Theory’ and the development of different strands, see Hülst (2010) and Johnson and Christensen (2012).
49 My translation.
spoken data with regard to their functionality for one case or one (e.g. the biographical) dimension but at capturing its multidimensionality” (Nohl 2010: 200). Flick (2014c: 3f.) further explains that in Grounded Theory the data is condensed and organised, whereas selected data are expanded and looked at in detail in the Documentary Method, as I will further explain in section 4.5.

Having pinpointed the study within the interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm and within the field of qualitative research, I will now turn to the notion of ‘quality’ and discuss the criteria guiding the data collection and analysis in the course of this research project. These criteria are defined and agreed upon “by the particular research community that accepts that work as valid and useful” (Freeman 2009b: 37). In general, it can be stated that whether a quantitative, a qualitative or a mixed-method design is applied to a particular research question, the most important quality criterion of all is that the design is adequate for the respective object of research. The quality criteria or warrants, as Freeman (2009) calls them, for qualitative research may differ tremendously from those of quantitative designs, in which terms such as objectivity, validity and reliability are prevalent in the discussion about quality. What exactly defines the quality of qualitative research or “[w]hat makes research qualitative?” (Freeman 2009b: 25). In order to approach an understanding of the term qualitative research and its quality criteria or warrants, I will have a look at several aspects that are central to this research approach and explain their particular relevance for my study. Where applicable, I will refer to sometimes contrasting standards in quantitative research in order to illustrate what makes – and what does not make – research qualitative.

At the core of qualitative research lies the fact that its purpose is not measuring but rather exploring selected aspects of a field of interest. As King and Horrocks (2010: 7) explain, quantitative research is “concerned with measurement, precisely and accurately capturing aspects of the social world that are then expressed in numbers, percentages, probability values, variance ratios, etc.” whereas in qualitative research “[t]he aim is still to capture aspects of the social world but this is done in numerous ways that do not rely on numbers as the unit of analysis.” Freeman explains that a basic characteristic of qualitative research is that “it focuses on questions that examine the relationships between information about people’s actions and phenomena, and the setting in which they do these things” (Freeman 2009b: 39). Another key characteristic of qualitative research is the central role of the researcher
and her closeness to the field of interest and the participants. As Finlay (2002: 531) states,

As qualitative researchers, we understand that the researcher is a central figure who influences the collection, selection, and interpretation of data. Our behavior will always affect participants’ responses, thereby influencing the direction of findings. Meanings are seen to be negotiated between researcher and researched within a particular social context so that another researcher in a different relationship will unfold a different story. Research is thus regarded as a joint product of the participants, the researcher, and their relationship: It is co-constituted.

These short statements on qualitative research already contain some of its main features, which are also manifested in my case study. Qualitative research:

- comprises various approaches and methods,
- focuses on phenomena related to social behaviour in the broadest sense,
- takes into account the context in which this behaviour takes place, and
- acknowledges the central role of the researcher.

In order to gain insights into social behaviour and "understand the subjective world of human experience" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2003: 22), not only the research methods or instruments (see sections 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 4.4.4 and 5.3) but also the researcher and her place in the process of collecting and analysing data is of crucial importance (see sections 4.4.1 and 5.2). The study of social behaviour in context usually requires a very close look, which means that the researcher engages personally with the participants and tries to shift the observer viewpoint towards the participant viewpoint. Hence, the quantitative principle of objectivity, which postulates that researchers “remain distanced from what they study so findings depend on the nature of what was studied rather than on the personality, beliefs and values of the researcher” (Payne & Payne 2004: 1), is reversed in qualitative research. Here, it is exactly the subjectivity of the researcher and the closeness to the field which grants access to the sought information about a certain behaviour which is of interest to the study. As Dörnyei (2007: 38) states, “the term ‘insider perspective’ has a special place in the qualitative credo.” The subjective nature of the research is very important with regards to the research objective. “Generally, qualitative research does not claim to produce objectively defined knowledge, as subjective interpretation is a philosophical keystone and value-neutrality a highly questionable notion” (King & Horrocks 2010: 19). Instead, it is “concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and
feelings of individuals and thus the explicit goal of research is to explore the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (Dörnyei 2007: 38). In the context of this case study, I was able to benefit greatly from an insider perspective and the close relationship to the participants of the study, as I will expand on in section 5.2 in the reflection of my role as a researcher. However, as Silverman (2005: 211) rightly emphasises, qualitative researchers always run the risk of ‘anecdotalism’ in case they can’t “convince themselves (and their audience) that their ‘findings’ are genuinely based on critical investigation of all their data and do not depend on a few well-chosen ‘examples’.” In other words, the subjective interpretation of the data, including the methodological considerations and sampling decisions, needs to be made intersubjectively comprehensible. This can be achieved through systematic data, method and investigator triangulation (cf. Dörnyei 2007; Flick 2014a). First of all, data from various different respondents and different data sources should be incorporated in order to gain as many perspectives as possible on the case (cf. for example Rallis & Rossman 2009: 266; Gillham 2000: 2). In this study, the principle of triangulation was central to the data collection and analysis. I worked with 12 (student) teachers and two programme tutors and used different data collection methods, such as audio data from semi-structured group interviews (see section 4.4.4), as well as written data from learning logs and portfolios (see sections 4.4.2 and 4.4.3). Furthermore, cooperating with other researchers, as suggested for example by Dörnyei (2007: 62), and reflecting on the role of my own biography (cf. Schart 2001: 41), helped ensure the intersubjective comprehensibility of the data interpretation, as I will further discuss in sections 5.1 and 5.3.

Also, as Rallis and Rossman (2009: 266; cf. also Mann 2011: 15) suggest, another possibility is ‘member checking’, i.e. sharing “the descriptions and analyses of what you are learning with the participants to see if they agree, argue with or want to add to what you are writing about.” However, this procedure is not always feasible, as participants are not necessarily available at the point of data analysis, and due to ethical constraints, as I will further discuss in the context of this case study. All the quality criteria discussed above can be summarised under the umbrella term ‘trustworthiness’ (Rallis & Rossman 2009). They consider the notions of competent and ethical practice crucial for qualitative research. They define trustworthiness as “a
set of standards that demonstrates that a research study has been conducted competently and ethically” (ibid.: 264). According to them, competent practice is ensured if the research is credible (i.e. includes a detailed description of the research process, adheres to the principles of data, method and investigator triangulation, makes transparent researcher bias and limitations) and if the study was carefully designed and conducted (ibid.). In conclusion, the previously discussed quality criteria for qualitative research, which are also relevant for this research study, can be summarised as follows:

1. Adhering to the standards of research ethics
2. Making the research process transparent
3. Critically reflecting one’s own role in the research process
4. Using different data types and sources (data/method triangulation)
5. Cooperating with other researchers (investigator triangulation)
6. Applying a methodologically guided analysis procedure.

All the aspects listed contribute to the trustworthiness of the study and ensure the intersubjective comprehensibility of the research procedure and the findings. In the scope of this study, these criteria were tied in closely with the process of data collection and analysis, as will become apparent in sections 5.1–5.4, in which I reflect on my role as a researcher, introduce the participants of the study, explain the importance of data, method and investigator triangulation as well as overall ethical issues that played a role for this research project.

Having discussed the foundations of qualitative research and relevant quality criteria that guided my research process, in the following section I will focus on a particular form of inquiry: case study research. I will move toward a definition of the term ‘case’ for the context of this study and explain which challenges and benefits are encompassed by case study research in general.

4.2 Key Characteristics of Case Study Research

In the previous section, I have outlined the relevant quality criteria for qualitative research and discussed several aspects that researchers need to be particularly aware of. However, case studies are not bound to either qualitative or quantitative research (cf. Gillham 2000; Dörnyei 2007). The way they are designed, conducted, analysed
and embedded in a larger research design defines their nature of research. In this
thesis, I will present a qualitative-interpretative case study. In the following section,
the definition(s) of the term ‘case’ as well as explanations as to which characteristics
case study research entail will be addressed. As Gerring explains (2007: 17 ff.), the
term ‘case study’ is used differently in various contexts. He defines a case as “a
spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over
some period of time” (ibid.: 19). This phenomenon, or unit as Gerring calls them,
usually refers to human beings and their interactions in a certain context. Gillham
(2000: 1) lists four features of a case that help develop a clearer idea of what is meant
by a case:

- a unit of human activity embedded in the real world;
- which can only be studied or understood in context;
- which exists in the here and now;
- that merges in with its context, so that precise boundaries are difficult to draw.

These four basic characteristics of a case highlight that a case study deals with human
beings in a particular context and clearly acknowledges the importance of the context
for the study. In order to illustrate his points, Gillham (2000: 1) continues by giving
some concrete examples:

[a] case can be an individual; it can be a group – such as a family, or a class, or an office,
or a hospital ward; it can be an institution – such as a school, or a children’s home, or a
factory; it can be a large-scale community – a town, an industry, a profession.51

In this study, the overall case consists of 12 (student) teachers of different educational
and cultural backgrounds, i.e. one cohort of the M.A. programme E-LINGO. Within this
overall case, the individual (student) teachers are referred to as single cases. Detailed
insights into the case study, as well as the participants will be given in Chapter 5.

Having defined what a case is, I will now turn to the objectives of a case study.
According to Gerring (2007: 20), a “case study may be understood as the intensive
study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed
light on a larger class of cases [...].” Hence, one of the aims of case study research is
the generalisability, or rather transferability, of the results to other cases and
contexts. However, as Gerring further highlights, the representativeness of one case
for a larger class of cases is not necessarily given, as the groups studied may be very

51 Emphasis (italics) in original.
heterogeneous (ibid.). Therefore, the selection of a suitable analysis tool is of utmost importance. The Documentary Method (Bohnsack 1989) applied in this study allows for a generalisability of the findings through the formation of a multi-dimensional typology as I will further explicate in section 4.5.3.

Looking at the definitions of the terms ‘case’ and ‘case study’, one might assume that case study research is a sub-type of qualitative research. However, as indicated in the introductory paragraph of this section, a case study is not bound to qualitative research approaches. Dörnyei (2007: 152) clarifies that “case studies often include quantitative data collection instruments as well” and argues that it “is not a specific technique but rather a method of collecting and organising data.” For this study, which is exclusively qualitative in nature and does not contain quantitative approaches, the case study approach is considered a form of qualitative inquiry targeting the case described in Chapter 5.

In case study research, usually a direct relationship between the researcher and the respondents is established. In contrast to researchers in large-scale studies working with quantitative research methods, a case study researcher very often meets her respondents in person, primarily due to the limited number of participants involved and the research instruments applied, such as interviews, group discussions, observations, etc. This can be very advantageous, on the one hand, as a close and trustful relationship might help grant access to the sought information. On the other hand, research interests and personal relationships can collide, if not reflected upon carefully. Issues of research ethics and integrity need to be considered in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the results. The researcher has to reflect on her role throughout the whole research process (see sections 4.4.1 and 5.1).

In the following, the central role of the research questions for the qualitative-interpretative case study will be described. It will become clear that the traditional, strict view of ‘Grounded Theory’, which presumes that no prior knowledge or assumptions interfere when interpreting the data (cf. Glaser & Strauss 1976), does not hold true (and would not make sense) for this case.

4.3 Constant but Changing Companions: The Research Questions

Referring back to the journey metaphor used in the beginning of the chapter: if a research project is considered a journey, the research questions are the constant companions of the researcher. They may change over time, but they are central to the
progress of the endeavour as they serve as guidelines and sign posts along the way. Schart (2003: 40) and Freeman (2009b: 28) therefore rightly highlight the necessity of reflecting on the genesis of the research questions in qualitative research. In spite of the fact that in this study a rather open stance was taken towards the data analysis in the traditional sense of qualitative research (see section 4.1), a general research interest and particular research questions were formulated in order to guide the research process and ensure a systematic data collection.

The M.A. programme E-LINGO and its organising centrepiece, the classroom action research projects (CARPs), framed the specific research context of this study (see Chapter 3). The research questions, which reflect my research interest in the professional development of foreign language teachers through engaging in cooperative action research, were introduced in section 3.6. However, the questions were by no means fixed before the study was implemented; rather they developed and got refined in the process of data collection and analysis while I critically engaged with the data material and related my findings to relevant literature within my area of interest. A pre-study or a pilot study may help formulate a general research idea and preliminary research questions. In my case, as explained in section 3.6, an online questionnaire which was sent out to E-LINGO alumni served as a tool to specify my research interest. Through the data collection process, critical engagement with supervisors and fellow researchers and extensive reading, the research focus successively became clearer. At the same time, considerations of a possible analysis method played a role in the process of (re)formulating the questions. In this project, the result of a constant (re)formulation process of the research questions that were influenced by all aspects addressed above, led to the following three main questions that address my research interest on three different levels: 1. from general to specific, 2. from open to closed, and 3. from descriptive to interpretative:

- **What happens when (student) teachers (of different cultural and educational backgrounds) engage in action research within a blended-learning environment?**

- **Which, if any, indicators can be isolated that show that action research supports the process of professional development?**

- **How and under what circumstances does action research foster professional development?**
In sum, the project did not start with one or several set research questions, as Freeman (2009b: 25 ff.) predicts for the majority of qualitative projects. The questions rather evolved in the process of reviewing relevant literature, approaching the field, collecting and analysing data and relating the findings to relevant literature again. Even though the questions were narrowed down and re-formulated several times during the research project, they can be considered constant companions of the researcher, as “while the questions may shift, the inquiry generally stays firm” (Freeman 2009b: 30). Hence, they represent the topical focus of the inquiry and guide methodological considerations, as they influence the selection of research instruments and analysis methods, as I will explore in the following section.

4.4 The Research ‘Instruments’

Especially in qualitative research, where reliability and validity in their traditional (quantitative) sense cannot be achieved through optimising the research instruments, the notion of data, perspective and investigator triangulation, as I will further discuss in the context of this case study in sections 5.3 and 5.4, plays an important role. In case study research, due to the small group size and the nature of the research, it is crucial to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the findings by incorporating different sources. Therefore, the use of different data sources (data triangulation) is an important feature of case study research (cf. Gillham 2002: 2). Hence, in this study, data from observation, semi-structured group interviews, learning logs and student portfolios were considered.

Dörnyei (2007: 124) points out a very important feature of the data collection process in qualitative research: “[I]n accordance with the flexibility and emergent nature of the qualitative research project, qualitative data collection and analysis are often circular and frequently overlap.” The data collection process for this study took place at several stages over a period of two years. As Dörnyei’s statement above suggests, there was no clear-cut distinction between the data collection and the analysis. The research context itself played a major role and the instruments were designed and adjusted according to the particular circumstances involved in the data collection process. As mentioned before, E-LINGO is organized as a blended-learning course, comprising online studies and regular on-campus sessions. In order to make the project feasible and at the same time meet the quality criteria of qualitative research as discussed in section 4.1, I chose semi-structured group interviews as the
main research instrument (see section 4.4.4). Additionally, data from the students’
learning logs (see section 4.4.2), which were kept electronically on the learning
platform, as well as the (student) teachers’ final portfolios (see section 4.4.3), in
which they reflect on their learning process retrospectively, were taken into
consideration. Additionally, I took notes during the on-campus sessions in order to
document my observations and gather information from informal conversations with
the (student) teachers and the tutors. Systematically reflecting on these notes became
part of the data analysis procedure, which is a common practice in ethnographic
studies (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 2011). The notes not only helped me triangulate the
data of the study (see section 5.4), but they also facilitated the process of collecting
detailed biographic information on the participants (see section 5.3) and enhanced
the reflection on my researcher role (see section 5.2).

All data sources have in common that they document the process nature of a
teacher’s professional development, as the data were collected at different stages
during the research process. They also lend themselves for the purpose of data and
method triangulation, as they are very different in nature. Whereas the group
interviews capture spontaneous reactions and thoughts on individual and group
progress, such as the quality of cooperation, comparison of teaching styles, etc., the
learning logs and student portfolios provide insights into more personal and thought-
out reflections on individual or cooperative learning processes. In the analysis,
findings from all data sources will be complemented in order to compensate for any
shortcomings the instruments bear, as I will further discuss in the scope of this case
study (see section 5.4). In addition, the perspectives of the programme’s tutors, who
agreed to share their thoughts in an interview at the end of the research period, were
incorporated into the data analysis (see Chapter 6). Moreover, a peer investigator
helped ensure a comprehensible interpretation of the data at several stages during
the analysis process (Dörnyei 2007: 61). In the subsequent section, I will address an
important issue in qualitative research, namely the reflection on the role of the
researcher, who may be referred to as a research ‘instrument’.

4.4.1 The Researcher and the Notion of Integrity
As Patton (2002: 14) nicely puts it, whereas it is important for a quantitative
researcher to optimise the instruments, “in qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the
instrument.” However, this quote shall not be misunderstood. Of course, the
instruments in qualitative research need to be considered and prepared carefully as well, and yet Patton's statement underlines the centrality of the researcher in the qualitative research process. As Finlay (2002: 531) rightly states, in qualitative research the researcher and her relationship to the participants is of utmost importance for the research process and outcome. By claiming that “another researcher will unfold a different story” (ibid.), Finlay assigns great responsibility to the researcher and her reflectivity. Therefore, the researcher is rightly considered the main research ‘instrument’ (e.g. Patton 2002; Merriam 2002; Schart 2003).

Rallis and Rossman (2009: 266f.), however, argue “that the researcher is not an instrument in the experimental sense but rather a participant in the process of creating qualitative data.” This way of looking at the researcher and her role in the research process is applicable in qualitative-interpretative case study research as it humanises the researcher and her perspective. Yet the term ‘participant’ can be misleading: even though the researcher might be close to the object or rather the subjects of investigation and may even be granted an ‘insider perspective (e.g. Dörnyei 2007), she remains in an outsider position to a certain extent. The direct relationship between the researcher and the respondents, which is usually established in case study research (see section 4.2), requires a careful reflection on the researcher role in order to meet the standards of competent and ethical research, as well as to ensure the intersubjective comprehensibility and trustworthiness of the study, as I will further discuss the reflection on my own role in section 5.1

As mentioned before, in contrast to many researchers in large-scale studies working with quantitative research methods, a case study researcher very often meets her respondents in person, primarily due to the limited number of participants involved and the research instruments applied, such as interviews, group discussions, observations, etc. This has great potential on the one hand as a trustful relationship might grant access to valuable information. On the other hand, balancing research interests and personal relationships can be a tightrope act. Several aspects play a role in the research process, such as how the researcher is perceived by the participants and, maybe even more importantly, how the researcher perceives herself.

As Schart (2001: 41) explicates, the qualitative research process is always influenced by the researcher’s biography. Therefore, reflection on one’s own role in the research process and one’s own subjectivity is essential. Not only the researcher but also the interplay with the chosen research instruments needs to be taken into
account. Therefore, making the research process transparent as well as “identifying potential researcher bias” (Dörnyei 2007: 60) is important with regards to research integrity and ethical issues. In order to transfer subjectivity into intersubjective comprehensibility, other scholars may be involved in the research process. Exchanging ideas and discussing different opinions in view of the data analysis in interpretation groups can be very supportive in the process of making sense of the data and finding evidence, as referred to in the introductory quote above. This form of investigator triangulation (Dörnyei 2007: 61) makes results tenable and credible for others and will be further discussed in section 5.4.

In sum, it is important for qualitative researchers to come to terms with themselves being a vital part of the research design, i.e. of being the central research ‘instrument’ or even ‘participant’ in the study (Rallis & Rossman 2009: 267). The questions asked, the methodological design of the study, as well as the data analysis approach chosen, reflect knowledge and skills of the researcher. In the sense of the quality criteria of qualitative research (see section 4.1), it is the researcher’s responsibility to prove integrity by making this process transparent and reflect on her evolving role. In the following, I will have a closer look at the theoretical foundations of the three data sources: learning logs (see section 4.4.2), student portfolios (see section 4.4.3) and interviews (see section 4.4.3). All data sources bear a number of strengths and weaknesses and the following explanations with reference to my own research will shed light on how to triangulate the three sources meaningfully in order to receive valuable evidence.

4.4.2 Learning Logs
Current research in foreign language teacher education clearly indicates that keeping a learning log\textsuperscript{52} has a lot of potential for personal and professional development – for learners, teachers and researchers. As Burton (2009: 302) points out, keeping a learning log is a central aspect of reflective practice. Particularly in pre-service teacher education, the use of diaries or learning logs can be an effective tool to reflect learning processes (e.g. Bailey 1990; Porter et al. 1990; Bailey, Curtis & Nunan 1998; Harbon & Browett 2006). The use of learning logs as reflective narratives has become an important instrument in teacher development research (Johnson & Golombek

\textsuperscript{52} In the literature, the terms learning log, diary and journal are being used. In the context of this study, I will use the term learning log, except when referring to other authors.
2002; Golombek & Johnson 2004; Harbon & Moloney 2013; Clandinin 2013) as they “allow readers to access lived practice and pedagogy, both in school languages education and teacher professional learning context” (Harbon & Moloney 2013: 3). In the field of research, it can play different roles. First, it can be a tool for the researcher to document the research process systematically and note down critical learning incidents (cf. Dörnyei 2007: 76) in order to become aware and reflect on her role in the research process. Secondly, learning processes documented in the learning logs can also be a source or the object of investigation for research, as is the case in this research project. Studying one’s own or others’ personal accounts has recently come more to the fore in qualitative research, for example in the form of autobiographic or autoethnographic studies (cf. Pavlenko 2007; Nunan & Choi 2010; Choi 2013) as they provide valuable insights into areas of interest that are very difficult to access otherwise. Furthermore, they have “aesthetic value” (Pavlenko 2007: 180) and “are transformative, as they shift the power relationship between researchers and participants, and between teachers and students, making the object of the inquiry into the subject and granting the subject both agency and voice” (ibid.).

The study of learning logs features a lot of strengths, but also has some weaknesses, which will be briefly outlined below with a particular focus on the learning logs used in this study. As Dörnyei (2007: 156) states, the term ‘diary studies’ usually implies that the diaries are produced solely for research purposes. This was not the case in this study. Keeping a learning log was a mandatory part of E-LINGO with the objective for the (student) teachers to develop a reflective stance towards their own learning process and teaching practice (cf. Bäcker 2008a). However, the participants gave consent for their learning logs also to be used for research and were aware of the fact that the diaries would be read by third parties, e.g. the programme’s tutors and me, the researcher. For this reason, the learning logs cannot exactly be considered a research instrument as they were not set-up and structured according to that purpose. As their primary purpose is being a reflective tool for (student) teachers, the learning logs will be considered a data source instead of a research instrument in this context.

The strength of diary studies lies in the fact that the researcher is granted insights into areas that are usually difficult to access to (Dörnyei 2007: 157) and might gain background information relevant for the study. Furthermore, Dörnyei (2007: 157) states that “[d]iary data is by definition an outsider account” and
therefore integrates another perspective than that of the researcher, which is relevant in view of the notion of triangulation. Another advantage of the study of learning logs is that they may reflect learning or development processes, as the entries are usually made at different points in time. The learning logs analysed for this study were kept over a period of two years and are, in this regard, very suitable to address the research questions aiming at the professional development of the (student) teachers during their involvement with action research in E-LINGO (see Chapters 6 and 7).

In spite of the advantages summarised above, working with learning logs has a number of disadvantages, too. As Dörnyei (2007: 158) rightly suggests, one of the weaknesses of diary studies is that a participant “needs to be not only literate but actually comfortable at writing diary entries.” The first aspect, literacy, was not an issue in E-LINGO as all participants were well-educated and had a high proficiency level of English, but the notion of comfort shall be briefly commented upon. The (student) teachers were aware of the fact that not only their team partners, but also the programme’s tutors and I, the researcher, had access to the learning logs. It can hence be assumed that contents and writing style of the diaries were filtered or adapted accordingly, as I will further discuss in section 5.4.

Another negative aspect Dörnyei (2007: 156f.) refers to is the inconsistency of diary entries. He finds it problematic that “the length and depth of diary entries show considerable variation” and that “there is a decline in the diary entries in stressful events, even though from the researcher’s perspective these events may be of particular interest” (ibid.). This was confirmed in the study at hand. In E-LINGO, keeping a learning log was a part of the course requirements, but neither the frequency nor the length of the entries was prescribed. Furthermore, learning log writing was not enforced when (student) teachers chose not to use the tool at all or used it only infrequently. As Bailey rightly points out, the literature on diary studies suggests that forcing students to write a diary is pointless, as “[s]ome people are simply not comfortable with self-examination and introspection, and the issues that emerge can be painfully revealing” (Bailey 1990: 225). This might have been a reason for the participants to use the tool in various ways, with differing quantity and quality of entries. Additionally, technical problems occurred while using the online diaries on the E-LINGO learning platform, which led to frustration and negligence of diary use. The inconsistency of diary use will be illustrated with data examples in section 5.4 in the case study description.
To conclude, learning logs can be of great use in qualitative research, if certain preconditions are met. However, the learning logs examined within the context of this study were used as supplementary sources only, as their accessibility for the tutors, who are responsible for the assessment of the (student) teachers, restrict the trustworthiness of this data source. Yet, they were taken into consideration in order to support or defy the findings from the interview study and offer a different perspective on the findings. Having discussed the advantages and disadvantages of learning logs as a data source, in the next section the value of portfolios will be explored on the basis of relevant literature.

4.4.3 Portfolios

In addition to the semi-structured interviews and the learning logs, another data source of this case study was the (student) teachers’ portfolios. However, they also function as a supplementary data source only, as many shortcomings mentioned in the context of the learning logs also hold true for the portfolios in the scope of this study, as I will further explain in section 5.4. In this section, I will briefly discuss the growing role of portfolio work in FLTE and explain to what extent they can be used as a data source in general.

Working with portfolios has become very popular in the field of FLTE – in pre-service as well as in in-service teacher education. The composition and range of use for portfolios differs from context to context; yet, portfolios are in general characterised by common features. Richard and Farrell (2005: 98) define a portfolio as

a collection of documents and other items that provides information about different aspects of a teacher’s work. It serves to describe and document the teacher’s performance, to facilitate professional development, and to provide a basis for reflection and review.

Not only in in-service teacher education, but also in pre-service teacher education, portfolios have become a commonly used reflective tool. Within the EU, for example, the EPOSTL (European Portfolio of Student Teachers’ Learning) is used as a reflective tool in pre-service teacher education (cf. Newby 2007, 2012; Kupetz & Ruhm 2012; Becker, Ruhm & Stöver-Blahak 2012). Richards and Farrell (2005: 108) explain the purpose of a portfolio and the procedure of its compilation as follows:
Compiling a teaching portfolio provides a teacher with an opportunity to document her strengths, skills, and accomplishments as a teacher [...] Assembling a portfolio is best viewed as an ongoing, long-term endeavour, with new features being added as needed and when they become available. Setting realistic goals and narrowing the contents of the portfolio are important, especially at the outset. The process of assembling the items to include in a portfolio can trigger self-appraisal, facilitate review, and help set goals for further development.

In the context of this study, the portfolios have some potential as a data source in contrast to the semi-structured group interviews. They function as a comprehensive documentation and reflection tool on the learning process over the whole period of studies. This makes the portfolios a rather interesting source for personal and background information, which are usually not mentioned within the narrow time frame of the interviews (see sections 4.4.4 and 5.5). Furthermore, they are systematically structured and give an informed overview of relevant learning incidents of the past two years. The portfolios are also connected to the learning logs, as it was a part of the (student) teachers’ task to systematically integrate selected learning log entries into their portfolios in order to reflect on situations that feature particularly interesting learning incidents. In this sense, the portfolios are a tool for meta-reflection of the learning incidents captured in the learning logs. Especially for non-native speakers of English, the written form of language production in the portfolios, as well as in the learning logs, might have given them greater opportunities to express themselves and reflect more thoroughly on their learning processes, as the data analysis indicated (see Chapter 6).

Despite the potential of portfolio work in general and its positive reputation as a reflective tool, the disadvantages as a data source for the present study must not be neglected, as the portfolios were read and graded by the programme’s tutors. In the following, I will introduce interviews as a data source in qualitative research and will discuss advantages and disadvantages they bear in view of my research questions.

4.4.4 Interviews

“The most obvious challenge of the interview is that it is easy to do but hard to do well.” (Richards 2009: 195)

In contrast to the previously discussed data sources, interviews bear a number of advantages that qualify them as the main data source for this study. As Richards (2009: 187) states, “properly conducted, they can provide insights into people’s
experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and motivations at a depth that is not possible with questionnaires.” In view of the research questions and considering the weaknesses of the other data sources, learning logs and portfolios, the interview lends itself as a suitable research instrument for several reasons. As Dörnyei (cf. 2007: 134) explains, interviews frequently occur in our everyday life and people are familiar with hearing, watching or even conducting different kinds of interviews. Hence, using interviews as a research instrument can be advantageous, as people are familiar with this type of inquiry. “It is exactly because interviewing is a known communication form that the method works so well as a versatile research instrument” (ibid.). Furthermore, interviews allow a quick access to the field of interest and usually produce large amounts of data material (cf. Friebertshäuser 2010: 371). However, an interview study has limits and needs to be well-planned and designed thoroughly (ibid.); therefore, the general principles of interviews studies will be outlined below.

The introductory remarks on the interview being a familiar communication tool are not intended to imply interviews are a simple and easy research method. Collecting and analysing interview data is a challenging process. As Richards (2009: 183) points out, conducting an interview is not simply a matter of using questions and answers in order to elicit information that we then go on to analyze, but a data collection method that offers different ways of exploring people’s experiences and views.

Richards (2009: 184) as well as Dörnyei (2007: 134ff.) distinguish between three main types of interviews: structured interview, unstructured or open interview, and semi-structured interview. In contrast to that, other scholars, for example Friebertshäuser (2010), suggest a more detailed typology of interviews, including the terms semi-structured, focussed, problem-centred, dilemma, and narrative interview. These specifically defined types aim at meeting the particular purposes of different research questions and methods of data analysis. In general, many different typologies can be found in the literature, and yet the three main types suggested by Richards (2009) and Dörnyei (2007) are the most commonly used interview categories.

In the following, the focus will be on semi-structured interviews as this type of interview forms the basis of the study as the primary data source. Moreover, the interviews were all conducted in pairs, a fact that influenced the choice of the analysis
method as I will further explain in Chapter 5. According to Dörnyei (2007: 136), semi-structured interviews are very common in the field of applied linguistics, as they are a ‘compromise’ between structured and open interviews: “Although there is a set of pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts, the format is open-ended and the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner.” This interview type is particularly suitable for the study at hand for several reasons. First of all, the research questions aim at identifying indicators for professional development through action research. These can be found best in detailed narratives, i.e. in the respondents’ detailed elaborations on their personal experiences (cf. Nohl 2010: 205). However, unstructured or narrative interviews usually take a long time, which the narrow timeframe calculated for the interviews in this study did not allow for. The only option to conduct the interviews was within an approximately 15-minute timeframe, right after the teams had finished the CARP presentation. Hence, semi-structured interviews were the only interview form suitable in view of both premises: generating narratives and being able to conduct the interview within a short time.

With regards to the overall organisation of an interview, Richards (2009: 186 ff.) suggests a four-step procedure for preparing, conducting and analysing interviews:

1. Preparing for an interview
2. Setting up the interview
3. Getting the interaction right
4. After the interview.

In the first step, it is important to become aware of the overall goal of the interview, which can be explored through reading and discussions with peer researchers (cf. Richards 2009: 187f.). Afterwards, the guiding questions, e.g. a suitable warm-up question, event questions (aiming at finding out about “chronologies, relationships, reactions,” etc., and perspective questions (aiming at producing “explanation and interpretation”) have to be worked out and ethical issues need to be addressed (ibid.). The second step, setting up the interview, is described as the organisational part of the interview. Richards suggest to plan who will be interviewed when, where, how long and under what conditions (2009: 189). In my study, all these parameters were pre-defined in my study, as I will further explain in section 5.5. The third step,
getting the interaction right or conducting the interview, is the most challenging part of the interview. The researcher needs to “maintain control while allowing the interview to develop as naturally as possible” (Richards 2009: 189). Establishing rapport, creating a positive atmosphere, listening carefully, not asking leading questions, etc. are only a few things the interviewer has to keep in mind. As Friebertshäuser (2010: 377) rightly states, it is impossible for an interview to go exactly according to the plan and making mistakes or encountering disruptions or difficulties is hard to avoid. Therefore, she suggests analysing interview flaws and considering them part of the process of gathering information. The fourth step, after the interview, is “an initial organization and data analysis” (Richards 2009: 191) by noting down the details and the main points of the interview. After all, it takes a lot of practice as well as critical self-awareness on the side of the researcher to be able to do interviews well, as the introductory quote implied.

As mentioned before, if an interview is prepared and conducted properly, it has a lot of potential. In the following, I would like to briefly address some advantages of interviews that also had a positive effect on the interviews conducted in the scope of this study. One aspect that plays an important role is the relationship between the researcher and the respondents, as I will further discuss in section 5.2. Notions of gender, age, social status, and power hierarchies have an impact on the interview and the atmosphere between the participants and have to be considered in the process of data analysis (cf. Mann 2011). Furthermore, the interviews were all conducted within the teams which cooperatively prepared and evaluated the classroom action research projects (CARPs) (see section 3.5); therefore, it can be assumed that the interviewees influenced each other in their responses. Therefore the selection of the analysis method, as I will explain in section 4.5, is crucial for the methodologically guided interpretation.

In sum, the semi-structured interviews in the present study were chosen as the main research instrument as they fulfil best the premises of good research as defined in section 4.1. Yet, in order to triangulate the findings with other sources and to gain additional insight into the (student) teachers’ professional development processes, the data from the learning logs and student portfolios were consulted to supplement the findings gained from the interpretation of the interviews. All three data sources have in common that they are all process-oriented and capable of depicting the (student) teachers’ professional development over the period of time of
two years. All research instruments have flaws and shortcomings, which have been discussed in the previous section. However, through meaningful triangulation of data and methods, the sources can complement each other and lead to comprehensible results, as the following sections will show.

4.5 The Documentary Method as a Tool for Data Analysis

“[Q]ualitative data tends to be bulky and messy.” (Dörnyei 2007: 125).

In qualitative research, usually large amounts of “unfocused and heterogeneous” (ibid.) data sets need to be explored and systematically interrelated. There are various possibilities of how to approach and analyse qualitative data systematically, e.g. using different versions of Grounded Theory (e.g. Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1990), Qualitative Content Analysis (e.g. Mayring 1983), Narrative Analysis (e.g. Schütze 1977), hermeneutic approaches (e.g. Oevermann 2000), etc. As Flick (2014c: 11) explains, there are two major approaches to qualitative data analysis. Whereas the first approach aims at reducing large data amounts or their complexity by organising (coding) the data and forming categories (e.g. Qualitative Content Analysis or Grounded Theory), the other approach expands the data sets by producing interpretative accounts of the original data (e.g. Documentary Method or hermeneutic approaches). According to Flick, the approaches are not mutually exclusive and have the same objective, as

any sort of interpretation at some point turns to identifying some kind of structure – like types or patterns – for organizing the diversity in the material in a clear and orienting way. Thus, we often find combinations of both strategies when it comes to analysing specific types of data. (Flick 2014c: 11)

The choice of the method for data analysis and interpretation depends on various factors, such as the emphasis of the research questions, the type of data gathered and the study’s objectives. The ‘Documentary Method’ (Bohnsack 1989) lends itself to be applied to the data sets described in the sections above, because the aim of the method is the formation of a multi-dimensional typology (in this case a multi-dimensional model of professional development), abstracted from the single case and therefore depicting the complexity of the whole case. The development of types follows a methodologically guided procedure (see section 4.5.3), in which not only a detailed single case analysis, i.e. the individual respondent’s utterances in their
particular framework of reference, but also an ongoing cross-case comparative analysis is central to the data analysis procedure (cf. Bohnsack 2007, 2010a; Nohl 2006, 2010).

The method as developed by Bohnsack (1989) has its origin in the works of Bourdieu (1974, 1981), Mannheim (1952, 1964), and Garfinkel (1961, 1984 [1967]), who all argue that through the analysis of social practices, knowledge about the underlying patterns of our behaviour can evolve (cf. Bohnsack 2007: 321f.). This ‘praxeology of knowledge’ (Bohnssack 2007: 322) is the central element of the Documentary Method, which aims at finding out in which socio-cultural framework, the so-called orientation framework, a topic is dealt with in an utterance. The Documentary Method was first developed for group discussions, which are closely related to the main data source in this study, namely group interviews in which two (student) teachers engage in relating to individual or shared topics and orientation frameworks. Moreover, the research questions aim at identifying implicit/practical knowledge and focus on personal and professional development. As Evers (2009) points out, the Documentary Method is “especially suitable for connecting cognitive and emotional development with biographical contexts as well as for capturing processes and effects of intercultural experiences”, as the utterances are interpreted in their particular orientation framework and in a specific context.

The aim of the Documentary Method is reconstructing a person’s practical knowledge. As opposed to theoretical or explicit knowledge, which is related to a person’s cognition, practical or implicit knowledge is related to a person’s experience and guides their actions (cf. Bohnsack 2007: 319). The Hungarian chemist and philosopher Michael Polanyi (1966) introduced the term ‘tacit knowledge’ to describe this implicit, almost intuitive, type of knowledge, whereas Mannheim (1964) coined the term ‘atheoretical knowledge’. In the field of FLTE, the terms ‘personal practical knowledge’ (Golombek 2009), and ‘experiential knowledge’ (Kolb 1984; Kolb & Kolb 2005; Appel 2000, 2001; Schocker-von Ditfurth 2001) are frequently being used to describe this atheroretical teacher knowledge that evolves through experience and over time (cf. also section 2.1.2 and 2.1.3). This type of knowledge is highly interesting when examining a (student) teacher’s personal development, as it shapes the way teachers “make sense of their classrooms” (Golombek 2009: 15). A language teacher’s knowledge is strongly influenced by the socio-cultural setting of their work (Freeman & Johnson 1998; Johnson 2006, 2009). Therefore, gaining and becoming aware of
(personal) practical knowledge plays a crucial role in a teacher’s professional development, as discussed in section 2.2. However, without systematic reflection and interpretation, this knowledge remains locked (cf. Bohnsack 2007: 321). The Documentary Method provides an opportunity to unlock this knowledge through analysing the respondents’ utterances in three main steps: formulating interpretation, reflecting interpretation and type formation. Central to all steps is an ongoing comparative analysis of the respondents’ utterances, which will lead to the systematic differentiation of types – in this case study, types or rather dimensions of professional development (see Chapter 7). In doing so, the method employs the basic principles of linguistic discourse analysis, assuming that language can only be interpreted in its socio-cultural context, as Halliday (1978: 150) precisely formulates:

What is revealed in a single sentence, or other unit of lexicogrammatical structure, is its origin in the functional organization of the semantic system. Each of the semantic components, ideational (experiential and logical), interpersonal and textual, has contributed to its makeup. A piece of wording – sentence, clause, phrase or group – is the product of numerous micro-acts of semantic choice. The semantic system has its own further context in the total socio-semiotic cycle, the series of networks that extend from the social system (the culture as a semiotic construct), through the linguistic system on the one hand and the social context on the other, down to the wording and the sounds and written symbols, which are the ultimate linguistic manifestation of the text.

Before presenting the detailed case study design in Chapter 5 and exploring selected data examples in Chapter 6, in the subsequent sections I will outline the individual analysis steps of the Documentary Method: formulating interpretation (section 4.5.1), reflecting interpretation (section 4.5.2) and type formation (section 4.5.3).

4.5.1 Formulating Interpretation – What is Said?

The first step of the Documentary Method is the reformulation of the texts that are to be interpreted. In this case study, the data base comprised semi-structured interviews as the main data source and learning logs and portfolios as secondary data sources (see sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3); however, the Documentary Method can also be applied to the analysis of pictures, photographs and videos.53 The aim of this first step is disclosing the thematic structure, i.e. laying open the topical scaffold of the text to be analysed (Bohnsack 2009: 325; Nohl 2010: 204). Interview data that are only

53 For a detailed description of the analysis steps involved in the documentary interpretation of pictures and video, see Bohnsack (2009, 2010b, 2011).
available in the form of audio files at this stage have to be reviewed, and selected passages have to be transcribed. In contrast to other qualitative methods for data analysis, such as Grounded Theory (e.g. Glaser & Strauss 1967) and Qualitative Content Analysis (e.g. Mayring 1983), where it is common practice to transcribe the whole interview before starting to interpret the data material, the Documentary Method combines the two steps within the formulating interpretation (cf. Nohl 2006: 46). First of all, the researcher listens to the audio file and notes down the addressed topics in the order of their appearance. The results of this step are illustrated in Tables 6, 7 and 8 in section 6.2. After that, relevant passages are selected and transcribed. According to Nohl (ibid.), the researcher might take into consideration topics meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- topics matching the prior formulated research question
- topics that are discussed in detail, possibly with metaphoric language use indicating their particular importance for the interviewee(s)
- topics that are addressed by different interviewees in different contexts, lending themselves to the comparative analysis.

Since my research questions of this study aimed at finding indicators for professional development, passages in which the (student) teachers describe critical learning incidents (CLIs) were chosen as focal points (see section 6). Furthermore, I focused on (student) teachers who addressed different topics than others or the same topic in a different manner. After having determined the topics of interest, the researcher starts transcribing the respective passages (in the case of an interview) and reformulates the relevant sections. This reformulation, which is an interpretation of the data already, as “the topical content of the interpretation is not self-evident but requires interpretation” (Nohl 2010: 204), serves the purpose of distancing the researcher from the text. A brief example from the first interview will help illustrate this analysis step. One of the guiding questions in the interview at the end of the first semester was directed at the participants’ experiences with the first CARP (classroom action research project) they had prepared, conducted and evaluated in a team. When asked to comment on the CARP and point out what went well and what went wrong, Daniela (D) and Nicole (N) answered as follows:

54 The detailed transcription guidelines can be found in Appendix F.
D: Well, I think it (.) our results worked really well. So, it worked as planned maybe BETTER than planned, I mean, I was shocked (laughs). When I even started the lesson with the introductory things, like we're getting the colours, they just/

N: Yeah, I liked the point of choosing really a small question and looking into it really close on the base of the literature so that was more like really research than I do normally in my reflection on lessons.

As explained above, the step of the formulating interpretation aims at identifying the topics addressed and reformulating what is said, in order to distance oneself from the interview data. The formulating interpretations for the two short utterances of Daniela (D1f) and Nicole (N1f) are the following:

Df: The CARP results were good and the lesson went well, which is a surprise (“I was shocked”). The whole CARP was a success and went even better than planned from the very beginning.

Nf: It was good to focus on a "small question" in detail and analyse it systematically ("real research"), which is different than the usual reflection on teaching.

The next step, the reflective interpretation, takes the analysis onto the interpretative level. I will pick up the example above in the next section to exemplify the procedure.

In sum, the aim of the formulating interpretation is to state what is said in a certain text. The truth or accuracy of what is being said is not questioned, as it is the aim of the Documentary Method to discover implicit or practical knowledge in a particular context, instead of testing explicit knowledge. The next step, the reflecting interpretation, focuses on how things are said and what they actually mean, i.e. to uncover the implicit knowledge “behind” the text, as I will explain below.

4.5.2 Reflecting Interpretation – How is it Said?

In this step, the data interpretation is taken a step further by defining so-called orientation frameworks, e.g. the way things are addressed. Therefore, the text needs to be analysed concerning different text genres. In the Documentary Method, three different text types are distinguished: narratives, descriptions, and argumentations. These narrative genres are based on Schütze’s (1977: 148) distinction of text types in narrative interviews. As Nohl (2010: 205) explains:

In a narrative, the informant gives an account of actions and events that have a beginning and an end as well as a chronological sequence. Descriptions are generally characterised by the fact that the narrator gives an account of recurring courses of action or established facts (e.g. of a picture or machine). Argumentations are
summaries of the motives, reasons and conditions behind one’s own or someone else’s actions based on common-sense theory.

According to Nohl (2010: 206), the most interesting text types in view of implicit or practical knowledge are narratives and descriptions. In contrast to argumentations, which take place on a meta-level and are usually closely related to the interview situation, narratives and descriptions relate to the respondents’ experiences (ibid.). In qualitative research on professional development, working with narratives has become increasingly prominent recently (e.g. Johnson & Golombek 2002; Golombek & Johnson 2004; Riemann 2010; Harbon & Moloney 2013; Clandinin 2013). As Scarino (2013: viii) accurately puts it, the reason for that may lie in the prosaicness of narratives for everyday life:

Narrative is of such interest because of the recognition that our understanding of the world, the actions we take, the decisions we make, the conclusions we reach and the judgements we make, are constructed and mediated through the narratives we share with others. As such, it can be understood as perhaps the most common of human activities.

Therefore, the interview questions were formulated openly in order to generate narratives that would allow an interpretation of how the (student) teachers construct and mediate their experiences with action research. However, as the reflective interpretations of the interviews (see Chapter 6) show, it is not always possible to distinguish between the different narrative forms, especially in the rather short interviews of this study, in which the respondents were constantly reminded of the interview situation by the next guiding question.

After the formal interpretation and differentiation of text genres, the semantic interpretation through comparative analysis follows. Here, the aforementioned orientation frameworks become relevant. The manner in which a person responds to a topic indicates the orientation framework of their individual experience (Nohl 2006: 53). Here, I would like to pick up the example introduced in the previous section. Daniela and Nicole responded as follows, when asked about their experiences with the first CARP:

D: Well, I think it (.) our results worked really well. So, it worked as planned maybe BETTER than planned, I mean, I was shocked (laughs) When I even started the lesson with the introductory things, like we’re getting the colours, they just /
N: Yeah, I liked the point of choosing really a small question and looking into it really close on the base of the literature so that was more like really research than I do normally in my reflection on lessons.

The detailed formulating interpretation of Daniela’s (D1f) and Nicole’s (N1f) utterances, highlight the topics addressed:

D1f: The CARP results were good and the lesson went well, which is a surprise (“I was shocked”). The whole CARP was a success and went even better than planned from the very beginning.

N1f: It was good to focus on a “small question” in detail and analyse it systematically (“real research”), which is different than the usual reflection on teaching.

The reflective interpretations of Daniela’s (D1r) and Nicole’s (N1r) utterances are detailed interpretations and analyses of their utterances in context:

D1r: Daniela seems to be satisfied with the outcome of her CARP, because she mentions good results. She is in a good mood during the interview and laughs quite a lot. However, she does not specify what exactly was good about the results, i.e. she did not give a concrete example. This could have different reasons. Daniela might have been tired and exhausted after her oral presentation, unwilling or incapable of specifying her answer. Another explanation might be that she had not reflected on the outcome of her CARP in detail and therefore only gives a general answer to the question. Daniela is apparently quite surprised about the fact that the CARP went well. This reaction could be an indicator for her lack of confidence in her teaching, which again might stem from her lack of teaching experience.

N1r: Nicole seems to have a positive attitude towards the CARP concept. However, she does not say anything about the content or the outcome of the CARP. She addresses conceptual issues and compares engaging in a research question with her regular reflection on her teaching practice. The utterance indicates that she has gained some teaching experience and reflects on her own practice on a regular basis. In contrast to Daniela, she gives a concrete example of what she likes about the CARPs, which may indicate a deeper level of reflection.55

At this point in the analysis process, cooperating with a peer investigator (cf. Dörnyei 2007: 61) can be very helpful for the researcher, in order to become aware of the subjectivity of the interpretation and in order to ensure intersubjective comprehensibility of the reflecting interpretation. Investigator triangulation enhances the credibility of a study, which is an important quality criterion of qualitative research as discussed in section 4.1. Hence, the process of the reflective interpretation

55 An example of a detailed formulating and reflecting interpretation of a longer interview passage can be found in Appendix G.
of the interviews was accompanied by a peer researcher, who helped me interpret selected data samples and critically engaged with my work at several stages, as I will describe in section 5.4. Apart from analysing the differences between the two (student) teachers working together in a group, as Daniela and Nicole in this example, a comparative analysis across the other teams illustrates how differently the same question was answered. As to the question above, other (student) teachers referred to completely different aspects of the project. Some reported technical problems, others talked about teamwork and others expressed their personal insecurities (see section 6.3). At this point, the data from the secondary sources (learning logs and portfolios) will be integrated in the analysis process (see section 5.7) as supplementary or complementary perspectives on the interpretation. The data analysis shed light onto the different orientation frameworks of the individual respondents and led to the differentiation of professional development types or rather different dimensions of professional development (see Chapter 7).

### 4.5.3 Type Formation

The formulating and reflecting interpretation of the data finally leads to the formation of types. In the present study, the ongoing comparative analysis between the individual participants’ interview utterances, complemented by information from the supplementary data sources, led to the formation of professional development dimensions (see sections 7.1–7.3). In the Documentary Method, the type formation process can be divided into two steps. In a first step, one-dimensional types are formed through the so-called sense-genetic type formation. Afterwards, the sense-genetic typology is further refined through generating multi-dimensional types, the so-called socio-genetic type formation. This process will be further explained and illustrated by examples below.

A sense-genetic type is based on the cross-case comparative analysis of one selected orientation framework, i.e. it focuses on which topics are addressed by individual respondents. The first identified orientation framework is defined as type A. That is the topic person A addresses in the first interview section of the analysis. In another interview, with person B, a different orientation framework might be discussed, a topic which is not A, and is thus defined as type B. For example, when being asked to comment on their experiences with their first classroom action research project (CARP), the respondents in this study used different orientation
frameworks to answer the same question. For example, Simone (respondent A) commented on technical problems (type A), whereas Patricia (respondent B) elaborated on aspects of their teamwork (type B). Ursula (respondent C) spoke of time management issues (type C) and Karen (respondent D) commented on general issues in the primary school setting (type D)\textsuperscript{56}, as the following chart demonstrates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Topic (tertium comparationis): “Please comment on the first CARP”</th>
<th>Simone (respondent A)</th>
<th>Patricia (respondent B)</th>
<th>Ursula (respondent C)</th>
<th>Karen (respondent D)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Utterance:</td>
<td>“Of course, the technical issues were difficult with sending the films.”</td>
<td>“I think we are really good team partners. We really worked well together.”</td>
<td>“It took much longer than I expected it would.”</td>
<td>“I was new to the primary school setting.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic:</td>
<td>Technical problems</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>Primary school in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➔ Type A</td>
<td>➔ Type B</td>
<td>➔ Type C</td>
<td>➔ Type D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Example Type Formation Process (Sense-genetic)

The result of the sense-genetic type formation is a one-dimensional typology, as it only depicts one type per person. Hence, the developed types are still attached to the single cases (respondent A = type A, respondent B= type B, respondent C = type C, etc.) and are not yet abstracted from the single case. This can only be achieved in the socio-genetic type formation in which the topics of the contrastive comparison, the \textit{tertia comparationes}, are systematically varied:

In order to establish in what social context the orientation frameworks referring to different topics exist, the interpretation must not end with a comparison of how one topic is dealt with in two interviews, but must include further interview sections in which other topics are elaborated upon and, most importantly, in which other orientation frameworks can be reconstructed (Bohsack 2007: 212).

In other words, the researcher now starts looking for type A in the utterance of persons B, C, D, etc. Reconstruction of multiple orientation frameworks within the single case and cross-case comparison and altering the angle from which the researcher looks at the data, finally leads to a multidimensional typology, in my case a multidimensional model of language teachers’ professional development (see section 7.4). This step “inquires for the experiential background against which the genesis of

\textsuperscript{56} See also Table 6 in section 6.2.
an orientation can be found” (Bohnsack 2007: 232). Respondent A, who described technical problems (type A) in the first interview sequence, might as well comment on teamwork (type B) at different stages of the interview, in other interviews or in the supplementary data sources portfolio and learning log. Furthermore, from the utterances of person A, other orientation frameworks in which the topics are dealt with, such as her age (type X), might be reconstructed. Likewise, person B might for example explicitly or implicitly refer to her professional experience (type Y).

The *tertium comparationis*, the topic serving as a starting point for a new analysis within a single case and in cross-case comparison, might be changed as often as desired in order to satisfy the research questions. Bohnsack (1989: 374) states that the “contrast within similarity is a fundamental principle of the generation of individual types.” In this case study, various topics and orientation frameworks relating to the respondents’ CARP experiences helped elicit different types of critical learning incident (see Chapter 6), which constitute the three dimensions of the integrated model of language teachers’ professional development (see section 7.4). The type formation process allows the researcher to abstract the identified types from the single case, when a reconstructed orientation framework from one case is found in others as well. From this evolves a generalisability of the results, as I will further discuss in Chapter 7.

**4.6 Summary**

In this chapter, the theoretical and methodological considerations that preceded and accompanied the present study were presented. After having delineated the quality criteria of qualitative research (section 4.1), I introduced the theoretical foundations of case study research (section 4.2) and discussed the role of the research questions (section 4.3). The detailed description of the research instruments (section 4.4) gave insights into the data collection process and the choice of suitable data sources in the context of this case study. In section 4.5, the Documentary Method was introduced and the three main analysis steps of ‘formulating interpretation’, ‘reflecting interpretation’ and ‘type formation’ were outlined in order to give an overview of the theoretical foundations of the method. The results of these analysis steps will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6. In the following Chapter 5, I will focus on the case study and describe my role as a researcher, the participants and the process of data triangulation in the context of this study.
5 The Case Study – Design, Participants and Procedure

Having outlined the theoretical and methodological groundwork underlying this case study in the previous chapter, I will now turn to the practical implementation of these foundations. First of all, I will briefly recapitulate the constitution of the specific research context and recall the central research questions (section 5.1). Then, I will reflect on my evolving role as a researcher during the course of the study (section 5.2) and introduce the participating (student) teachers (section 5.3). Afterwards, I will discuss the concept of triangulation (section 5.4) and will present the guiding questions for the semi-structured group interviews (section 5.5). Finally, I will briefly address the issue of research ethics in the context of this study (section 5.6). In close connection to the methodological framework established in Chapter 4, this chapter will illuminate various aspects of the data collection and analysis procedure that guided my interpretation of the 12 (student) teachers’ voices.

5.1 Research Context and Central Questions

“Letting the setting offer new or unconsidered information, while not losing track of your questions or sight of your inquiry, is the pleasure and the dance of good research.”
(Freeman 2009b: 32)

As described in detail in Chapter 3, the specific research context for this case study is a foreign language teacher education programme called ‘E-LINGO – Teaching English to Young Learners’. The course is organised in a blended-learning format, i.e. it combines online study phases and regular on-campus sessions, and thereby conforms to the current trend towards online teacher education (see section 2.1.5). Moreover, the conceptualisation of E-LINGO is based on recent findings and developments in FLTE research as discussed in Chapter 2. According to Schocker-von Ditfurth (2008: 28f.), the core objectives of E-LINGO are learning to critically reflect on one’s own learning processes, gaining experiential knowledge, adapting a theory-driven stance towards one’s own and others’ teaching practice, and acquiring mediation competence by undertaking classroom action research projects. The programme’s content comprises relevant texts and materials concerning teaching young learners organised in different modules (see section 3.3).

One core component of the programme, the action research approach, lies at the heart of this case study. As discussed in sections 2.2 and 2.3, reflective practice
and the systematic and critical investigation of one's own teaching can contribute to a (student) teacher's professional development. The aim of this study was to find out, if, how and under what circumstances teacher learning takes place through the cooperative engagement in action research.

In accordance with the basic principles of qualitative research (see section 4.1), this qualitative-interpretative case study followed the principle of openness (cf. Lamnek 1988) and was designed to generate hypotheses from within the data, rather than verifying pre-existing hypotheses based on theoretical considerations. However, the data collection and analysis process was naturally co-configured by my prior knowledge, expectations and preliminary findings. As described in section 4.2.1, the researcher is the most important ‘instrument’ (cf. e.g. Patton 2002; Merriam 2002; Schart 2003) in qualitative case study research. The relationship between researcher and participants as well as the researcher's biography and self-perception are decisive factors in the process of data collection and analysis. In order to make my stance in the presented research project transparent, I will now turn to describing and reflecting on my role as a researcher.

5.2 Reflections on the Researcher Role

“You’re one of us. I mean, kind of...” (Simone, On-campus session, October 2010)

In the form of a narrative account, a prevalent form of inquiry within autoethnographic research (cf. Nunan & Choi 2010; Riemann 2010; Scarino 2013; Harbon & Moloney 2013), in this section I will reflect on my role as a researcher. Thereby, I aim at making transparent my role in the research process, my relationship to the study's participants and my stance as the main interpreter of the data presented in this study. As Finlay (2002: 537) notes, “[o]nly by bringing our implicit frameworks into relief do we stand a chance of becoming relatively independent of them.” Therefore, in reference to critical learning incidents (Flanagan 1954; Chell 2004; Shapira-Lishchinsky 2011; Tripp 2011) I encountered during the research process, I will describe how I experienced and made sense of my role as a researcher in constant negotiation with the study's participants, the literature and myself. However, I also aim at avoiding making my position "unduly privileged, blocking out the participant’s voice” (Finlay 2002: 541) and will therefore only reflect on my own stance when necessary for the intersubjective comprehensibility of my research.
At the first on-campus session, I officially introduced myself to the participants and briefly talked about my research project and the organisational issues involved, for example that written consent would have to be given to participate in the study (see Appendix H). Afterwards, Simone, one of the (student) teachers, approached me and asked a few more questions about my project. When I told her that I would like to conduct and audio-record interviews and evaluate their learning logs and portfolios, she smiled and said: “Ok! I would tell you anything, you’re one of us. I mean, kind of…” (Observation notes, October 2010). Some other students showed similar reactions. I felt comfortable among them and was very glad about their positive attitude towards me and about their willingness to participate in the study. A few days later, when looking at the notes I took during this first on-campus session, a question arose in my mind: Why was I, the researcher, considered part of the group (“you’re one of us”), even if with certain restrictions (“kind of”)? I could think of several reasons for that. First of all, the fact that I was not one of “them”, i.e. the programme’s tutors, certainly played an important role. It was clarified right from the beginning that I would not be involved in grading or assessing the (students) teachers’ assignments and performances in any way. Hence, there was no power hierarchy (cf. Zigo 2010) between the participants and me. Secondly, I was in the same age group as the majority of the participants, with a similar educational background and common experiences and knowledge. Last but not least, all of us were female, which certainly had an impact on our conversational behaviour. This trustful and relaxed atmosphere was very conducive to the data collection process (Dörnyei 2007: 140), as the participants communicated openly and honestly. I will further explore these issues in sections 5.4 in the context of data triangulation.

However, not all participants considered me as part of the group. “So, you are a researcher? And you do research on us? I’d better be careful what I say then” (Observation notes, October 2010) was Elisabeth’s humorous and yet slightly sceptical reaction. From her perspective, I was not part of the group, but rather an outsider imposing some kind of threat on her. In retrospect, I explain her reaction by the fact that she was about 10 years older than me and had worked in a school context for many years. She probably had, in contrast to younger (student) teachers who were still closer to the university context, already developed more rigid images of a ‘teacher’ (her) and a ‘researcher’ (me). Interestingly, I felt somewhat irritated by what she said. Looking at this incident retrospectively, it becomes clear to me why: I did not
consider myself a ‘proper’ researcher at that point and was rather insecure about my own role. I was curious to get to know the participants as they all had very interesting biographies, but did not really know how to approach them as researcher. In my understanding, a researcher was an experienced professional, knowing a lot about theories and research methodology, knowing exactly what to do, when to ask questions, what to ask, when to listen and when to take notes. Of course, a researcher was also capable of expressing her findings eloquently in academic writing. However, that was not me. Apart from an online survey I had conducted for my MA thesis the year before, I had no research experience and was not at all aware of my role, my tasks and the course of my whole research journey. I had not yet developed a researcher identity (cf. Norton & Early 2011) and my professional confidence, a central concept within this thesis (see section 2.2.1 and 7.3), was rather low. In spite of what I had read about research instruments and procedures so far, I did not feel confident as a researcher having no experiential knowledge and was therefore confused by the fact that someone else had a clearer image of me as a researcher than I myself had.

A third incident at the end of the second face-to-face meeting brought me closer to understanding my role within the group. In the middle of an interview, Karen suddenly lowered her voice and said: “...and this is off record...” (Interview I, February 2011) in order to start criticising aspects of the programme's organisational structure and the lack of tutor support, a topic that I will further discuss in the scope of the data analysis in section 6.3. Her utterance was definitely not off the record – at least not technically since the audio recorder positioned on the table right in front of her was still running, a fact she was well aware of. Yet, Karen was trustful that her complaint would be treated confidentially. At the end of the interview, she made a number of suggestions for the improvement of particular aspects of the programme, obviously hoping for her constructive criticism to be communicated to the tutors and considered for future cohorts. I found myself in the role of a mediator between the students and the tutors. I was considered a third party, close to the (student) teachers and the tutors, but still taking up a special position as a marginal member of the group. I was close enough to benefit from the “insider perspective” (Dörnyei 2007), as I was being considered as a trusted, if peripheral, member of the group. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), understanding respondents as “conversational partners” and creating a trustful atmosphere in the research situation is conducive to the data
collection. Yet, it is important to be clear about one’s own role as a researcher (ibid.). As my own understanding of my role grew, I realised that my peripheral position as a mediator between the (student) teachers and the tutors ensured my outsider perspective as well. During the two years of the E-LINGO programme, not only the observations of the on-campus sessions and the collection and analysis of data, but also the continuous engagement with literature on theoretical and methodological aspects of research as well as the ongoing exchange with other researchers, meant my self-perception as a researcher was successively refined and my professional confidence slowly increased.

Through this process of finding myself in the role of a researcher, I have come to terms with considering myself as part of the research design, the central research “instrument” of the study (cf. Patton 2002; Merriam 2002; Schart 2003). The questions I asked, the methodological design I have chosen as well as how I approached the data analysis, reflect my knowledge and skills, including all my knowledge gaps and all mistakes I made. In the sense of the quality criteria of qualitative research (see section 4.1), I came to understand that my responsibility as a researcher is not to make no mistakes, but to make transparent my mistakes and my researcher bias in the description of the methodological framework of the study and within the data analysis. Adapting a mediating role allowed me “to relate honestly to [my] conversational partners”, “encourage open dialogue” (Rubin & Rubin 1012: 74) and pursue my research interest at the same time. In the following section, I will introduce my ‘conversational partners’ (ibid.), the 12 participants of the study, and provide selected biographical information relevant for the research project.

5.3 The Participants: 12 (Student) Teachers
As mentioned before, this study is a qualitative-interpretative case study. The rationale for choosing this form of inquiry lies in the nature of the research interest as well as in the composition of the specific research context as discussed in sections 4.1 and 4.2. All in all, 12 (student) teachers were enrolled in the E-LINGO cohort investigated and all of them took part in the research study.57 Furthermore, two of the programme’s tutors volunteered to share their knowledge and experiences in an

57 Originally, the cohort consisted of 13 (student) teachers, but one candidate, Marina, dropped out after the first year of the programme. Marina had given oral, but no written consent to participate in the study. Therefore, the data obtained from her (learning log, interview I, interview II) were not considered in the data analysis and will not be displayed at any stage in this thesis.
interview at the final on-campus session (see Appendix E). They will also be considered part of the case, as they offer another perspective on the research questions. However, the main emphasis lies on the 12 participants and their professional development processes over the period of two years. In the description of the data, the group as a whole is referred to as the ‘overall case’, whereas the individuals are referred to as ‘single cases’. In the following, the participants of the study, as well as selected information from their biography such as their age group, the range of their professional experience at the beginning of E-LINGO, their native language and the country of their workplace during the programme will be introduced. Furthermore, the team affiliations will be indicated by the background colour in the table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Range of Professional Experience before E-LINGO59</th>
<th>Native Language</th>
<th>Country of residence during E-LINGO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ursula</td>
<td>Adult (30-35)</td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Young Adult (under 30)</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Bosnian</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniela</td>
<td>Young adult (under 30)</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>Mature adult (over 35)</td>
<td>10-15 years</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarissa</td>
<td>Young adult (under 30)</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisabeth</td>
<td>Mature adult (over 35)</td>
<td>15-20 years</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>Young adult (under 30)</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>Mature Adult (over 35)</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simone</td>
<td>Adult (30-35)</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>Mature adult (over 35)</td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>NZ/German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Mature adult (over 35)</td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>UK/Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>Young adult (under 30)</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Biographic Data of Participants and Team Affiliations

The participants were born in six different countries and, during the period of data collection, lived and worked in seven different countries. Almost all of them had a

58 In order to secure the participants’ privacy, their names have been changed and only selected biographic information is provided at this stage.

59 Here, the range of professional experience refers to teaching English to young learners. However, some (student) teachers had teaching experience in other disciplines and/or with other learner groups, as I will specify where applicable in the data analysis in Chapter 6.
partner, more than half of them had children and all of them were working full-time or part-time whilst enrolled in E-LINGO. This brief overview shows that the group is relatively small, but quite heterogeneous. Given the different levels of professional experience, the variety of first languages and cultural backgrounds, the group is predestined for a qualitative-interpretative case study targeting my research interest in professional development through action research (see section 5.1).

In the following, I will have a closer look at the three main data sources of this study: learning logs, student portfolios and group interviews. All research instruments and data sources bear strengths and weaknesses, as already discussed in sections 4.4.2, 4.4.3 and 4.4.4. Here, I will focus on methodological and ethical issues in the process of data collection and will explain how data, perspective and investigator triangulation safeguarded the data collection and analysis process in this study.

5.4 Data, Perspective and Investigator Triangulation

“No one kind of evidence is likely to be sufficient (or sufficiently valid) on its own. This use of multiple sources of evidence, each with its strengths and weaknesses, is a key characteristic of case study research.” (Gillham 2000: 2)

As indicated in section 4.4, in which I laid out the theoretical and methodological foundations for the selected research instruments and data sources in this study, the semi-structured interviews formed the main data source, whereas the students’ learning logs and portfolios served as supplementary sources. In this section, I will provide a detailed rationale for this form of data triangulation.

First of all, I will describe the data collection timeframe and procedure. As the table below shows, the data collection process comprised approximately two years. Attending all of the four on-campus sessions allowed me to get to know the participants, engage in informal conversations and take observation notes on their presentations of the classroom action research projects (CARPs). At the second, third and fourth on-campus session, I conducted the semi-structured group interviews with the (student) teachers (cf. Appendices A–D); at the fourth and last on-campus session, I also interviewed the tutors (see Appendix E), ensuring the triangulation of perspectives involved in the data analysis. During the two years of my study, I had access to the online learning logs of the (student) teachers. At the end of the course, in
July 2012, the (student) teachers submitted their portfolios for assessment and provided me with a copy for my data analysis. In their portfolios, some of the (student) teachers reflect on selected entries from their learning logs. However, during the data analysis, not all of the data sources turned out equally relevant in view of my research questions, as I will discuss below.

![Diagram showing data sources and time frame](image)

Table 4: Data Sources and Time Frame of Data Collection

Even though a growing body of literature on diary studies suggests that learning logs can provide valuable insights into teachers' thinking and behaviour processes (cf. e.g. Bailey 1990; Porter et al. 1990; Dörnyei 2007; Bäcker 2008a), the weaknesses of this data source in the context of this study cannot be ignored. In the scope of this research project, the learning logs as data sources had two major flaws. First of all, they were characterised by a great inconsistency of entries with regards to quality and quantity. Secondly, they were at all times accessible by the programme's tutors (cf. Bäcker 2008a: 87) who were in charge of assessing the (student) teachers' performance.

As the data analysis revealed, the (student) teachers did not use the learning logs consistently, an aspect that is being discussed in the literature on diary studies (cf. section 4.4.2). Dörnyei (2007: 156f.) finds it particularly problematic that “the length and depth of diary entries show considerable variation” and that “there is a
decline in the diary entries in stressful events, even though from the researcher’s perspective these events may be of particular interest” (ibid.). Both of these points were confirmed in the present study. Even though keeping a learning log was mandatory for all (student) teachers, neither the frequency nor the length or form of the individual entries was prescribed. Hence, some participants used the tool very often, but only noted down key sentences or ideas, others wrote large amounts of cohesive texts, while yet other participants hardly wrote anything. After the first semester, for example, the word count of the individual online learning logs ranged from 730 words to 5720 words. In general, the number of learning log entries decreased in the course of the programme, probably due to the increasing workload in E-LINGO in approaching “stressful events” (Dörnyei 2007: 156f.), such as the classroom action research projects (CARPs), important hand-ins and, finally, the Master’s thesis, the final portfolio and the preparation of the oral exam.

In view of the overall workload involved in E-LINGO, keeping a learning log was not considered very important, as the following data examples illustrate. Several participants commented on the frequency of their diary use. Karen, for example, wrote in her learning log: “It’s been quite a while since I spent time writing in my diary. I’ve just had too much on my plate lately, so the diary was the last thing I could think of” (Karen, Learning Log, 21.01.2011). Elisabeth also comments on her irregular writing: “It’s time for a new entry... often thought about it” (Elisabeth, Learning Log, 22.11.2010) and Melanie makes a similar statement: “I have been thinking about this for weeks now, but I have never found the time to write it down” (Melanie, Learning Log, 28.11.2010). The fact that neither the frequency nor the length or form of the individual entries was prescribed may have led the (student) teachers to think that the learning logs had not a high priority for their learning processes.

Another reason for inconsistency in the E-LINGO learning log entries as revealed in the data analysis is related to technical problems with the learning platform. Apparently, the (student) teachers often encountered difficulties when trying to save their entries, which led to frustration and neglecting the learning logs as a reflective tool. The following examples from Anita, Patricia and Karen illustrate the negative effects of this technical issue:

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60 For an overview of the complete data corpus, see Table 5 in Chapter 6.
My diary entry from Friday 15th of October got lost, [which was] a pity because I’ve written a lot, I spent quite some time on this entry and I don’t remember everything. It was right after the course, I wrote down all my impressions which were still very comprehensive and all fresh (Anita, Learning Log, 17.10.2010)

I wrote more than one page – and now it’s all gone - cos the computer did not publish it and instead crashed – this is highly frustrating – I wonder if I am allowed to write my diary in a word document or in a calendar. I do not have the time to rewrite every single thing and I could use it better for my portfolio anyway (Patricia, Learning Log, 16.10.10)

Oh no!!!!!!! I had just written a very long paragraph about how difficult it was to find a school for my CARP when I hit a key that made my whole message disappear! How frustrating!!! I wish there were a save function like in the e-mail (Karen, Learning Log, 14.12.2010)

All three of them uploaded only shortened versions of their original entries in their second try, explaining that they do not have time and motivation to elaborate on their thoughts again, after the data of the first try had been lost. Hence, the learning logs are not a completely consistent and trustworthy data source in view of the research questions and will therefore be considered as a supplementary data source only.

The portfolios also bear a severe weakness as a data source. Not only were they read by the programme’s tutors like the learning logs, they also were graded with their mark counting towards the overall M.A. grade. This is very likely to have had an influence on contents and style of the texts in the portfolios as indicated by partly contradictory statements revealed through the systematic triangulation of the data sources. The following example, referring to the (student) teachers’ attitudes towards classroom action research, helps illustrate this point. Anita states in her portfolio: “My dream is to keep on doing CARPs” (Anita, Portfolio July 2012: 15). However, when asked in the third interview, a few months earlier in February 2012, whether or not she is planning to continue working with the CARP concept, she admits:

I’m afraid I won’t, because if you don’t have anybody who kicks your ass you just don’t do it, because it is a lot of work, but on the other hand it is definitely worth doing it, so (.) I’m a bit afraid that I will be too lazy to take the time. (Anita, Interview, February 2012)

As elaborated upon in section 5.2, the relationship between the participants and me was trustful, so that I consider the spontaneous utterance in the interview as honest. The register of her statements is rather informal; the use of colloquial expressions such as “kick your ass” and “lazy” suggests that Anita was not trying to filter her
response in order to make it socially desirable and acceptable. In general, the language in the portfolios tended to be very formal, which is not surprising as the portfolio was an assessment task in which content, structure and language use was marked. Some (student) teachers also expressed gratitude towards the tutors in their texts, which might be an indicator for social desirability bias, for example Patricia: “Thanks [VALERIE]61 – I love this book” (Patricia, Learning Log, 27.10.2010) and Rebecca: “I was very pleased with [Valerie’s] detailed critique” (Rebecca, Portfolio, July 2012).

In contrast to both of the written data sources, the semi-structured interviews have a number of advantages. As outlined in section 4.4.4, interviewing is a popular method of data collection in qualitative research. Interviews are a familiar form of communication (cf. Dörnyei 2007: 134), allow for a quick access to a particular field of interest (ibid.) and may produce large amounts of data in a relatively short time (cf. Friebertshäuser 2010: 371). However, conducting interviews involves careful preparation and post-processing (cf. e.g. Freeman 2009b). In view of the research questions guiding this study, the semi-structured interviews appear to be more conducive than the other data sources. First of all, oral texts are produced spontaneously and intuitively, in contrast to written texts, which are mostly well-reflected. As it is implicit or tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1966) that is of interest for the study, spoken language seems to be more promising as a data source than written language. In particular in view of the Documentary Method (Bohnsack 1989), narratives and detailed descriptions, as occurring in the interviews, are more suitable text genres to explore than arguments and meta-reflections, as prevalent in the learning logs and in the portfolios.

As mentioned in section 4.1, Rallis and Rossman (2009: 266) suggest including ‘member checking’ in the data analysis procedure, i.e. sharing and discussing the research findings with the participants (cf. also Mann 2011: 15). However, this procedure was not feasible in the scope of this study because of the unavailability of the participants at the time of data analysis and due to ethical constraints. The project was finalised approximately two years after the participants had completed the E-LINGO programme. Hence, contacting the (student) teachers in order to discuss my findings would not only have been difficult, but also questionable in view of research ethics. Involving them in the data analysis procedure would have imposed additional

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61 The names of the tutors have been changed.
work on them. However, a follow-up project examining the sustainability of action research in the teachers’ daily practices would be possible, provided that a few of the teachers give consent to participating in a second study.

Given the nature of my role within the group (see section 5.1) and considering the generally positive and relaxed mood during the interviews, as I will outline in section 5.5, I am confident that a trustful atmosphere was created and that the participants were honest and open during our conversations (cf. Dörnyei 2007: 140). However, one disadvantage of the interviews as revealed in the data analysis was that some of the non-native speakers of English tended to answer very briefly, maybe due to the fact that the interviews were conducted in English. As Mann (2011: 15) states, “[t]he language in which the interview is conducted is integrally related to the nature of the co-construction.” Therefore, it can be assumed that the language of the interview had an influence on form and content of the responses as well as on the conversational interactions between the interviewees and me.

In sum, the reason for the semi-structured group interviews being the most conducive data source mainly lies in the nature of spoken discourse in a trustful and rather informal environment. In contrast to the written documents obtained in this study, the interviews have most advantages which are highly relevant for the research questions, as summarised below:

1. In contrast to the learning logs, which are characterised by inconsistency in frequency, length and depth of the entries, the interviews produced data from every participant at different points in time over the research period of two years and are therefore relevant for the observation of professional development.

2. In contrast to the learning logs and the portfolios, the data from the interviews were at no point in time accessible by the programmes tutors. Thus, it is to be expected that the (student) teachers did not assume their answers have any kind of influence on their grades. The trustful relationship between the participants and me, the researcher, is likely to have had a positive impact on the honesty and openness of the participants.

3. Oral texts are produced spontaneously and intuitively, in contrast to written texts, which are mostly well-reflected. As it is implicit or intuitive knowledge that is of interest for the study, spoken language seems to be more promising as a data source than written language. In view of the analysis method, narratives and detailed descriptions (interviews) are more suitable text genres to explore than arguments and meta-reflections (learning logs and portfolios).
As mentioned before, the notion of investigator triangulation (cf. Dörnyei 2007) also plays an important role in qualitative research (see section 4.1 and 4.4). In the scope of this study, I worked with a peer researcher in order to incorporate a second perspective on the interpretation of the data and to ensure the intersubjective comprehensibility of my data analysis. The peer researcher helped interpret selected data examples and critically engaged with various passages of my formulating and reflecting interpretation (see Chapter 6).

In this section, I provided insights into the interplay of the different data sources and explained why the interviews were chosen as the central data source. Nevertheless, the benefits of the data, perspective and investigator triangulation employed in this study will become clear when examining the selected data examples in Chapter 6, as all data sources have their strengths and weaknesses in view of the research questions. In the following section, I will describe the development of the guiding questions and take into consideration various aspects influencing the interview situation.

5.5 Preparing and Conducting the Interviews

“In responsive interviewing, both the researchers and their conversational partners actively contribute to the research, bringing to the interview their experiences and interests.”62 (Rubin & Rubin 2012: 72)

As the introductory quote as well as the reflections on my researcher role (see section 5.2) indicate, understanding and treating the interviewees as ‘conversational partners’ is crucial for establishing a trustful atmosphere during the interview. In the following, I will explain how the interviews in this study were prepared, set up, conducted and analysed. In this case study, all preparatory work for the interview studies was done in correspondence with the supervisors of the study on the one hand, and with professors and peer researchers working together in a weekly research colloquium.63 A consent form addressing ethical issues was signed by all participants of the study (see Appendix H). All interviews were conducted as group interviews, as the (student) teachers worked on all action research projects cooperatively in their respective teams (cf. section 3.5 and 5.3). The first interview

62 Emphasis (bold print) in original.
63 GCSC Research Colloquium October 2010 – August 2012 at Justus Liebig University, Gießen.
had the purpose of gaining an overall impression of the (student) teachers’ feelings and attitudes towards E-LINGO and the action research approach. The guiding questions were deliberately formulated as very open in order to generate responses with a narrative character, providing the opportunity to interpret the documentary meaning and filter implicit or tacit knowledge (see section 4.5). However, the interviews had to be conducted within a narrow time frame (approximately 15 minutes), shortly after the (student) teachers’ oral presentation while the tutors withdrew to consult about their marks. This had two disadvantages: firstly, the time was too short for two (student) teachers to talk about their learning processes and experiences of the last six months. Secondly, the respondents all had just been in an exam situation, which evokes several emotions depending on how satisfied they were with their performance. In the first interview, the mood among the respondents can be described as relaxed and tense at the same time. They had just given a presentation and were therefore relieved, but also had no conception of the assessment procedure at this point. The guiding questions for the first interview were the following:

- How do you feel after the first semester?
- Do you have a teaching post or did you have to find a class for the CARP?
- Could you comment on the first CARP? (What went well? What did you like about it? What went wrong? What did you not like about it?)
- How would you rate the success of your CARP? Choose of the following statements the one that describes best how you feel after the first CARP: 1. I’m absolutely pleased with my first CARP. There is nothing I would change for the next one. 2. I’m satisfied for the most part, but there is still room for improvement, for example… 3. I’m rather unhappy with the CARP. I still need to work on some aspects, for example… 4. I’m not happy with the CARP at all. I still need to work on a lot of aspects, for example… (see Appendix A)

The second interview covered more complex topics. After the experience of the first interview, where the respondents included many references to the presentation they had just finished, I carefully formulated the first two questions of the second interview. Rather than commenting on their presentation, they were supposed to describe their actual experiences with preparing and conducting the CARP. In the third question, I confronted the (student) teachers with selected results from the pre-study and asked them to relate these to their own experiences. The interview atmosphere was generally friendly and relaxed. The guiding questions were:
Chapter 5 – The Case Study

- You have just finished your second CARP presentation – how do you feel?

- The presentation was the final part of your second CARP. If you think back of preparing and conducting this CARP – what was the difference compared to the first one? (Was it easier/more difficult to prepare/carry out? Was it more or less beneficial in view of the collected data? Was it more/less fun?)

- This year in March, I conducted an online-survey on the CARPs with former E-LINGO students. 81% of the respondents said that they were intimidated by the CARPs in the beginning (45% absolutely agreed, 36% partly agreed). Would you agree? Has your attitude changed after the second one or not?

- Did you have any kind of teaching experience before starting E-LINGO? (When? Where? How long? How many hours a week? What kind of teaching post? Which institution?)

- There’s a view among researchers that a person's cultural and educational background has an enormous impact on their teaching. Could you comment on that from your experience? Within your tandem/tridem, are there any apparent differences in terms of teaching philosophy/approach? Could you explain to what extent? (e.g. You had the same research question, but chose different methods and got different results!) (see Appendix B)

The third and last interview was conducted at the end of the third semester in the fourth and last face-to-face meeting before the final exams. Again, the interview aimed at generating narratives by asking (student) teachers to rank themselves on a scale from 1 to 10 between novice and expert teachers at two different points in time (see Appendix D). Also, I asked them to comment on their choice. As well as in the second interviews, the atmosphere in the third interviews was generally relaxed and friendly. The following guiding questions were used for the interview:

- You have just finished your third and last CARP presentation – congratulations! Take a moment and try to think back to the first face-to-face meeting in October 2010. You were sitting here, probably not knowing what to expect from the course, from the tutors and your peers. Now, you're at the end of the third semester. Please have a look at this scale and tell me where you were at the beginning of E-LINGO and where you are now! (Do you think working with CARPs had an influence on you? Where there any key moments/special learning incidents you remember? What defines you as a teacher? How “much of a teacher” are you now/were you before E-LINGO? (cf. Appendices C and D)

At the third and last face-to-face meeting, the tutors were also interviewed, drawing on their experience as experts who have been observing many (student) teachers for
several years. Furthermore, they bring a new perspective to the research questions, as discussed in section 4.4. The guiding questions for the interview were:

- How would you describe what happens when (student) teachers, who all have different educational and cultural backgrounds, engage in cooperative action research projects?

- Referring to (student) teachers of this cohort, could you explain if and to what extent working with CARPs is related to the (student) teachers’ professional development? Was there any observable change within the tandems/tridems? What do you think are the reasons for the change?

- Are there any examples from the last cohorts you would like to refer to? (see Appendix E)

As to setting up the interview – i.e. planning, who will be interviewed when, where, how long and under what conditions (Richards 2009: 189) – all aspects were defined prior to the study. As mentioned in section 4.4.4, the respondents were all part of the E-LINGO cohort. The only possible time frame to conduct an interview them was at the respective on-campus sessions, shortly after the (student) teachers’ oral presentation. I was allocated a timeframe of approximately 15 minutes for each interview, when the programme’s tutors withdrew to discuss the (student) teachers’ presentation. With regards to the interview conditions, the interviews took place in an empty classroom, across the hallway from the seminar room. Obviously, an empty classroom is not necessarily conducive to creating a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere. Furthermore, all of the respondents participated in the respective interviews directly after their oral presentation. Hence, the exam situation might have altered their mood as well as their conversational interactions due to them experiencing different emotions, such as relief, excitement, unsettledness, exhaustion, etc., which I will further elaborate on in the depiction of interview examples in Chapter 6.

Conducting the interviews was challenging, especially trying to “maintain control while allowing the interview to develop as naturally as possible” (Richards 2009: 189). When listening to the interviews in the scope of my data analysis, I realised that I had made quite a few mistakes, e.g. asking leading questions, failing to ask for specific examples and further information etc., but decided to analyse these interview flaws in the scope of my interpretation (cf. Friebertshäuser 2010: 377). Furthermore, all interviews were conducted in a team; therefore, it might be
reasonable to assume that the interviewees influenced each other in their responses. In some interviews, there was an equal share of the conversation, whereas in others one (student) teacher was more dominant in the conversation than the other. This dominance not only relates to the proportion of talking time, but also to conversational interactions, such as turn taking, commenting on the other’s utterance or asking questions. These formal issues will also be part of the interpretation. Examples of different conversational interactions will be illustrated in Chapter 6 when exploring selected interview passages in depth.

Before embarking on exploring selected data sets in Chapter 6, the following chapter will address ethical considerations which accompanied the process of preparing, conducting and writing up the findings of this study in two different educational contexts.

5.6 Ethical Safeguarding

As already discussed in section 4.4.1, the notions of researcher integrity and research ethics play an important role in qualitative research. In the context of this case study, the formal ethical requirements of two different educational settings had to be met, as the first part of the study (literature review, methodological design, data collection) was prepared and conducted in Germany and the second part of the study (further literature review, data analysis, thesis writing) was conducted in Australia.

Within the German research context, the guidelines for ethical conduct of research are formulated by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)\(^{64}\) in the form of ‘Proposals for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice’ (DFG 2013 [1998]). However, there are usually no ethics committees acting on an institutional level. Rather, the guidelines of ethical conduct are discussed and negotiated with supervisors and fellow researchers in the process of preparing and conducting a research study. Therefore, in preparation of this case study, informal consent to conduct the research was obtained from the Landesstiftung Baden-Württemberg and the programme’s tutors. Furthermore, the E-LINGO participants were informed about the project and I was introduced to them at the first on-campus session in October 2010. They were informed about the supervisors responsible for the research project as well as the topic and the overall goal of the study. All (student) teachers were asked to give written consent to being part of the study and were assured that the data obtained

\(^{64}\) German Research Association.
will be treated confidentially (see Appendix H). As this research study was also partly conducted in Australia, all research activities also adhered to the requirements of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) as well as the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2013 [2007])\textsuperscript{65} of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) of the Australian Government and monitored by the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee, Macquarie University. The final ethics approval for the study through the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee, Macquarie University, Sydney, was obtained in December 2012.

5.7 Summary

In this chapter, I briefly revisited the research context of my study (see section 5.1), which had been described in detail in Chapter 3. After reflecting on my role within the research process (see section 5.2), I introduced the participants of the study and provided selected biographical information relevant for the data analysis (see section 5.3). In close connection with the theoretical and methodological considerations established in Chapter 4, in sections 5.4 and 5.5 I described the design of the study and presented the triangulation of the data sources, particularly focusing on the semi-structured interviews. In section 5.6, I commented on the formal requirements to meet the standards of ethical research underlying this study, which was conducted in two educational contexts. The following Chapter 6 is dedicated to the data analysis of this study and will illustrate how the guiding principles of Documentary Method (Bohnsack 1989) were adopted to the context of this study.

\textsuperscript{65} http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf, checked on 15/05/2014.
6 Data Analysis: The Search for Evidence

“Data analysis is the central step in qualitative research. Whatever the data are, it is their analysis that, in a decisive way, forms the outcomes of the research.” (Flick 2014c: 3)

The data obtained in the scope of this study were indeed quite “bulky and messy” as Dörnyei (2007: 125) puts it. Not only a few hours of recorded group interviews but also numerous text pages of the participants’ learning logs and portfolios, as well as observation notes and notes on informal conversations, formed the overall data corpus of this case study, as the following table shows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Data type</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Overall volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured group interviews</td>
<td>Audio files</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3 hours 46 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning logs</td>
<td>Text files</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>approx. 65,000 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios</td>
<td>Text files</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>approx. 110,000 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation notes, notes on informal oral and written conversations</td>
<td>Handwritten notes, personal messages</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Data Corpus of Study

Making sense of qualitative data requires a methodologically guided approach. Flick (2014c: 5) concisely and appropriately describes the process, means and aims of qualitative data analysis as follows:

Qualitative data analysis is the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it. Meaning-making can refer to subjective or social meanings. Qualitative data analysis also is applied to discover and describe issues in the field or structures and processes in routines and practices. Often, qualitative data analysis combines approaches of a rough analysis of the material (overviews, condensation, summaries) with approaches of a detailed analysis (elaboration of categories, hermeneutic interpretations or identified structures). The final aim is often to arrive at generalizable statements by comparing various materials or various texts or several cases.

In the context of this study, the principles of the Documentary Method as developed by Bohnsack (1989) guided the data analysis (see section 4.5). The interview data formed the main data corpus for the analysis and were complemented by the learning
logs, the portfolios and observation/conversation notes (see section 5.4). The triangulation of different data sources and perspectives was very conducive to the analysis, as shortcomings of one data type could be systematically compensated for by considering other data sources, as will become apparent in the discussion of the examples. The first step of the Documentary Method, i.e. the formulating interpretation (see section 4.5.1), led to the overall organisation of the data in topical overviews (cf. Tables 6, 7 and 8), as I will further explain in section 6.2. The second step, the detailed formulating and reflecting interpretation of relevant passages (see sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2), will be illustrated in section 6.3, where I will discuss a number of data examples relating to critical learning incidents (CLIs) experienced by the (student) teachers while being engaged in action research. The results of the analysis, a multi-dimensional model of professional development based on the findings from the data, will be presented and discussed with reference to current literature in Chapter 7. In the following section, I will explain the process of organising the data and will provide a rationale for the selection of data samples considered in the detailed formulating and reflecting interpretation.

6.1 Organising the Data

Selecting the most relevant interview passages for the transcription and a detailed analysis was very challenging considering the richness and diversity of the data. Revisiting and specifying the research questions (cf. Schart 2001; Flick 2014a; Freeman 2009b) in the process of data analysis helped me rectify and narrow down the research focus. The formulating interpretation allowed me to distance myself from the texts by systematically reformulating and organising the topics that structured the individual interviews (cf. Nohl 2010: 210). To organise the topics, I listened to the audio material several times in order to be able to formulate topics and sub-topics addressed by the respondents. Furthermore, a peer investigator66 was involved in this process and offered a second perspective on samples of the data material (cf. Dörnyei 2007: 61). The results of this first analysis step are condensed in topical overviews of all 18 (student) teacher interviews (cf. Tables 6, 7 and 8 in section 6.2). The research questions as well as the methodological framework of the study were designed to explore the professional development of the (student)

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66 I thank Verena Fries for critically engaging with excerpts of my data and for offering a second perspective during the data analysis procedure.
Chapter 6 – Data Analysis

During the transcription and the detailed analysis of these passages, I found that the passages of interest all reflected different types of critical learning incidents (CLIs) of the (student) teachers, i.e. their orientation frameworks related to experiences with the CARPs they learned from or could potentially learn from. As explained in section 2.2.2, I understand a critical learning incident in the context of teaching and learning as mostly straightforward accounts of very commonplace events that occur in routine professional practice which are critical in the rather different sense that they are indicative of underlying trends, motives and structures. These incidents appear to be
In the context of this study, I define the recall and critical reflection of an incident in the interviews, portfolios and/or learning logs as ‘analysis’, even though the depth of reflection and analysis varied among the (student) teachers, as will become apparent in the data examples. Many of these incidents were described with affective and metaphorical language expressions, indicating their particular importance for the respondents (cf. Nohl 2006: 46). Consequently, I analysed and grouped these different types of CLIs according to the orientation framework they are referring to (e.g. how the teamwork within the group is described, the way a (student) teacher perceives herself as a teacher, etc.). I will present selected data examples which aptly illustrate these learning incidents in section 6.3, which then formed the basis for the development of a multi-dimensional model of the (student) teachers’ professional development, discussed in Chapter 7. In the following section, I will present the topical overviews of the interviews and explain the selection of relevant passages for the detailed data analysis of critical learning incidents.

6.2 Topical Overviews

The systematic topical overviews presented in this section show which topics were addressed in the utterances of the respondents. The structuring topics (A, B, C, D, etc.) are the topics initiated by me, the interviewer, in the form of the guiding interview questions (see section 5.5 and Appendices A–E). They served as starting points for the comparative analysis, as the so-called tertia comparationes, i.e. the common grounds from which the subsequent sub-topics developed into various directions (Bohnsack 2007: 327; Nohl 2010: 211). Whereas the initial topics are labelled A, B, C, etc. throughout the interviews, the subsequent utterances containing several sub-topics are numbered I, II, III, etc. The example interview passages discussed in the following sections are referred to accordingly, for example the fourth utterance on the first topic in the second interview will be labelled Interview II, Topic A, Utterance IV. Furthermore, I used the initial letter of the respondents’ first names and the initial ‘I’ for interviewer in the transcription as well as in the formulating and reflecting interpretation. Since the topical overviews are condensed versions of the interviews, one utterance does not necessarily equal one single response or turn of a respondent. Several responses of an interviewee may be depicted as one utterance in the topical
overview in order to enhance the readability of the topical overviews. In the detailed formulating and reflecting analysis, however, the interview passages will be depicted as transcribed, including turn-taking, interruptions, simultaneous speech, non-verbal expressions, etc., and the responses of the individual speakers will be numbered 1, 2, 3, etc. accordingly.

As explained in section 6.1, I chose those topics for the detailed analysis that related directly to my research questions, were discussed intensively or were addressed in different contexts by different respondents. Those topics and passages are highlighted in the topical overviews in bold print. Where applicable, I noted down examples of affective or metaphoric language use in brackets. As the (student) teachers were interviewed in their respective teams, the utterances of the respondents are distinguished by the background colour of the table (e.g. respondent A = grey, respondent B = white). Following the topical overviews, I will present selected data examples from the 18 interviews and supplementary examples from the learning logs and the portfolios, grouped in critical learning incidents (CLIs). The data obtained from the individual student (teachers) varied greatly. Not only the length, but also the reflective depth of interview responses, learning log entries and portfolio excerpts differed. Therefore, data examples from some (student) teachers were more viable for the analysis than those of others. However, I attempted to incorporate data material from all (student) teachers. Additionally, I will refer to data from the interview with the programme’s tutors, who offer another perspective on selected topics. Unfortunately, it is impossible to present and discuss all relevant data examples in the scope of this thesis. Therefore, I will only discuss selected examples which aptly illustrate the CLIs the (student) teachers’ experienced and will refer to the topical overview for additional occurrences of similar topics and orientation frameworks.
Table 6: Topical Overview Interview I (February 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic A</th>
<th>Barbara</th>
<th>Simone</th>
<th>Ursula</th>
<th>Daniela</th>
<th>Melanie</th>
<th>Elisabeth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utterance I</td>
<td>Introduction/general comment (How do you feel after the first semester/the first CARP?)</td>
<td>Rel</td>
<td>Rel</td>
<td>Rel</td>
<td>Rel</td>
<td>Rel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance II</td>
<td>Rel</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Challenge, work–life–balance, CARP concept (&quot;I loved it!&quot;)</td>
<td>Rel</td>
<td>Right decision to study E-LINGO</td>
<td>CARP workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance III</td>
<td>Workload, learning experiences</td>
<td>Teamwork, presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic B</td>
<td>Organisation of CARP (Did you have a teaching post or did you have to find a class?)</td>
<td>Finding a class (easy), CARP problems (&quot;trouble&quot;, &quot;chaos&quot;)</td>
<td>Teaching post</td>
<td>Finding a school (challenging), private school settings</td>
<td>Teaching post</td>
<td>Teaching post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance I</td>
<td>Teamwork, presentation</td>
<td>Finding a kindergarten (easy)</td>
<td>Teaching post</td>
<td>Kindergarten group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic C</td>
<td>Experiences with first CARP (Please comment on your first CARP! What went well? What went wrong? Did your opinion on the CARPs change?)</td>
<td>Organisational issues, time management</td>
<td>Technical issues, CARP preparation (&quot;very smooth&quot;)</td>
<td>Time management, students’ performance, task demand</td>
<td>CARP went well (&quot;better than planned&quot;); &quot;I was shocked&quot;</td>
<td>No support in finding a school, satisfaction with CARP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance I</td>
<td>Teaching post</td>
<td>Finding a school (challenging), private school settings</td>
<td>Teaching post</td>
<td>Teaching post, attempts to help Rebecca</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance II</td>
<td>Finding a kindergarten (easy)</td>
<td>Teaching post</td>
<td>Finding a school (challenging)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic D</td>
<td>Evaluation of CARP/areas of improvement (4 statements: 1. Absolutely happy with CARP, 2. Happy for the most part, 3. Not so happy, 4. Not happy at all)</td>
<td>Organisational issues, time management</td>
<td>Technical issues, CARP preparation (&quot;very smooth&quot;)</td>
<td>Time management, students’ performance, task demand</td>
<td>CARP went well (&quot;better than planned&quot;); &quot;I was shocked&quot;</td>
<td>No support in finding a school, satisfaction with CARP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance I</td>
<td>2, improving teaching rituals</td>
<td>2, improving technical aspects, material preparation</td>
<td>2, improving presentation</td>
<td>2, improving presentation (PPT), more preparation for CARP</td>
<td>4, improving lesson content, presentation</td>
<td>2, improving preparation, teacher behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance II</td>
<td>2, improving task sequencing, learner involvement</td>
<td>2, improving time management, teamwork (&quot;clash again&quot;)</td>
<td>2, wish for more tutor support and feedback</td>
<td>2, no example for area of improvement (would pick 1)</td>
<td>2, improving lesson planning, presentation</td>
<td>2, improving lesson, time management, presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance III</td>
<td>Classroom management, learner involvement</td>
<td>Team conflict (&quot;clash&quot;)</td>
<td>CARP concept challenging</td>
<td>Comment on M’s performance (&quot;you’re not nervous at all&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance IV</td>
<td>Learner involvement, young learners</td>
<td>CARP concept (&quot;change little things&quot;) learning by doing</td>
<td>Overwhelming workload in the beginning</td>
<td>Bad time management, presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance V</td>
<td>Cooperative reflection/preparation, CARP manageable</td>
<td>Being filmed, academic approach</td>
<td>CARP concept new (&quot;it sounds so academic&quot;), attitude change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic E</td>
<td>Any other comments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance I</td>
<td>Critical of concept at first, change of opinion (&quot;you need to compare two groups&quot;)</td>
<td>Learning through experience (&quot;stick to my mind&quot;, &quot;proves what has already been written&quot;)</td>
<td>CARP concept, introducing it to other teachers</td>
<td>Nothing to add</td>
<td>General dissatisfaction with school/job</td>
<td>Help and encouragement from tutors/peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance II</td>
<td>Learner performance</td>
<td>Agrees with Simone</td>
<td>Feedback, tutor support</td>
<td>Exhausted</td>
<td>Hope to do better on next CARP</td>
<td>Pleasant atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance III</td>
<td>Mentoring helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

67 For the complete guiding questions of the interviews, see Appendices A–E.
### Table 7: Topical Overview Interview II (July 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Barbara</th>
<th>Simone</th>
<th>Ursula</th>
<th>(Daniela not present)</th>
<th>Melanie</th>
<th>Elisabeth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utterance I</td>
<td>Differences between second and first CARP</td>
<td>Much easier, concept familiar, time management, teamwork (&quot;Anita helped me a lot&quot;)</td>
<td>Time management, teamwork</td>
<td>Time management, team communication, high potential of research question</td>
<td>CARP concept familiar, less anxiety, topic familiar, presentation on CARPs for colleagues</td>
<td>Time management in CARP preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance II</td>
<td>A lot easier, CARP concept familiar, less pressure</td>
<td>Resolving team conflict, time management (&quot;we're becoming friends or something&quot;)</td>
<td>CARP concept familiar, time management, teamwork, unsuitable research question</td>
<td>Better experience, teaching a lesson in a proper class</td>
<td>Concept familiar, question more challenging, not confident with result, lower mark</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance III</td>
<td>Similar personalities, same approach to presenting</td>
<td>Lack of task support</td>
<td>Discipline problems, problematic school (&quot;not an easy school&quot;)</td>
<td>Easier than first CARP, concept familiar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance IV</td>
<td>Quantity of data (films and observation sheets)</td>
<td>Difficulty of online learning, no task support, question too broad</td>
<td>Satisfactory findings, similar results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance V</td>
<td>Concept familiar, less anxiety (presentation)</td>
<td>More systematic approach (&quot;triangulation&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance VI</td>
<td>Free choice of topic</td>
<td>Technical issues, video quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance VII</td>
<td>&quot;Contents love doing&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Topic G
Comment on data example pre-study (81% intimidated by the CARPs in the beginning)/Attitude towards the CARPs

| Utterance I | Intimidated, ("freaked out about the filming", "the whole disaster has to be filmed") | Worried about organisational issues (e.g. parents’ consent) | Lack of support, no instruction on data analysis | First CARP was "hard and shocking", implementing CARPs into teacher training | More confidence, task management | Felt intimidated at first, being marked, but clear expectations, less nervous (presentation) |
| Utterance II | Positive experience since first results, guides helpful | Not intimidated, teaching and presenting experience | Task management, hand puppet, language proficiency |
| Utterance III | Self-confidence, satisfied with lesson, critical about presentation (including everything) | Familiar with the concept of reflection, but not with action research ("official term") | Workload, benefits for students and teacher, plans to incorporate CARPs |

### Topic H
Influence of cultural and educational background on teaching (Do you teach as you were taught?)

| Utterance I | Living abroad for 10 years changes people, personality ("that’s not me at all") | Student–teacher relationship (e.g. US, DK, GER), trustful atmosphere in E-LINGO | Role of personality, own experiences with reform pedagogic schools | Own teachers as negative role models, language lab vs. communicative approach | German perfectionism, learning from negative role models, student-teacher relationship | Comparison E-LINGO with university courses in the UK |
| Utterance II | Role of personality, comparison to Simone | Teacher-student relationship depends on context (Brazil), primary school teacher | Teaching defined by context, EFL community globalised, teaching styles Bosnia-Herzegovina ("drills") vs. Austria ("creative") | Teaching styles Romania vs. Germany, own teaching style | Teaching styles depend on teacher training |
| Utterance III | Background/culture plays a role in forming identity | Own teachers shape expectations, but do not teaching style | Focusing on discipline and rules, different methods than own teachers (reform pedagogy) | Methods in FLTE programmes, experience |
| Utterance IV | More emphasis on speaking | Travelling, experiences abroad | Teaching depends on learners |
| Utterance V | More communicative | | Similar teaching styles |
### Table 8: Topical Overview Interview III (February 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic J</th>
<th>Scale from 1 to 10 (novice teacher – expert teacher) before (A) and after (B) E-LINGO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utterance I</td>
<td>(A: 1,5, B: 5), 6 months of experience before E-LINGO (&quot;I gained confidence through the knowledge&quot;), awareness through CARPs, expertise through time, involvement with research, grammar awareness (A: 10, B: 10), no change as a teacher, several years of teaching experience, different way of thinking about theories and research, self-perception (&quot;I didn’t know we have such a big impact&quot;), analysing teaching (A: 3,5, B: 7,5), lesson preparation, rationale for enrolling in E-LINGO, sceptical towards CARP concept (&quot;A new job&quot;), insecurities (filming), awareness about students’ needs (A: 6,5, B: 8,5), teaching experience, (&quot;I would never call myself an expert. NEVER!&quot;) , CARPs new and helpful to analyse and improve teaching, awareness (TBLL in primary school) (A: 6, B: 8), E-LINGO exceeded expectations, experiential learning, linking knowledge (&quot;It’s like a puzzle putting itself together&quot;) (A: 1, B: 7), no experience before E-LINGO, expertise through experience, lesson planning, theoretical knowledge, CARP opportunity to test theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance II</td>
<td>(A: 2, B: 5,5), comment on Anita’s rating, pedagogic background, teaching experience abroad, insecurities (&quot;I felt I wasn’t good enough&quot;), examples of good practice (confident teachers), learning from literature and video, “It keeps on working in your mind” (A: 3, B: 7,5), pedagogic background/modern theories, enthusiastic about teaching, no prior experience, insecurities (&quot;I learned to loosen up a bit&quot;), expertise and confidence through experience, English in different contexts, e.g. playground (A: 2, B: 7), expertise through experience, insecurity about teaching profession, organisational issues of CARPs (&quot;They were a pain in the neck&quot;), experiential learning (A: 2, B: 4), little prior experience, comparing herself to Nicole (&quot;she’s like the classic teacher&quot;), &quot;I just feel so scatterbrained sometimes&quot;), lesson plans for modules (&quot;busy work&quot;), CARP kept lesson focussed, negative tutor feedback on lesson plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance III</td>
<td>Agrees with Barbara (liking CARPs in particular, challenge of CARP, focus on projects) Liked CARPs in particular, challenge of CARP, focus on projects Liked CARP and presentation to &quot;Unterrichtsbesuch&quot; Expertise through a lifetime of experience (e.g. professors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance IV</td>
<td>All tasks well integrated, intuition plus theory Liked CARP I and III, CARP II (TBLL) was challenging Teacher learning, engagement with literature, observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance V</td>
<td>Team development, comparison with other teams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Topic K Classroom research the future

| Utterance I | No motivation/commitment ("too lazy", "no one kicks your ass"), workload, benefits Project work, not all the formalities, but certain elements of CARP (e.g. video analysis) Sharing experience with teacher trainees, workload, problem-based use (filming) Using CARP in teacher training, at a conference Only if needed, problem-based used CARPs very time consuming, problem-based use only |
| Utterance II | Alternative use, gaining understanding through literature ("the quotes really helped me") “For me, it’s like a mission”, teacher development through CARPs, career options (e.g. PhD) Benefits of filming Not every day, problem-based use Being filmed is self-assuring (positive self-perception) Alternative use, filming and reflection beneficial |

### Topic L Final Comment (Is there anything else you would like to say?)

| Utterance I | Always new things to learn (lifelong learning) Teamwork improved after the triadem became a tandem More time for last CARP |
| Utterance II | Workload didn’t change, team communication improved |

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In the second phase of teacher education in Germany (Referendariat), the student teachers’ performance is assessed by a committee in several trial lessons (Unterrichtsbesuche).

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6.3 Critical Learning Incidents – (Student) Teachers’ ‘Aha! Moments’

The topical overviews presented in the previous section give a first impression of the vast variety of topics addressed by the respondents in the group interviews. Adapting Nohl’s (2006: 46) criteria for a systematic selection of interview passages, I elicited a number of topics which were salient – either through their presence or their absence – within the systematic cross-case comparison of the 18 semi-structured group interviews with the (student) teachers. Most interview questions were deliberately formulated very openly (see section 5.5), so that the respondents had the opportunity to address any aspect of the CARPs and produce narrative responses, which are most conducive for the analysis (cf. Nohl 2006: 48). However, as the timeframe for the interviews was very narrow, most of the interview responses are not very long, which makes the distinction between the text genres description, argumentation and narration very difficult (see section 4.5.2). Thus, I focussed on passages directly relating to my research questions, passages containing affective and metaphoric language use indicating their importance for the (student) teachers, unusual responses and passages containing topics which also occurred in other cases.

In the following sections, selected topics discussed by the (student) teachers will be presented and systematically compared to each other. As Nohl (2010: 211) points out, the guiding topics in semi-structured interviews lend themselves to be used as *tertia comparationes*, the joint initial topic of all interviews for the comparison. The responses of the individual interviewees to the same questions are quite different, as Tables 6, 7 and 8 in section 6.2 indicate, and are therefore suitable for the comparative analysis. Through this ongoing cross-case comparison, the risk that “researchers analyse the text against the background of their own conceptions of normality, which are the result of experience, thought experiments, (common-sense) theories and/or past empirical research” is reduced and the interpretation is “methodologically controlled” (Nohl 2010: 203).

Considering my research questions as well as particularly noticeable interview passages with affective or metaphoric language use, unusual responses, etc., I selected relevant passages for the transcription⁶⁹ and further interpretation. Following the steps of the Documentary Method, a detailed ‘formulating interpretation’ (*What is said?*) of the data preceded a ‘reflecting interpretation’ (*How is it said?*), as explained

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⁶⁹ The transcription followed the guidelines of a simple transcription system (cf. Dresing, Pehl & Schmieder 2013: 27ff.). The guidelines for the transcription can be found in Appendix F.
in detail in sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2. At the stage of the reflecting interpretation of the selected excerpts, evidence from the supplementary data sources, the learning logs and portfolios, were incorporated in order to support or refute the findings from the interview analysis. Additionally, through my observation of the on-campus sessions and through informal conversations with the participants, I gained detailed insights into their biographies, e.g. their cultural and educational background, their individual teaching context, level of professional experience, their career objectives, etc. I took all these aspects into consideration in the second step of the analysis, the reflective interpretation, in order to understand the orientation frameworks of the participants, i.e. how they discussed the topics and what critical learning incidents they referred to.

During my analysis, I elicited eight different groups of CLIs and labelled them with informal phrases, which straightforwardly express the quintessence of the accounts discussed (see sections 6.3.1–6.3.8). In the first two sections 6.3.1 (‘Teamwork means team work’) and 6.3.2 (‘We learn together and from each other!’), I will look at different examples of topics and interaction patterns in the interviews in order to draw conclusions with regards to various aspects of cooperative learning as documented in the data. In section 6.3.3 (‘Now I understand the theory!’) and section 6.3.4 (This is action research? I can do that!), I will discuss data examples that illustrate the (student) teachers’ theoretical, conceptual and experiential learning. In sections 6.3.5 (‘The camera is not the enemy’), 6.3.6 (I’m a central figure in the teaching and learning context’) and 6.3.7 (‘My English isn’t good enough, Or is it?’), I will discuss several CLIs related to the (student) teachers’ self-perception and professional confidence in being an English teacher. Finally, in section 6.3.8 (‘Is teaching English to children my cup of tea?’), I will present data examples which relate to the (student) teachers’ commitment to the teaching profession and discuss their relevance for the findings of this study. In Chapter 7, when drawing together the findings from the analyses of various data examples, I will have a look at how the different types of critical learning incidents are interconnected and which factors seem to have the strongest influence on the (student) teachers’ professional development.
6.3.1 ‘Teamwork means teamwork’

“We had some discussions [...] we exploded once and then we solved it and now it’s fine [...] now, we had a really relaxed semester, we enjoy to talk to each other, we’re, I think, becoming friends or something.” (Patricia, Interview, July 2011)

As all CARPs had to be prepared, evaluated and presented in small teams (see section 3.5), the notion of cooperative development (see section 2.2.4) is a central principle of E-LINGO. At the same time, cooperative learning poses various challenges to the (student) teachers, as several topics related to difficulties within the teams revealed. All interviews were conducted as group interviews within the respective teams and me, the researcher. Therefore, not only the topics related to teamwork addressed, but also the way the interviews unfolded were highly interesting. In some cases, the respondents mostly answered my questions individually with no or only few references to each other and their shared CARP experiences, i.e. their “conjunctive spaces of experience” (Bohnsack 2010a: 105). In other groups, however, the interviews developed naturally as dialogues covering different topics of the shared experiences. These conversational interaction patterns revealed interesting aspects of the groups’ teamwork. The first group of critical learning incident (CLIs) I would like to discuss is the realisation of some (student) teachers that ‘teamwork actually means teamwork’, i.e. that successful teamwork involves some effort from the team members. Within the cohort investigated, preparing, evaluating and presenting the CARPs in a team evoked different experiences for the participants. One team in particular, Simone and Patricia, referred to their teamwork frequently in the interview data and shall therefore serve as a first example in exploring critical learning incidents related to teamwork.

When asked for a general comment on their first CARP experience (see Appendix A) at the second on-campus session towards the end of the first semester, their answers stood out in comparison to the other five groups. Whereas the majority of (student) teachers discussed the challenges of action research being a new concept for them and commented on practical and methodological aspects of engaging in CARPs, as will become apparent in the comparative analysis following the data
example, Simone and Patricia focussed on discussing the quality of their team work and responded as follows (Interview I, Topic C, Utterances I–IV70):

S1: Of course, the technical issues were difficult with sending the films (...) that was a bit of an issue, getting just the film material across to the other person, we already thought about like posting it the old-fashioned way, if nothing would work, right? (.) That was difficult. Once we had agreed on a topic, the first phase was very SMOOTH, looking for literature and agreeing on the hypotheses (.)71

P1: //Yeah, I think//

I: //Was it difficult to find a topic, or (.) not really?//

P2: No.

I: Good!

P3: No, but I think we are really good team partners, so we really worked well together and we had in the beginning this discussion, that was how we ARE I think, we really solved this easy (laughs)

S2: (laughs) Yeah, that's like (.) sometimes like we (.)

P4: //clash and then it's//

S3: //clash and (/) but that's a good opportunity to actually solve it, because if we clash (claps her hands), the other one knows where you're standing and I know what [Patricia's] attitude is and she knows what MINE is, because of this clash kind of. But then we're good at getting back together and agreeing on how to do it, so in the beginning for me that was kind of "Oh my God, now we kind of clash" (claps her hands) and I was so a bit like "Oh my God, if it continues like that, how are we going to figure it out?" But after this first experience of "OK, it's ok if we clash in between and if we argue and sometimes one of us is like (makes a grumbling sound to express that someone is unhappy with a certain situation), but we can figure it out", that was a good experience, just knowing we can figure it out afterwards, even if (.) we clash.

P5: Yes, and I think for us, our communication then it was fine, in the beginning it wasn't, but it wasn't our fault, it was more or less the computer's fault and (.) my mobile didn't work, it was more these technical things. And her computer crashed and so we had one or two weeks were we weren't in contact, we were very like "Argh, it can't be", and but then we worked it out and everything worked fine, so I think we have to have these phases as well while we have

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70 As explained in section 6.2, the topical overviews are condensed versions of the interview topics. Therefore, one utterance does not necessarily equal one single response or turn of a respondent. Several responses of an interviewee may be depicted as one utterance in the topical overview in order to enhance readability of the topical overviews. In the data examples, the individual turns will be numbered 1,2,3, etc.

71 In a simple transcription, as suggested by Pehl, Dresing and Schmieder (2013:27ff), the transcription is literate, but slightly polished (e.g. fillers like 'uhm' and slips of the tongue are not transcribed). Pauses and non-verbal expressions are indicated in brackets. The detailed transcription guidelines are to be found in Appendix F.
this discussion and to (.) because of our mentality we can deal with it as well, no one of us is offended and none of us want to have it more like (.) written in between so that you have to GUESS, what the other perhaps feels, so we're more DIRECT and sort this out. And therefore, everything what we had to do was really more or less then in harmony. We could argue about different opinions, but we always agreed then (.) to one result or yes, (.) so I think this was a really, really good semester for me.

The detailed formulating interpretation of what is said (see section 4.5.1.) by Simone and Patricia and the reflecting interpretation of how it is said (see section 4.5.2) in this interview passage clearly reveals the central topic ‘team experience/conflict’, i.e. their shared orientation framework of a critical learning incident, which Simone and Patricia both relate to after Simone’s initial utterance. First of all, Simone states that there were some technical problems (“sending the films”) in the beginning, but that preparing the CARP was not problematic (“first phase was very SMOOTH”), on which Patricia agrees. However, Patricia then explains that they did not have any problems on a content level, because of their good cooperation (“we are really good team partners”) and reveals that they had an argument about their personalities in the beginning. They both use the metaphor of a “clash” to further describe their argument. They both continue talking about how they solved their team problems and Patricia concludes that external factors (“it wasn't our fault, it was more or less the computer's fault”) caused the communication breakdown.

In particular, Simone’s and Patricia’s last two utterances (S4 and P5) are highly relevant in view of the research question due to their narrative character and the use of metaphoric language (cf. Nohl 2006: 46). The fact that Simone (S4) picks up the ‘clash’ metaphor established by Patricia, as well as her body language (clapping hands) and the use of para-verbal expressions (making a grumbling sound to express that someone is unhappy with a certain situation) indicates that the topic is of great importance to her. Her conversational performance indicates that their argument was severe, but also a positive experience, as they were able to solve the problem through open communication. Patricia (P5) offers an explanation for the argument by stating that they had technical problems with her phone and Simone’s computer. Then, she positively comments on their personalities and their capacity to solve this problem.

72 Only shortened versions of the formulating and reflecting interpretations will be provided due to the limited space within this thesis. For an example of a complete detailed formulating and reflecting analysis of an interview passage, see Appendix G.
By saying that it was a good semester for her, she emphasises the positive impact of their argument in retrospection.

The detailed formulating and reflecting interpretation of the interview passage revealed the importance of the topic ‘teamwork/conflict’ for Simone and Patricia. They only marginally addressed other topics in this and other interview sections. This becomes apparent when comparing their responses to those of other teams (cf. Bohnsack 2007: 327). When asked to comment on their first CARP experience, others talked about the general challenge of understanding and implementing the CARP concept (Barbara, Melanie, Elisabeth, Clarissa, Ursula), benefits of videography (Anita), the benefits of tutor support (Clarissa), difficulties in finding a school (Rebecca), difficulties in adapting to a new school context (Karen), methodological aspects of working with CARPs (Nicole), or surprisingly good CARP results (Daniela) (cf. Table 6, Topic C in section 6.2). All of those topics relate to individual experiences with action research. Even though all (student) teachers prepared and evaluated the first CARP in teams, none of them commented on the quality of their teamwork except Simone and Patricia. However, this does not mean that teamwork did not play a role for the other teams, as further analysis will show.

Not only the topics addressed, but also the way the interview with Simone and Patricia developed, revealed information about the nature of their teamwork. They pick up each other’s topics, interrupt each other and generally answer my questions together rather than separately. In their second interview (July 2011), they pick up the topic ‘teamwork’ again as a first topic when asked to comment on the difference between the first and the second CARP (see Appendix B) and state that the second semester worked better than the first one for them (Interview II, Topic F, Utterances I–III):

S1: We were better in time management, I think, and we had (,) our first struggles we had with the first CARP and the first semester I would say, so NOW (,) we were a better team, I would say.

P1: I think we WERE already a good team.

S2: //Yes//

P2: //but we// had some discussions in December but this were actually not our faults, they were more like outside problems, but we didn’t know and so we exploded once and then we solved it and now it’s fine. And I think after that we were already a good, but the time management for the first CARP was
terrible and I was very upset with this again (laughs), so it was one day before or something, but I heard some stories here worse so I think it wasn’t so bad at all and now we had a really relaxed semester, we (.) enjoy to talk to each other, we’re, I think, becoming friends or something.

S3: //Yes we are //

P3: //We are friends already (laughs)//

S4: drinking Caipirinhas\textsuperscript{73} and all (laughs)

P4: No, we exchanged personal details as well, which I think is good for having a better atmosphere and we understand each other very well, if something happens which is now not ideal than we can support each other as well.

S5: Yes, and we know what’s important for the other person and what’s really important and that the creative things are important for both of us and having some entertainment as well while presenting (.)

The interpretation of this passage revealed that Patricia attributed the team difficulties not to either Simone or herself, but to “outside problems”, i.e. technical problems with their communication, as they discussed in the first interview (cf. Table 6, section 6.2). Furthermore, Simone’s utterances indicate the realisation that getting to know each other on a personal level and finding out not only about differences but similarities (“the creative things are important for both of us”) is important in trying to make a team work. The fact that both of them are very relaxed as indicated by topics (“drinking Caipirinhas”) and non-verbal expressions (laughter) in the course of the interview shows that they have managed to overcome their difficulties successfully.

A second example that helps illustrate the CLI ‘Teamwork means team work’ is an interview passage from the third interview with Ursula and Karen in February 2012. Their team had been a team of three (tridem) for the first year of E-LINGO, but Marina dropped out of the course due to personal circumstances. During their first year, the three of them had a few problems with their team work and communication, as I learned from the tutors at the on-campus session and from informal conversations. The example shows how group dynamics as well as personal relationships can change due to overall changes in the group constellation. When asked to describe what changed when they went from being a tridem to being a tandem, Karen and Ursula explained (Interview III, Topic L, Utterances I–II):

\textsuperscript{73} Simone is referring to a get-together the night before the presentation and the interview, which they had told me about at the beginning of the interview.
K1: We experienced that in this term, we (.) were a team. And we were a team in a way a team is supposed to be working together, because before – that’s from my side – I always felt bad talking to [Ursula] when [Marina] wasn’t there, which is why we didn’t support each other, we didn’t (.)

U1: We didn’t dare it!

K2: We didn’t DARE working together, because we felt bad about not including [Marina], but (.) she wasn’t there, so we were just working on our own for about a year and this term we just thought: “We were so stupid.”

U2: (laughs) Yes, we were.

K3: We could have supported each other SO much more.

U3: From the very first day, yeah. It would have been so much easier!

At several stages later in the interview, Karen and Ursula clarify that they are not blaming Marina for their rather dysfunctional teamwork in the first semesters, but rather analyse their own responsibilities in it in retrospect. In contrast to Patricia and Simone, the team with Karen, Ursula and Marina avoided the conflict in the beginning of their cooperation and chose to work individually (“working on our own for about a year”) instead of openly addressing their problems, which they consider as “stupid” (K2, U2) in retrospect, realising later how much they can benefit from each other’s support. This realisation can be interpreted as an indicator for a CLI, as both Karen and Ursula understand that they could have worked better as a team if they had attempted to communicate the difficulties either with each other or including Marina. Similar to Simone and Patricia, the two worked closer together in the second half of E-LINGO and became friends, visiting each other and even engaging in team teaching. Karen’s and Ursula’s experience can be interpreted as another example of the CLI ‘Teamwork means team work.’ They realised that communication and team effort is needed for successful cooperation. Ursula reflects on her experience in her final portfolio and draws conclusions for her own teaching practice:

The incidents within our team and the discussions about who is doing what changed my perception of teamwork in general. I learned to value good teamwork as a supportive and constructive way to solve tasks with high demands. In contrast teamwork can be much more difficult than working on your own in case the communication does not work efficiently. […]

74 Marina spent some time with her family in Bangladesh and afterwards decided to drop out of the course.
This understanding has a major influence on my teaching practice. I therefore very carefully consider whether or not to use teamwork in class. When using it, I integrate communication forums, which the learners can use to reflect upon their team and the work they have done. In those forums, there is no right and no wrong. Every child is allowed to express everything, which is relevant to further the group results. My role in these meetings is to mediate and to reflect the children’s expectations and to provide feedback on how the group members may communicate better and value each other. (Ursula, Portfolio, July 2012)

At the final on-campus-session, both of the programme’s tutors, Josephine and Valerie, commented on E-LINGO in general and the cohort investigated for the research project in particular. When I asked them to describe what happens with the (student) teachers through the involvement in CARPs, Josephine addressed the notion of teamwork as a central aspect of the CARPs:

[...] To begin with, everybody thinks of being in a group where they have most of the advantages to themselves, so they want to be in a group where they can profit, benefit from each other. And then, in the course of time, when we communicate that it doesn’t really matter, who is in the group [...] the success is to collaboratively put together a successful project and it doesn’t really matter how good individual people are but how much they reflect on what is happening [...] (Josephine, E-LINGO Tutor, Interview III, February 2012)

In her comment, Josephine draws on several years of experience with E-LINGO and the cooperative nature of the tasks and confirms Patricia’s and Simone’s as well as Karen’s and Ursula’s realisation that communication is the key to a successful project by highlighting the importance of individually or cooperatively “reflect[ing] on what is happening”. Other teams had communication problems and difficulties due to different levels of commitment towards the cooperative task and different working styles, as I further learned in informal conversations as well as from the programme’s tutors. Yet, these difficulties were not addressed by the respective (student) teachers in the interviews, learning logs and portfolios. As I only learned about these problems via third persons instead of finding them documented in the data of the respective teams, I have no knowledge of why and how these conflicts were caused and if and how they were solved.

In general, the findings of the analysis of CLI related to ‘teamwork’ suggest that being put into a team in order to cooperatively prepare, evaluate and present a complex task such as a classroom action research project in a blended-learning environment posed a challenge to the majority of the E-LINGO teams. Some of the teams participating in this case study encountered problems during their cooperation
at some point and were able to communicate these problems and solve them in favour of a productive cooperation (Patricia and Simone); others avoided the conflict and the cooperation altogether until the group constellation changed (Karen and Ursula); and yet others found ways of working together without sharing any thoughts on it in their learning logs, the portfolios or in the interviews with me. The fact that Simone and Patricia as well as Karen and Ursula did address these issues openly and honestly in the interviews and were able to overcome their difficulties – actively or passively – indicates their cooperative development. The introductory quote highlights this assumption. Patricia explains that they “exploded once and then solved it and now it’s fine.” She concludes that they are “becoming friends or something” (Patricia, Interview II, October 2011). The same holds true for Karen and Ursula, who became close friends after a change in their group dynamics. In sum, it became clear that cooperative learning involves efforts of all those involved and that communication and critical reflection are the keys to the successful completion of the task. The implications of this CLI will be further discussed in section 7.1 with reference to the literature on interpersonal development.

6.3.2 ‘We learn together and from each other!’

“I had the end product on my mind but didn’t know how to get there. Somehow [Anita] organized the chaos of my ideas and just by talking to her we managed to fit the puzzle together. All of a sudden, it all fell into place.” (Barbara, Learning Log, 04.05.2011)

The example of Karen and Ursula referred to in the previous section includes a second learning incident: not only does teamwork mean team work, but also it enhances ‘learning together and from each other’. Their example showed that an experience of team difficulty can change in favour of a positive team experience once the group dynamics have changed. Other teams did not discuss the nature of their teamwork as extensively in the interviews as Simone and Patricia and Ursula and Karen did. For example, Nicole and Daniela do not mention the fact that they worked in a team at any point in the interviews and did not relate to any shared orientation frameworks. This was rather unusual in the comparative analysis; therefore, their example shall be the starting point to explore a group of CLIs related to ‘learning together and from each other’. They answered all of my questions individually and referred to their individual experiences rather than any shared experiences. On the
one hand, this could simply mean that teamwork was not an issue for the two and that they worked together very well. On the other hand though, it raises the question of how their teamwork was and how much they benefitted from the cooperation. The analysis of Nicole’s portfolio revealed that she evaluated their teamwork as quite functional and satisfying:

Immediately after the face-to-face meeting my team-partner and I started with the first CARP and I was deeply impressed how good our team work was. My team partner’s work at a bilingual kindergarten fitted perfectly to my work with first graders in a school for children with special needs in learning. We could compare notes and results very well. That was very helpful during all CARPs and during the first one in particular. We were able to learn a lot by our team work and to be honest I wonder how our tutors were able to form the teams that good. (Nicole, Portfolio, July 2012)

By saying that she was “deeply impressed” with their teamwork, which she considered “very helpful”, Nicole indicates that she had learned from the cooperation through “comparing notes and results.” However, her utterance remains on a general level; she does not give a detailed account of what she learned from working with Daniela. The examination of Nicole’s learning log further indicates that she was very satisfied working with Daniela, as she describes how concerned she was when she learned that she might have to change teams:

I was totally terrified when [Josephine] said that we must split up our team when [Daniela] would not be able to attend the next face-to-face meeting. I’m so glad that we find the solution that [Daniela] and I will present our CARP to a group of students in Freiburg at the beginning of July 2011 and I can do it again on the next meeting to our cohort. It's only an additional day for me and as I have not to take a day off that won't be a problem. And besides that we'll have a nice afternoon in Freiburg together what is also great. The reason for that is that our team work was a really good team work and it’s a pleasure to work with my team partner. To compare notes with someone who is working in a kindergarden (and is a native speaker) is a fantastic way to learn because she has always a closer look into different aspects of a topic than I. (Nicole, Learning Log, 19.02.2011)

The learning log reveals that Nicole values the fact that Daniela “is working in a kindergarden (and is a native speaker)”. As Nicole is a non-native speaker of English, she seems to benefit from working with Daniela. Her affective language use (“terrified”) further indicates that she would not have liked to change groups. In Daniela’s data, however, I could not find any comment on their teamwork. She only mentioned her team partner’s name a few times in different contexts, but does not

75 Emphasis (bold print) added.
express any thoughts on their cooperation or benefit from the team experience. The fact that there was no reference to any shared experience in the interviews suggests that the experiences of Nicole and Daniela might have taken place on different levels. Nicole seems to have been able to benefit from working with Daniela, whereas there is no evidence as to how and to what extent Daniela has benefitted from working with Nicole, as intended by the programme’s tutors (see section 3.4). I will further explore reasons for this in section 6.3.3 and section 6.3.8.

Other participants also expressed how highly they valued the cooperation during the CARPs, as indicated in the topical overview (cf. Tables 6, 7 and 8 in section 6.2) and in the additional data sources. For example, Barbara gives credit to her team partner Anita in her diary for helping her structure the final phase of her CARP:

**Today I was very glad about having a tandem partner.** Due to my private tumult of moving soon from Cambodia to the UK, I felt a bit overwhelmed with all the challenges to come. I thought I wasn’t moving on in E-Lingo. I wanted to get the planning of the final CARP lesson done, but couldn’t put all my different ideas together into a fitting concept. Something was missing. I had the end product on my mind but didn’t know how to get there. *Somehow [Anita] organized the chaos of my ideas and just by talking to her we managed to fit the puzzle together.* All of a sudden, it all fell into place. Ideas I had abandoned now proved to be the missing piece and fitted perfectly together76 (Barbara, Learning Log, 04.05.2011).

She also referred to this incident again in the second interview in July 2011, when I asked them to make a comment on how the second CARP was different from the first (Interview II, Topic F, Utterance I):

But then at the end I felt like it was getting too much. I couldn’t really (.), at some point I didn’t know how to fit it all together (..) and then luckily [Anita] came in (laughs) and I told her all my ideas and then she really helped me a lot to bring it to the main point; I mean, I had ideas before, but as I had so many ideas by that time, at the end I had to finish it, I just had totally forgotten about it, so (laughs), but [Anita] helped me a lot then.

As Barbara refers to the incident again in the interview, it can be assumed that it played an important role for her. Retrospectively, she laughs about her difficulties to finalise the CARP, but openly admits that she had lost track towards the end of the procedure and gladly accepted Anita’s help. As this example illustrates, Barbara had many teaching ideas and was able to find a focus together with her team partner

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76 Emphasis (bold print) added.
Anita. Hence, Barbara benefitted greatly from the teamwork and the example displays the notion of positive interdependence.

Furthermore, some participants who did not explicitly relate to the orientation framework ‘team experience’ in the interviews addressed topics related to this orientation framework in other data sources. For example, Clarissa comments on how working in teams can help overcome the challenges of online learning when she writes:

As regards the demands of the course, I think one problem for me may be the motivation. As I have no-one looking over my shoulder, I may find it difficult to push myself. I do think the partner work will keep me on track. I never like to let anyone down and am sure to keep up to date if I know someone is relying on me. (Clarissa, Learning Log, 19.10.2010)

Clarissa’s comment is highly interesting in view of the discussed challenges of distance and online foreign language teacher education as discussed in section 2.1.4. Not only face-to-face meetings but also virtual cooperation seem to help overcome the feeling of isolation and contribute to positive interdependence, as Clarissa states to feel responsible for her work due to the fact that another person depends on her (“relying on me”).

Apart from comments on their team partners, several (student) teachers discussed their CARP experience in reference to other people offering them support while being involved in the action research process. One important aspect in the accomplishment of the CARPs seems to have been the tutor support. Whereas some teams were satisfied with the tutor support, others criticised a lack thereof. When Karen and Ursula were asked in the second interview (July 2011) about their opinion on the CARP concept after their second experience, they responded as follows (Interview II, Topic F, Utterances II–IV):

U1: I still agree on the CARP concept, the only thing (.) I would (.) have loved [the tutor] to kind of warn us: “Look, hey guys, this is a perfect question, very good, but PLEASE be aware of the workload. So please, slow down and focus.” And that would have been her /

K1: her responsibility for us (laughs) to do, but she did the contrary. And she said it again now “Why did you focus on these things, why didn't you open it up?” and so on and it's (.) I think sometimes (.) it's just, that's distance, that's distance (.) We cannot get across, how we're feeling, how (.) sometimes, we're just stuck, we don't know where to go, what to do and in this case, the task support failed totally.
I: Ok.

K2: But it’s maybe also our fault, because we didn’t really communicate, but, you know, the thing is, with the research question (?) that’s when I would have expected a warning.

U2: Yeah, that’s it.

K3: That’s when I would have expected a warning “Be careful, it’s a great thing, BUT (.) think of //((inc.))//

U3: //a reduction//

Clearly, they are suggesting that more tutor support would have helped them narrow down their research question in order to make it feasible in the scope of a CARP. At the same time, Karen mentions the communication challenges involved in distance learning (“that’s distance, we cannot get across, how we’re feeling”). Later in the same interview, Karen further commented on the lack of instruction and support in terms of data analysis (Interview II, Topic G, Utterance I):

And the other thing is as well that it’s all about data, data analysis, what you found out and so on. We haven’t had one single lesson of instruction on how to go about that, we ALL know how to set up a research question, now, but we have NO idea how to (. ) what to do and so on. Ok, we’ve got that book, I can read the book, I can do that, but what’s relevant for this CARP? And so on and I have the feeling that everybody is kind of (. ) floating around (laughs) and not knowing, without knowing /

In this utterance, it becomes obvious that Karen would have wished for more guidance and support in view of the analysis of the data. Interestingly, other (student) teachers did not seem to have found collecting and analysing data as challenging anymore after the second CARP. For example, Anita found that the literature provided, as well as her first experiences, helped her understand the procedure (Interview II, Topic G, Utterance II):

When we had the first meeting, the first presentation, and the student from an ex-E-LINGO cohort explained us how to do it, this helped a lot, but still weren’t sure, we had so many question marks everywhere, but then doing it and having all these guides (. ) leading you step by step, this was quite a good support.

These two contrasting opinions exemplify how different the (student) teachers’ needs for task support are. Whereas Karen wished for more instructions, Anita was satisfied with an example, her own experiences and the literature on CARPs provided. The statements have in common that some form of task support is considered helpful and useful by the (student) teachers, as I will further discuss in section 7.1.
The programme’s tutors, Josephine and Valerie, also commented on their role in supporting the cooperative learning processes in online communication and emphasise the difficulty of giving written feedback during the online phases (Tutor interview, February 2012):

J: [...] We believe strongly in learning from each other, sharing personal experiences and I think we try to be a model, we always try to be polite and nice. It’s very intensive when we communicate in writing, we try to be understanding and supportive and we try to be models, don’t we?

V: It's really hard to get that across in writing, often you have to be very careful about what you write and to make sure that you write the right things and you can't do smileys and things like that.

These utterances indicate that the tutors find it difficult at times to offer task support and communicate during the online phases. As Valerie points out, they “have to be very careful about what [they] write and to make sure that [they] write the right things” in order to get the message across and avoid misunderstandings. Obviously, the written communication between (student) teachers and tutors is challenging for both sides. Since the need for task support of individual (student) teachers varies greatly, as the examples of Karen and Simone have demonstrated exemplarily, the key for appropriate support from the tutors in accomplishing a complex task such as an action research project lies in the quality of communication between (student) teachers and tutors. In sum, topics explicitly or implicitly relating to ‘learning together and from each other’ were to be found in all data sources. Apart from cooperation with the team partner, also the support through tutors, colleagues and friends were discussed in this orientation framework (cf. Tables 6, 7, 8) and helped elicit different types of CLI, by finding slight differences in similar topics and orientation frameworks (Bohnsack 1989: 374).

6.3.3 ‘Now I understand the theory!’

"[T]he CARP about task-based language learning was very impressive for me, because I would have never suggested that it is possible to use the approach of task-based language learning in the primary." (Nicole, Interview I, February 2011)

As the literature suggests, engaging in action research leads to the formation of knowledge that is relevant to the teaching context in which the research is conducted.
(see section 2.3). This was widely confirmed by this case study. In the interviews as well as in the supplementary data sources, learning logs and portfolios, various CLIs documented that the (student) teachers had gained knowledge through their involvement in the CARPs. I labelled these learning incidents ‘Now I finally understand the theory!’ to highlight the fact that it is not necessarily new knowledge, but a different kind of knowledge that the (student) teachers gained.

As a starting point, I will refer to the interview passage the introductory quote stems from. This passage was selected for a detailed analysis for two reasons. First of all, Nicole is able to give a concrete example of theoretical knowledge acquired through the CARP experience. Secondly, the answers of Nicole and her team partner Daniela appeared to be extremely different in view of their orientation frameworks, i.e. how they responded and what kind of learning incidents they described, as the formulating and reflecting interpretation summarised below confirmed. In this last interview, the respondents were handed a sheet with a scale from 1 to 10. One end of the scale (1) was labelled ‘novice’, the other end (10) was labelled ‘expert’ (see Appendix D). I asked them to rank themselves on the scale at two different points in time, first at the very beginning of E-LINGO, before the start of the first semester, and secondly, after the end of the third semester (point in time of the interview), and mark on the scale wherever they saw/see themselves, comment on their choice and explain what had happened during the three semesters of E-LINGO. As a follow-up question, I asked for concrete learning incidents. The team Nicole and Daniela answered as follows (Interview III, Topic J, Utterances I–II):

N1:  Yeah, that’s quite a problem, because I’ve been an English teacher (.) before the course

I:  Also a teacher of English to children?

N2:  Yeah, I the licence to teach before

I:  //But that’s fine//

N3:  //and I would never say// that I’m an expert. NEVER! [inc.] So maybe today, should I mark it here? (points at scale) Maybe at the moment I’m here (marks the scale at 8.5) and before E-LINGO I’ve been here (marks the scale at 6.5).

I:  Ok, and what happened through E-LINGO, throughout the time?

N4:  For me the CARPs were the most important part (.) I was not used to the concept of classroom action research and I saw that this method was VERY helpful to analyse (.) my lessons and to analyse my teaching and to improve it.
And for me that was the MOST important part, because the work on the units and the work on literature that was all I’ve (.) yeah, I’ve done before, but the CARP was really new and that was really the point to see on special aspects of my teaching.

I: Ok, could you describe any learning incidents you had through the CARPs?

N5: Yeah, for example the CARP about task-based language learning was VERY impressive for me, because I would have never suggested that it is possible to use the approach of task-based language learning in the primary. And using this for the CARP – it was a given topic, so I had never chosen it – I realised, ok, it is possible when I break it down to the very, very base (..) That was my main learning incident (.) and that it is possible to analyse lessons and teaching DURING the doing, so during the process.

I: Ok, thank you. How about you, [Daniela]?

D1: Ok, A [the beginning of E-LINGO] is easier, because I was definitely in the novice area (..) and I didn’t have a background as a teacher and (.) but at the point when we started I have been working with kindergarten kids for one year and I went to some seminars which is (.) would help me the most and then (even?) go programming and doing research, so I was gaining more experience and getting to know what I was doing, so (laughs nervously) I put myself not quite completely a novice, but somewhere in there (marks the scale at 2). And then I’m not sure where to put myself now, because (..) like when I look at what [Nicole] does, she’s a great partner (to have?), because she has so much experience (laughs) and so much of a background in education and (.)

I: But you had completely different starting points, I mean /

D2: Yes, but I mean like she’s always so organised and she always has everything (.) she’s thought of everything! You know like the classic teacher. She’s just extremely well-prepared and I just feel so scatterbrained sometimes and I just think, you know, of course that’s what comes from teacher training and years of practice and I didn’t have all that (.) So I don’t wanna put myself too far up the scale (.), but I mean I feel like I did GAIN and I gained from the experience, especially that I had for two years working with kindergarten kids, so maybe three or four (ranks herself at 4), which MAYBE is modest, I feel like (.) but especially ‘cause I’ve only been working with the younger children, so I have no experience (laughs) practically at all with (.) primary.

I: So, would you say the CARPs had any kind of influence on you and this development or was it more the overall E-LINGO course, the modules, the materials, the texts?77

D3: For me (..) Yeah, probably the CARPs helped the most, because (.) Like when we do lesson plans for the modules, you never use the lesson plan, so it just seems like busy work and that’s really frustrating (laughs) which we’ve often discussed (.) The CARP you actually did a lesson, so everything had a point and a purpose and was planned out for a reason, so I would say that was more (laughs/giggles) helpful than the modules.

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77 This question is poorly formulated as it leads the respondent in a certain direction. The impact of this question on the respective answer will be discussed in detail in the consecutive interpretation.
Could you describe, like [Nicole] did, a critical learning incident? (...) Like an "aha moment" where you really had a key (...) experience within the classroom during the CARP? Or was that just your general impression?

An actual "aha moment"? I don't know. But for me, like the overall process, 'cause for me what I like is just that going into a lesson with everything very well planned out, like not that I didn't do that on my own, but the CARP kept everything very focused for me, so I would say it's helping me get on the right track (laughs/giggles), but I don't know (laughs), I don't always get great feedback, so /

Nicole states that the CARP concept is of particular importance for her learning process, because it was new to her. The fact that Nicole points out that the CARP concept, in contrast to the other course content, was new to her supports the assumption that she had gained a lot of teaching experience before. Her saying that she has learned to use action research as a tool to analyse and improve her teaching practice indicates an awareness of her learning process, hence she is able to describe her learning on a meta-level. The description of this learning process continues in her third response (N3) and is in line with her attitude expressed in her first response (N1) that even after having been a teacher for a while there are always new things to learn ("I would never say that I'm an expert. NEVER!").

The learning incident she describes, i.e. realising that it is possible to use task-based language learning in the primary school, shows that Nicole had prior knowledge and assumptions about TBLT. At the same time, a gap between her theoretical and practical knowledge becomes apparent. She had learned about TBLT before, but she had never tried out working with tasks in the primary school, because she assumed that it would not work. Through the CARP on TBLT she experienced that TBLT does work in the primary school under certain preconditions ("it is possible when I break it down to the very, very base"). This clearly indicates a learning process, in that Nicole has enlarged her theoretical knowledge of TBLT through experiential learning.

In contrast to the learning process documented in Nicole’s utterances, Daniela’s answer is seemingly on a completely different level, as already indicated in section 6.3.2. Having little experience, she ranks herself lower on the scale for the beginning of E-LINGO, but hesitates to rank herself according to her current experience level. Apart from referring to own experiences and knowledge gained, she also compares herself to Nicole. After I had pointed out that Nicole and Daniela had completely different starting points, implying that it is normal that their professional
development differs, Daniela starts to describe Nicole as well-organised and well-prepared ("classic teacher") and herself as unorganised or disoriented ("scatterbrained"). Daniela explicitly uses the orientation frameworks established in her previous utterance by comparing herself to Nicole and making references to her prior experiences. Her description of Nicole and the use of the expression “classic teacher” indicates that she has developed a certain perception of the typical characteristics of a teacher which Nicole meets much more than she herself does. This entails the notion of an ‘ought-to self’, i.e. an image of a teacher she is supposed to be, a “well-organised, well-prepared and classic teacher” such as Nicole. She further argues that these features are closely related to teacher training and professional experience. Based on her utterances and through comparing herself with Nicole, rating herself at 3 or 4 seems plausible. However, her comment on the choice (“which is maybe modest”) indicates that she might have ranked herself higher on the scale if she had not compared herself directly with Nicole. Interestingly, in comparison with the other (student) teachers, she ranked herself the lowest after the third semester. Other (student) teachers with similar professional experience, rated themselves higher at the end of E-LINGO, e.g. Clarissa: 7, Simone: 7.5, Karen: 7, Rebecca: 7, Barbara: 5.5 (cf. Table 8, Topic J, Utterances 1–2), which might indicate low confidence and maybe even intimidation by working with someone much more experienced such as Nicole.

Daniela states that the CARPs have helped her more than the modules in developing as a teacher, because she experienced the CARPs as purposeful work. She considers designing lesson plans that are not actually put into practice as “frustrating” and describes them as “busy work”. However, she only further elaborates on these issues because she was directly asked (I: So, would you say that the CARPs had any kind of influence on you and this development or was it more the overall E-LINGO course, the modules, the materials, the texts?). This is a leading question, as it implies that either the CARPs or other elements of E-LINGO (e.g. the modules) had led to her perceived development and is clearly an interview flaw caused by me. However, her reasoning still gives interesting insights, as it illustrates that only a purposeful activity has a learning effect for her. Daniela cannot recall a critical learning incident while being engaged in the CARPs. She states that having the lesson planned out helped her maintain an overview and stay focused in the lesson. Yet she also expresses doubts by saying that the tutor’s feedback on her CARPs is not
always positive. Daniela cannot describe a learning incident in relation to the CARPs, but describes a learning incident that is of a very general nature in teacher learning. She addresses the issue of lesson planning and states that it is important for her having clearly structured lessons and staying focused. Of course, lesson planning is part of every CARP, but was not the focus of the three E-LINGO CARPs. Daniela’s description of a rather general learning incident instead of a more CARP-related learning incident can be interpreted in different ways. One possibility is that she was unable to focus on a specific detail of the teaching and learning context, simply because she is at the very beginning of learning and needs to develop an understanding of teaching and being a teacher on a general level first. Therefore, her reflections on the importance of lesson plans could be an indicator of her professional development, not necessarily through engaging in action research, but on a more general level. Another possibility, supporting the previously made interpretation of a lack of commitment, is that she does not consider the CARP concept relevant. I will further discuss this issue in section 6.3.7. In view of theoretical learning, it can be summarised that Nicole gained theoretical and conceptual knowledge about TBLT, whereas Daniela benefitted from practical knowledge, i.e. working with a lesson plan.

A few other examples in reference to this question will help illustrate CLI in the framework of theoretical and conceptual learning. Melanie, who already had had some teaching experience before starting E-LINGO, states in the same interview in February 2012 (Interview III, Topic J, Utterance I):

I’m already an English teacher, so (...) I knew some things before I started with E-LINGO (laughs) [...] before E-LINGO, I was bit afraid that there was nothing new for me in the course of studies, but actually, I’ve learned so much, it’s more like a picture or puzzle putting itself together now, it’s more connected and there were insights into new things, like the whole intercultural competence thing. We had talked about it at my first university, but it was just like something in my brain that I had never really done and with the CARPs I (...) HAD to do it, and that was good (laughs), because now I know what they’re talking about and I feel more comfortable about repeating it in the future.

Melanie’s statement is interesting from different perspectives. First of all, her assumption that she might not learn anything new indicates that she feels quite confident with her previous education. Yet she describes that her knowledge has grown ("insights into new things") and that her previous theoretical knowledge ("something in my brain that I had never really done") is being linked ("more
connected”) through her experiences with CARPs and helped her develop a more holistic understanding of the teaching and learning context (“like a picture or puzzle putting itself together”). Also, she links understanding theoretical concepts (“I know what they’re talking about”) to feeling more comfortable in her teaching practice. The notion of professional confidence as discussed in section 2.2.1 will play a central role in the following sections on various CLI.

As a further example of learning with and from theory, I would like to refer to a response from Barbara, who explained in the last interview that she gained an understanding of theoretical concepts through the CARPs (Barbara, Interview III, Topic K, Utterance II):

> What I found very interesting this time, that was the first time happening in the third CARP, that the quotes REALLY helped me, because reading the quotes, I mean of course obviously in the beginning you scan through the literature and look what suits your hypothesis, but later on with the result I really realised I really could understand a lot of quotes, it was sort of the experience which I made during the CARPs.

Her example shows that, through being involved in the CARP and through experiential learning, Barbara managed to make sense of aspects discussed in the relevant literature (“the quotes REALLY helped me”). She admits that she initially only dealt with the literature superficially as they were required to support their hypotheses with statements and theoretical concepts (“you scan through the literature and look what suits your hypothesis”), but actually came to understand theoretical concepts after having experienced the CARP and analysing the findings (“later on with the result I really realised I really could understand a lot of quotes”). This strongly indicates that Barbara learned theoretical concepts through experientially engaging with them in the scope of the CARPs. In sum, as the findings in the framework ‘Now I understand the theory!’ indicate, the knowledge gained through the engagement in action research is not the same for everyone. In the case of Nicole, Patricia and Melanie, it became obvious that it is not necessarily new knowledge which is gained, but rather experiential, practical knowledge embedded in the context of the teaching situation. As the interpretation of Patricia’s and Melanie’s examples revealed, action research can help establish links between knowledge of different areas and thereby contribute to a more holistic understanding of teaching and learning in general. Daniela’s example has shown that not necessarily action research but teaching practice in general may lead to critical learning incidents for
inexperienced teachers. For her, working with a clearly structured lesson plan was an important experience to keep her teaching in order and focused.

6.3.4 'This is action research? I can do that!'

“[Action research is] not as academic and impossible as it seems to be.” (Elisabeth, Interview, February 2011)

Another group of CLIs I consider important in view of my research questions is the growing understanding of what research in general and action research in particular is. Particularly in the first interview, when the (student) teachers had just experienced their first CARP and presented the results at the second on-campus session in February 2011, changing attitudes towards research and action research were documented in the data. Before engaging in the CARPs, some of the participants had a different understanding of research in general and action research in particular than afterwards. I consider a growing understanding of what research is and acknowledging one's own capability to do research as a critical learning incident and labelled it 'This is research? I can do that!' to express the two aspects of this learning incident. I have found indicators for learning incidents throughout the data. The following examples illustrate a change of knowledge about research as well as a change of attitude towards the concept of research in general or action research in particular. As a first example, I will refer to a short passage from the first interview with Elisabeth and Clarissa in February 2011. I asked the participants to comment on their first CARP experience and whether or not their attitude towards the concept has changed. Elisabeth’s answer in particular reveals information about her previous attitude towards research (Interview I, Topic C, Utterance VI):

E1: When I heard about the CARP, I thought ‘Hm, it sounds so important and so (.) wissenschaftlich’? (searching for the English word)

C1: //Scientific//

I: //Academic//

E2: Academic. And I haven't done any academic things for the last 20 years, so I thought how could I come up to the level to do these things, but at least it worked. It's not as academic and impossible as it seems to be (laughs).

The reformulating and reflecting interpretation of Elisabeth's responses led to the understanding that Elisabeth's attitude towards the CARP concept has changed. When
she first heard of it, she evaluated the CARPs as something “important” and “academic” (E2). Stating not to have done any academic work for a long time and wondering how she can succeed in the CARP, indicates that she did not feel very confident about the CARP. The metaphoric language use, to “come up to the level” (E2), indicates that she considers research to be on a higher difficulty level than her regular work and that it will be difficult for her to accomplish this task. However, after her experience, she realised that the CARP is not “as academic and impossible” (E2) as she thought. Hence, it can be assumed that the way she conceptualised research was different from what she experienced as research through the CARPs. Yet, from Elisabeth’s example, I did not learn anything about what exactly she considered “academic” and “impossible”.

In this regard, Simone documented an interesting stance on action research as the following two utterances from the first interview show. To the same question in the second interview, on whether or not their opinion about the CARP had changed, Simone responded as follows (Interview I, Topic D, Utterance V/Topic E, Utterance I):

For me it's a bit ambiguous, I still think it's a lot of work. We've had interesting results and due to the fact that we had different groups, it's even more detailed. But still you can't look at it like it being (.) quantitative research, like it's done in books. It's still true for our contexts and it's still limited, kind of [...]

I think it helps to better drive home the message, because I won't forget about THAT one, having experienced it and having presented it, it will stick to my mind and I won't forget this experience, but on the other hand, you look at all the work and then, as you said, it proves what has already been written (.) that's kind of the (in between?). It's good because this way I’ve experienced it myself, and you know all the theory behind doing it yourself will, yeah, make it better memorable, and it surely did.

Simone’s responses entail different implications. First of all, it becomes obvious that she also conceptualises research in general within a positivistic/quantitative framework, which differs a lot from action research (“But still you can't look at it like it being quantitative research, like it's done in books. It's still true for our contexts and it's still limited”). By describing action research as limited and context-bound, she is showing an understanding of the practices and purposes in action research. Later, in referring to her experiences with action research, she explains how experiential learning helps her memorise (“I think it helps to better drive home the message, because I won't forget about that one, having experienced it and having presented it, it will stick to my mind and I won't forget this experience”). At the same time, she
questions the value of this type of research, which does not produce any new knowledge (“but on the other hand, you look at all the work and then, as you said, it proves what has already been written”). In the end, on a positive note, she mentions the value of the experience for herself again (“It’s good because this way I’ve experienced it myself, and you know all the theory behind doing it yourself will, yeah, make it better memorable, and it surely did.”). The back and forth momentum in Simone’s responses indicates that she is struggling to conceptualise ‘action research’ within her framework of ‘research’, which is characterised by a traditional, positivistic understanding of research. At the same time, the description of benefits she had gained from the engagement in action research show an altered understanding of the term ‘action research’ and indicate that Simone learned to value the concept within the framework of her own learning process.

Similarly, in the first interview with Anita and Barbara, an interesting conversation on what research is and should accomplish developed. When asked for any final comments towards the end of the interview, Anita started reflecting on her attitude towards the CARP concept and on research in general. Barbara then responds to what Anita says and explains how she conceptualises action research (Interview I, Topic E, Utterances I–II).

A1: In the beginning we were both very critical about it, but I think //we//

B1: //Yeah//, yeah that’s true.

A2: We do appreciate it now, we got to know the advantages of the CARPs.

I1: What do you mean with critical?

B2: I still (..) in my opinion, if you want to find out something, you need to compare two groups, you use one group were you tell the story, and in my opinion, you need another group where you do the same without the story, and this is not the case in CARP, and I have some problems with that.

I: OK.

B3: So to see actually, if it's the story, because what we were thinking is maybe they would have produced that language anyway (.) but on the other hand, maybe not, because what I saw from the film, is that performing the story they really, really enjoyed and this is where we were saying that as a result that they seem to produce language much faster by doing it with a story, because otherwise, like in my class, I actually didn't expect them at ALL to say language chunks, because what before the lessons were mainly like one-word sentences, maximum two-word-sentences [...]

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In Anita’s statement, a similar conception of research as in Elisabeth’s and Simone’s statements is prevalent. She assumes that in order to do research in one group, a control group, as in many positivistic/quantitative research designs, is needed (“you need to compare two groups”). Interestingly, Barbara seems to agree with Anita at first, but, when continuing reflecting on their CARP, comes to the conclusion that their results actually indicate a change in behaviour of their students through being engaged in a story (“before the lessons were mainly like one-word sentences, maximum two-word-sentences”) and afterwards they were able to produce “language chunks.” Similarly to Simone, Barbara seems to have altered her understanding of the term ‘action research’ and learned to value its benefits for her very context. She further reflects on the CARPs in her portfolio:

The CARPs posed the biggest challenge of the course and were at the same time an opportunity to put into practice what I had learnt. My first CARP [at a school] in Cambodia was dominated by insecurities, as I was not quite sure how to get started, how to prove our research question, how to videotape the lesson and how to achieve a representable result for the presentation. **The most important revelation was that the focus of a research project is not on confirming one’s expectations (or hypotheses), but instead on learning from the observations made and to see that there is always a result, which one can investigate further and draw conclusions from.** Another eye-opener was that my observations of the CARP lesson were not the entire truth, as the video clip showed quite a different picture of the same lesson.78

(Barbara, Portfolio, July 2012)

One sentence in particular (see emphasis) can be interpreted in view of her altered understanding of action research. Barbara understood that research is not about “confirming one’s expectations (or hypotheses)” but that the objective is to learn “from the observations made and to see that there is always a result, which one can investigate further and draw conclusions from.” This indicates a growing understanding of what action research is and how to benefit from it in the classroom situation. This change of attitude towards action research is also reflected in other (student) teachers’ data. Ursula, for example, reflects on her attitude towards action research in her portfolio and explains why she was reluctant to the idea of engaging in the CARPs in the beginning of E-LINGO:

When [Josephine] introduced us to the Classroom Action Research Project, on first sight I disliked the idea of ‘research’ in my lessons. This might be explained by the fact that I had studied natural sciences and was familiar with their research methods, meaning to collect data with the aid of measurement instruments. **The idea to**
collect data in my classroom by observation seriously annoyed me, simply because I could not believe one could draw any significant conclusions from my teaching.

I therefore was not very enthusiastic in formulating a research question and finding supportive hypotheses. It was a lot easier for me to phrase our indicators as this was very close to the learning goals in a lesson plan, which I was much more familiar with. [Josephine’s] feedback on our project outline however encouraged me knowing I was on the right track.79 (Ursula, Portfolio, July 2012)

In the tutor interview, Josephine, points out that exactly this change of attitude towards the action research project, as displayed by Simone’s, Barbara’s and Ursula’s learning incidents discussed above, is what they are trying to promote through E-LINGO:

And I think what we communicate is that every CARP can go completely wrong, I mean, no hypothesis can be (.) everything can be completely wrong and yet it can be an excellent CARP, if they reflect on the process thoroughly, and to change this attitude of what it means to succeed, that takes time. And as soon as they notice that, yeah, I think that takes a bit, that takes the pressure out of their world. (Josephine, Tutor interview, February 2012)

For other (student) teachers, the growing understanding of what research in general and action research in particular is was documented in their language use when talking about the CARPs. For example, Melanie uses research terminology ("triangulation") very naturally in the second interview when she evaluates the success of her second CARP (Interview II, Topic F, Utterance V):

And I also think that, because there was this focus on triangulation this time, I really had that questionnaire and I really analysed it and it’s a good starting point for the next term, because I now know what [the pupils] know and what they don’t know, because I have all these charts and I know, OK, this is something the majority of my students still have problems with.

The examples discussed in the scope of the CLI ‘This is research? I can do that!’ have shown that the (student) teachers learned about and from action research in different ways. Some have gained more understanding of what action research is, e.g. that not all research is embedded in the framework of the positivistic paradigm and applies exclusively quantitative methods. Instead, action research is conceptualised as something that is manageable and beneficial for teachers as it enhances the notion of experiential learning. In the next section, I will discuss topics and CLIs in connection

79 Emphasis (bold print) added.
to a research instrument applied by the (student) teachers for their data collection and analysis: videography.

6.3.5 ‘The camera is not the enemy’

“I always kind of tried to get around being filmed at university (laughs) and now I had to be filmed and I really like the insights you get when you’re looking at your own videos, about your own teaching and what you can improve on. Also, it gives you some self-assurance, when you look at it and see things that work out well.” (Melanie, Interview, February 2012)

The realisation that ‘the camera is not the enemy’ but can be beneficial in different ways was reflected in a number of critical learning incidents that became apparent in the data analysis process. Several students uttered a change of attitude towards having themselves and their teaching filmed. In this section, I will explore some exemplary CLI from different (student) teachers in order to elicit different aspects the participants voiced about videography.

For instance, Karen, when asked in the third and last interview whether or not she is planning to continue with CARPs in the future, states that videorecording the lesson can help solve the dilemma of not being able to monitor the whole classroom in the teaching and learning situation (Interview III, Topic K, Utterance II):

I was used to cameras before, because I had a lot of colleagues who were very passionate about that, so I always tried to avoid that; I did film them and watched the films with them but I never wanted to film myself, because I found it awful, right now I just don’t care anymore, so I’m healed from that (laughs) and the other thing is, in the future, I don’t think I’ll do classical CARPs anymore, but filming, yes, especially if we have (peer?) problems in the classroom, that helps a lot, because you simply can’t see everything during the class because you’re involved, the learners are involved.

Also, Barbara commented on the use of the camera for her CARPs. In the second interview, when asked to comment on the fact that 81 percent of the E-LINGO alumni taking part in the pre-study were intimidated by the CARPs in the beginning (see Appendix B), she states (Interview II, Topic G, Utterance I): “I was very freaked out actually about the filming (laughs), I mean the whole DISASTER had to be filmed (laughs)” (Barbara, Interview II, October 2011). This utterance indicates that Barbara is quite insecure about her teaching and/or about implementing the CARP. Assuming that her lesson will be “a disaster”, she was seemingly scared and intimidated to videorecord her lesson and described this emotional state using the affective phrase: “I was very freaked out actually about the filming”. However, she learned to
appreciate the change of perspective, as she states in her portfolio: “Another eye-opener was that my observations of the CARP lesson were not the entire truth, as the video clip showed quite a different picture of the same lesson.” (Barbara, Portfolio July 2012). Barbara’s portfolio entry towards the end of E-LINGO, i.e. after having filmed parts of her lessons for three CARPs, reveals that in spite of her initial insecurities and negligence, her understanding of the benefits of using video as a tool for observation and reflection grew.

A learning incident described by Melanie has similar implications; however, it emphasises a different aspect of videography at the same time. In her last interview she gives an account of a learning incident related to her self-perception while teaching (Interview III, Topic K, Utterance II):

M1: I really like the idea that (..) I had to be filmed throughout the CARPs, because I always kind of tried to get around being filmed at university (laughs) and now I had to be filmed and I really like the insights you get when you’re looking at your own videos, about your own teaching and what you can improve on. Also, it gives you some self-assurance, when you look at it and see things that work out well.

I: Can you specify that? What was it that you recognised //watching the videos?//

M2: //As something that worked well?// Sometimes I have the (.) feeling that I’m kind of (.) not angry, but it’s just a lot of things to do, but in the movies, I’m always smiling and I’m happy, so it must be just like an inner feeling, because a day at school is so busy, but still I’m able to switch on that light during English and be motivational.

From Melanie’s example it becomes evident that the camera not only offers another perspective on teaching situations but also on the teacher herself. Through working with videography, Melanie found out that she can manage to promote a positive image and encourage her students in her lessons (“switch on that light during English and be motivational”). Hence, her self-perception was challenged and maybe even altered through videorecording her lesson. This is confirmed and even strengthened in her portfolio:

E-LINGO has introduced me to new ways of reflection. While the idea that required me to be filmed – an aspect that I had successfully sneaked out of during my first course of study as well as during teacher training – made me very anxious at the beginning. By now, however, I consider it to be an excellent means for self-affirmation and self-improvement. In addition to that, I have also become a more confident public speaker. Since I have become aware that I can successfully present an academic
content in a language that it is not my mother tongue, I no longer have stage fright when I have to speak to a large audience. (Melanie, Portfolio, July 2012)

In other (student) teachers’ data, videography is not only described as a tool for the observation of one’s own teaching and professional development, but also as a tool for teacher training and the professional development of others. Ursula reflects on her experiences with the CARPs and in particular with filming and being filmed in the third interview (Interview III, Topic J, Utterance I):

It’s interesting, ‘cause when I first met the idea of a CARP, I was like “Ok, a new job. I do have enough others”, so I didn’t really believe in (..) the success of that idea to film myself teaching. That was a horrible idea for me (.) and to watch in a very detailed way on what my students were able to do before and after a unit, that really helped to create a little kind of awareness, to improve an awareness, of their needs.

Even though Ursula states that she was not convinced of working with videography (“I didn’t really believe in (..) the success of that idea to film myself teaching”) and describes the experience of seeing herself on video as “horrible”, she acknowledges the benefits of taking a close look at her practice (“to watch in a very detailed way on what my students were able to do before and after a unit, that really helped to create a little kind of awareness, to improve an awareness of their needs”). In her portfolio, she further reflects on her experiences with videography. She refers to one of her entries in her learning log to explain how the engagement in CARPs has helped her to evaluate her own and others’ teaching:

At the latest from the second CARP, I have started to value the evaluation of my teaching by using the Classroom Action Research. It was already in Semester 1, when I wrote in my diary: “The CARP was going well, wasn’t it? I think (although there was some kind of time-pressure) we all learned. Even [I] “practised lady” had another focus on my lessons. It was fascinating watching me on the video... my body language (...) the intonation of my voice. Pfffff, I still don't like seeing myself on film.” (Diary entry 28.02.2011) Although my attitude towards being filmed and watching myself interact with the children has not changed, I found the collection of significant data via an observation sheet and the filming very interesting.

This year, I started filming the trainee in order to give her the opportunity to observe her body language. Although she does not like to hear her voice recorded (something I share with her), she now uses the filming regularly as a helpful tool to improve her speech and her body language. (Ursula, Portfolio, July 2012)
Even though Ursula denies that her attitude towards videography has changed, the fact that she is further using and recommending the technique indicates that she has come to appreciate the benefits of it.

In sum, filming the lessons and being filmed was a topic that occurred frequently in all data sources and entailed benefits as well as challenges for the (student) teachers. Some of the CLI discussed here seem to be related to the (student) teachers’ confidence as teachers. In the next session, the notion of confidence also plays a role. Several learning incidents reflected certain changes in the self-perception of the participants.

6.3.6 'I'm a central figure in the teaching and learning context'

“I didn’t know that we have such a big impact on their ideas, so we can manipulate them and BECAUSE we can do this, we have to be REALLY aware about our material, about what we’re saying and how we treat them.” (Patricia, Interview, February 2012)

Another area of CLI elicited in the data refers to the self-perception of the (student) teachers in their endeavour to conduct a CARP in their respective socio-cultural setting. 'I'm a central figure in my learning context' refers to two types of critical learning incidents. First of all, it comprises CLI, in which teachers realise the importance and value of what they do. Secondly, it addresses learning incidents, in which teachers become aware of how their personality and their approach to teaching are influenced by multiple socio-cultural aspects. As explicated in section 5.3, the (student) teachers had different cultural and educational backgrounds and they conducted the CARPs in different settings. However, 'culture' in this context does not necessarily refer to a regional, national or transnational culture, but also to a specific 'school culture' (Avalos 2011: 18, cf. also Freeman 2002: 12) and 'learning culture' Appel (2001: 189). The realisation that they as teachers play an important role in the learning process of the children and that the way they act in and interact with the socio-cultural setting of their teaching is central in these CLI.

As a first data example, I will refer to Barbara, whose answer particularly stood out in the comparative analysis to a question of the first interview. Usually, my question whether or not the participants had a teaching post or had to find a school and a class to conduct their CARP evoked a relatively brief response (cf. Table 6). Barbara, though, produced a long and emotional answer to this question as the
following excerpt from the interview transcript shows (Interview I, Topic B, Utterances I–II):

B1: I had to find a class (...) Luckily I knew the school where I was going to. I knew them, because that's where my daughter is actually going to kindergarten, so I knew the teachers, the parents, I knew the children and they are all very relaxed and (...) so, luckily, it was no problem to get it organized. But in the beginning I was facing quite a bit of trouble, because it's very difficult to explain what you are doing. At that point I didn't have the letter in English,80 I had it only in German, which didn't help me at all. By the time I had the English translation, I had been through all this already. But this is all very difficult to realise right in the beginning of what you need.

I: Yeah, sure.

B2: And I was always "I know we actually, we got this e-mail" and then I realised it was, I know that was about the (...) signing (...) that was for the parents, because that was also only in German, so that was a bit tricky in the beginning and with the teacher it was difficult to know of what she actually understood of what I was going to do. She left me, like in the first lesson I had, she was saying a second before "OK, you are [by] yourself" and I was expecting her to come in with me, but I think she actually just tried to be nice, yeah? To make it easier for me, which I appreciated, but at the same time of course it left me on my own in this chaos (laughs). But yeah, and there also was a bit of misunderstanding in the beginning, because she wasn't quite clear of how often I would come and all these things, it's quite difficult to EXPLAIN (...) because you are not very aware of, I mean first of all you have to (...) it's new to oneself, so you have to get it clear of what you are actually going to do and then to bring it across and to (...) to know of what they understand of what you are saying and what they don't understand, so that was a bit of a challenge in the beginning, but it worked out.

I: Ok, how about you? You had your class, right?

A1: Yeah, for me it was a lot easier, as I'm an English teacher.

The detailed formulating interpretation of Barbara's two utterances and the subsequent reflecting interpretation revealed the detailed topical structure of these passages. For Barbara, finding a school and a class was not a problem, as she was familiar with the teaching context. However, she experienced problems in communicating the purpose of conducting an action research project and states that she was not aware of some aspects that had to be organised. As an example, she mentions the consent form, which had to be translated to English in her teaching context. Furthermore, she states that she thought that she would be teaching the class together with the regular teacher, but instead she unexpectedly had to teach the

80 Here, Barbara is referring to the consent form the E-LINGO students used to obtain written consent from the children's parents before they conducted the CARP and filmed the lesson(s).
Barbara interprets the teacher’s behaviour as a nice gesture, but describes that she felt somewhat overwhelmed (“it left me on my own in this chaos”). Furthermore, she describes the CARP concept as new and unfamiliar, which made it difficult for her to communicate its purpose with the teacher. Barbara responds extensively to this interview question and produces a very lengthy answer, which becomes apparent in direct contrast to her team partner Anita’s response (see A1) and in response to other (student) teachers’ answers (cf. Table 6). I interpret her long and narrative response to a simple question as an indicator of her willingness and/or need to talk about her experiences. Barbara is using metaphoric and emotional language to express her feelings of insecurity evoked by the misunderstanding she had with the teacher (e.g. “she left me”, “chaos”). She tries to explain and interpret the teacher’s behaviour and concludes that it was her own responsibility to communicate the purpose of the CARP better, which was difficult to her as she had not quite understood the concept at that stage. It becomes apparent that Barbara did not feel confident using the CARP concept without having fully understood it in the context of her teaching. This interpretation is further confirmed in the examination of her learning log, in which she reflected upon the issue she is referring to in the interview. In one entry she writes:

I think I might not have been as communicative as before because [the class teacher] decided not to take part in the lesson last week. She did not say why and in a way I was glad not to be observed during my first lesson. But as I had told her about what I had planned to do during the lesson and her announcement two minutes before I gave the class that she would be outside, I might have misinterpreted as a lack of interest. I could not work it out. Maybe it was just an opportunity for her to sort something else out and to use that time in another way or she thought it would be easier for me without her.

I explained [the regular teacher and a colleague] again what the purpose was of me giving a lesson at their school. I should in the future just presume that people are interested in what I am doing there and be more talkative about it. (Barbara, Learning Log, 25.11.2010)

Barbara’s learning log entry confirms her insecurities about the CARP concept. Also, it indicates that the socio-cultural setting of her CARP experience may have contributed to the misunderstanding. Yet her reflection clearly shows that she has learned from her experiences with the CARP, as she decides to communicate her thoughts and ideas in the future, instead of presuming that others are not interested in what she is
doing. Thereby, she also values the importance of her actions, in this case conducting a CARP.

In the data from Clarissa, I found a similar learning incident. In the interviews, Clarissa appeared to be rather quiet and serious; she never addressed affective factors of her CARP experiences. However, in her portfolio she admits a lack of confidence in her teaching and reveals strategies of using self-appraisal instead of self-criticism in order to increase her confidence:

Another difficulty for me is my confidence when teaching. I worry that I will just criticise my work and not give myself any praise. Just like my pupils, I need to remember to encourage myself and look at positive aspects of my work and not just negative aspects. I also hope I am creative enough after a day at work and a night at the computer to come up with some interesting work and exciting lesson plans!

(Clarissa, Learning Log, 19.10.2010)

Clarissa is a young adult (i.e. under 30 years of age, cf. Table 4, section 5.3) with little teaching experience, whereas Barbara is mature-aged (over 35) and has several years of teaching experience. Both describe a learning incident related to their self-perception as a teacher and their confidence. Clarissa is a native speaker of English, whereas Barbara is a native speaker of German. These two learning incidents are not connected to language proficiency, but to teaching competence only. However, other CLI found in the data referred to language proficiency of the (student) teachers and will be discussed in the following section 6.3.7.

Patricia, in the third interview (February 2012), gave a very interesting answer to the question whether or not she has changed during course of E-LINGO. After stating that she has not changed as a teacher, she explains (Interview III, Topic J, Utterance I): “But what changed, but this is not my quality as a teacher in class, I think what changed is how I can actually think about theory and what is behind it. So, it was good what I did but now I know why (laughs).” Seemingly, thinking about theory was not something Patricia had included much in her prior teaching. This is highly interesting in view of her self-perception as a teacher. When I asked her to elaborate on her example, Patricia explained what exactly she had learned from engaging in theory:

What I learned for example is, with the first CARP, is that (.) how important the quality or the things what the teacher actually is saying and doing, influences the children, that was really like ‘woof’, I didn’t know that we have such a big impact on
their ideas, so we can manipulate them and BECAUSE we can do this, we have to be
REALLY aware about our material, about what we’re saying and how we treat them.
We have to treat them with respect and that’s something which I learned, that’s more
like to ( ) to analyse, I think I did it right, but now I can analyse it, that’s something
which happened actually with the first CARP, because we had this gender aspect.

The interpretation of this utterance strongly indicates that the awareness Patricia has
gained from engaging in a CARP, focusing on whether or not their learners have
gender stereotypes, has altered her self-perception as a teacher. Not only did she
learn about theory related to gender issues, but she also became aware of her central
role as a teacher of young and vulnerable learners (“we can manipulate them”) and
her responsibility in shaping the learners’ attitudes and personalities.

Another example of a learning incident in this group of CLIs is Simone’s
realisation that her change of career to the teaching profession was the right choice
for her. She reflects on her role as a teacher of English to young learners in her
portfolio as follows:

I would hate to go back to an office job, where it seems like you only change things
on paper, but not in real and where your email account is filling up faster than you
can respond. And I would prefer to stick with these very young learners. They are not
spoilt yet and you have more freedom to actually adjust your teaching and your
activities to what the learners need. Furthermore, there is no need to look at only one
small part of the whole being. You can support them in whatever is needed at that
time. On the one hand their motivation, their fantasy, their emotions, their way of
living is so much better for me than anything I have experienced so far and, on the
other hand, I think that I can contribute to a good childhood of these children.
We have fun together and we learn a lot from each other and this process is not
over yet, not at all. Beside a part-time position or job, which is necessary for survival,
I would like to completely change my career to this sector. In December I will apply
for the lateral entry to the profession as an early childhood educator.81 (Simone,
Portfolio, July 2012)

The example showed that Simone values her job and wants to make a difference
(“change things [...] in real”; “I think that I can contribute to a good childhood of these
children”). She seems to face her new career and all challenges involved with a high
degree of awareness and growing confidence. She clearly has to have an ‘ideal-self’,
i.e. an image of a teacher she wants to become. The statement is not exclusively based
on her experiences with classroom action research, but with experiencing teaching in
general. Yet the fact that Simone is new to teaching, but highly committed and
motivated as displayed in many learning incidents through CARPS and E-LINGO in
general, indicates that prior experience in the field is not necessarily needed to

81 Emphasis (bold print) added.
develop reflective competence and awareness of the teacher’s central role in the teaching and learning context. As Simone’s example indicates, there seems to be a close connection between the enjoyment of teaching and professional confidence, as I will further discuss below and in section 7.3.

Other CLIs within the framework 'I’m a central figure in the teaching and learning context’ were related to the notions of choice and agency with regards to the CARPs and in the teaching and learning context in general. In the first interview, Patricia commented on why she likes action research (Interview I, Topic A, Utterance II):

Yeah, but the CARP, I loved it, it's really for me, it's the most important thing which we could do during (.) this [inc.] I think, it's really interesting, because you can (.) develop, you can do what you actually want and you decide what you want, and that's really good.)

First of all, Patricia’s affective language use (“I loved it, it’s really for me”) indicates the particular importance of action research for her. Secondly, in further explaining the benefits of the CARP, she puts emphasis on the notions of choice and agency in doing action research (“you can do what you actually want and you decide what you want”). The same topic is addressed by Patricia and Simone again in a second interview in July 2011, when they discuss the differences between the first CARP (storytelling) and the second CARP (TBLL) (Interview II, Topic F, Utterances VI–VII):

S1: It was more fun, I wasn’t as tense as with the first one, because back then I didn’t really know what to expect and how they would mark it and the others would judge it and now I’m more familiar with//the audience//

P1: //You were thinking// more about the presentation, I was thinking more about the project itself, I think my project was like, yeah, storytelling, looong storytelling, and not so much fun [...] but this [CARP], we were free to do what we want, I think that’s really nice.

S2: Yeah, with task-based language learning, they give you a method or form and then you can choose the content, and I think we found content that we really love to do.

These responses indicate that the notion of topic choice and agency was important for Patricia and Simone in order to feel as agents of their CARP. With the second CARP, they were allowed to set their own focus which both appreciated (P1: “we were free to do what we want, I think that’s really nice.”); (S2: “you can choose the content, and
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I think we found content that we really love to do”). As central elements of action research, choice, agency and ownership seem to play an important role in the (student) teachers’ professional development processes, as I will further discuss in Chapter 7. In the following section, the focus will be on the notion of being a non-native speaker of English and its relevance for the (student) teachers’ self-perception.

6.3.7 ‘My English isn’t good enough. Or is it?’

“I know already that there is no shortage of jobs for English teachers. The question is how much emphasis is put on the criteria of being a native speaker – a “qualification” I will never have.” (Barbara, Portfolio, July 2012)

A number of topics were addressed referring to the orientation framework of being a non-native speaker of English. However, I only found reflections of CLIs related to language proficiency and professional confidence in the written data sources, portfolio and learning logs. These topics were probably not addressed in the interviews due to the narrow time frame of the interviews and the focus on CARPs prescribed by the interview guidelines. Yet through analysing the supplementary data sources, I found that language proficiency or rather the (student) teacher’s perception of their ability to use the target language for different purposes, played an important role with regards to the (student) teachers’ confidence in their profession. I labelled this group of CLIs ‘My English isn’t good enough. Or is it?’ in order to emphasise the insecurities of the (student) teachers with regards to their own and others’ perception of their language proficiency.

The first example, a portfolio excerpt from Ursula, indicates that insecurities about one’s own language proficiency may be reduced through positive feedback and experiences of success:

When I started the course I had already developed a good command of the oral skills. I had spent quite a long time in English-speaking countries and was therefore able to lead conversations with native speakers rather fluently. But at the same time, I was concerned about my writing skills, in particular regarding the academic writing. I was really surprised to get good marks for it and those as a result lifted my self-confidence enormously.82 (Ursula, Portfolio July 2012)

Ursula seems rather confident with her oral language skills based on positive experiences from her past (“I had spent quite a long time in English-speaking..."

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82 Emphasis (bold print) added.
countries and was therefore able to lead conversations with native speakers rather fluently”). Yet she is insecure about her written proficiency “in particular regarding the academic writing”. Interestingly, she establishes a direct link between positive feedback and her confidence in her proficiency (“I was really surprised to get good marks for it and those as a result lifted my self-confidence enormously”).

In contrast to Ursula, who felt confident with her oral language proficiency based on experiences in native speaker environments, Barbara has lived in English-speaking environments for several years, but perceives her language proficiency insufficient for the teaching profession. In her portfolio, she reflects on her rationale for enrolling in E-LINGO in the first place and comments on various aspects related to her professional confidence:

Another reason that prevented me from becoming fully committed to working as an English teacher was the fact that I was not a native speaker. [...] Rating my competence in English, I am sure I gained a lot through reading and writing in the target language during the course. Also living in the UK for the last year naturally added to my skills. Nevertheless, especially as I am living among native speakers, I realise how far away I am from feeling absolutely confident. My doubts about grammar issues and pronunciation will probably always be there, as it is just difficult to achieve native-like speaking skills later in life.

However, as we will move to Myanmar in August, I have to wait and see what the chances are. I know already that there is no shortage of jobs for English teachers. The question is how much emphasis is put on the criteria of being a native speaker – a "qualification" I will never have. Also, finding employment in Myanmar will pose similar challenges to the conditions in the UK: Am I applying as a foreign language teacher of English – without being a native speaker – or am I applying as a primary teacher – without having the qualification as a primary teacher? It obviously depends on the school, where I will apply, if they teach English as a foreign language or as first language like in international schools.\textsuperscript{83} (Barbara, Portfolio, July 2012)

As with some other E-LINGO students (e.g. Clarissa, Daniela, Simone, Karen), Barbara was not a trained teacher and therefore expressed the wish to gain theoretical knowledge and experience in the field of teaching English to young learners. However, given the fact that she had lived abroad for over ten years with her partner, taught English in different countries for several years and is raising her two children bilingually (observation notes from informal conversations, on-campus session October 2010), it seems surprising that her confidence in her language proficiency is still not very solid. The comparison with the other (student) teachers showed that her

\textsuperscript{83} Emphasis (bold print) added.
confidence in her own abilities and qualifications seems disproportionally low and her self-perception seems to be quite negative. An example illustrates this aspect. At the beginning of the first semester, Nicole comments on the use of English within E-LINGO in her learning diary:

To use the target language in written and spoken language fluently will be a real challenge for me as I know that I have to do a lot of work in this field too. I have never been to an English speaking country for longer than holidays and I improved my English only at the night school. **So I guess that I will need another course in essay writing and some other opportunities to use English for academic purposes. (This is one of my reasons to be so happy having [Daniela] as a team partner. I am sure I can learn a lot from her).**84 (Nicole, Learning Log, 17.10.2010)

Comparing Nicole’s and Barbara’s comments on their insecurities in view of their English proficiency, Nicole’s concerns seem much more appropriate than Barbara’s, as Nicole states not to have spent much time abroad. However, Nicole does not lack professional confidence in her ability to improve her English and considers working on her language as a positive challenge rather than a threat. She is optimistic (“I am sure I can learn a lot from her”) and has an ‘ideal-self’ as well as a positive perception of her future English proficiency, which can be considered an important factor for her professional confidence. Even though she has a lot of teaching experience, she is aware of the fact that she can always develop professionally.

Rebecca, who perceived her English proficiency particularly low in comparison to other students (observation notes, on-campus sessions), comments on the feedback on her written assignments as follows:

And still one very important aspect of this course: I was very pleased with [Valerie’s] detailed critique. I have never had the opportunity to get my English texts corrected by a native speaker, and that is why during the whole course I felt very fortunate. At the beginning I was a little shocked, because I was not aware that I was making so many faults with tenses and "easy" grammar. (Rebecca, Portfolio, July 2012)

Rebecca’s portfolio excerpt shows that even though tutor feedback may not necessarily enhance a (student) teacher’s professional confidence, it may still be appreciated. The fact that Rebecca is using the tutor’s name in the portfolio, which is part of their final assessment, needs to be considered cautiously in view of social desirability, as discussed in section 5.4.

84 Emphasis (bold print) added.
The fact that the learning logs and the portfolios had to be written in English, and that the interviews were conducted in English as well, certainly had an impact on the contents and depth of the (student) teachers’ reflections, depending on their individual language proficiency, as well as their ability to reflect on their learning processes, as indicated by Rebecca’s first sentence in her learning log: “It is the first time that I have to write my diary in a foreign language” (Rebecca, Learning Log, 01.11.2010), as well as by the first sentence in her portfolio: “It is for the first time when I have to write about the experience I have acquired during a course” (Rebecca, Portfolio, July 2012). Even though it would be very interesting to explore the interrelation between language proficiency and reflective competence, neither the data nor the scope of this thesis allow further elaboration on this matter.

A last example referring to language proficiency shall illustrate that in the German-speaking context, native speakers did not necessarily consider being a native speaker of English as an advantage in the field of FLTE. Daniela, for example, encountered unexpected difficulties caused by not having native-like fluency in German at the beginning of her work in the kindergarten as the following excerpt from her portfolio shows:

For a native English-speaker from the USA, speaking English all day would be the easiest part of my job. Or so I thought. In practice, it didn’t turn out to be so easy. For the first time since I had arrived in Germany two years before, I was being bombarded with German. In contrast to my former colleagues who often used me to practice their English, almost all of my new coworkers were speaking German to me all day long. Additionally, in a class made up almost entirely of monolingual German-speaking children, I was suddenly hearing a lot of German, and not the easy kind tailored to non-native speakers.85 (Daniela, Portfolio, July 2012)

In the teaching and learning context, being a non-native speaker of German may bear advantages. The different examples show that language proficiency is an important topic for some of the (student) teachers. However, not only the language proficiency itself, but rather the (student) teacher’s perception of self and their abilities seem to influence the way they evaluate their language and teaching competence. A central issue in the CLIs described here is the notion of confidence, as I will further explore in Chapter 7. In the following section, the focus will be on the question of whether or not teaching English to children is considered the right profession for the (student) teachers or whether other career paths may lie ahead of them.

85 Emphasis (bold print) added.
6.3.8 ‘Is teaching English to children my cup of tea?’

“Inspired by my master’s thesis topic and research, I have even put some thought into developing materials for preschool immersion programs. Before embarking on the course, I never considered a career in writing or publishing, but now I find myself increasingly more curious about this field.” (Daniela, Portfolio, July 2012)

Apart from CLI analysed above, there were many more interesting topics and learning incidents documented in the data. However, they cannot be explored in the scope of this study in detail. Still, I would like to point out one interesting orientation framework in which (student) teachers addressed various issues. I chose the label ‘Is teaching languages to children my cup of tea?’ for all topics and learning incidents relating to the question of whether or not the (student) teachers see themselves in the role of teachers of English to children in the future. These topics were usually discussed in a broader framework of reference, predominantly in the portfolios, and do not necessarily relate to the CARPs, but to various experiences. Yet I think that the area of self-conception plays an important role in the professional development of foreign language teachers – also if the development leads to the realisation that the teaching profession might not be the right choice. For example, the following data examples on (student) teachers’ career goals revealed interesting insights in comparison to Daniela’s insecurities about the teaching profession being the right choice for her:

Before E-Lingo I thought that I will do these studies to become a teacher. However, since having started this blended learning course I am in a process of self-discovery. The more I think about everything, the less I am convinced that the M.A. title and working as a primary school teacher will be the final destination. (Anita, Portfolio, July 2012)

A very clear result of the last two years is my settled confidence that I want to keep on teaching. This is the work I love doing. I would like to teach adults as well as pupils. In order to improve my CLIL teaching, I need to gain further knowledge on English language, particularly concerning language functions and grammar. (Ursula, Portfolio July 2012)

Anita’s example shows that working with theories in the scope of E-LINGO triggered new interests and ideas for her. For Ursula, as the second example indicates, the E-LINGO studies have confirmed her wish to be teacher and have helped her further specify her particular field of interest. Other (student) teachers do not explicitly

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formulate career goals in their portfolios. Rebecca, for example, writes in her portfolio that she will work as an English teacher, because she already put a lot of time and effort into her training:

Due to this course I’ve gained so much knowledge in working with young learners that it would be really [a] pity if I didn’t work in this field. During the study I have learnt lots of methods meant to support learning at young learners. That is why I will definitely try to find as soon as possible a primary school where to teach English. (Rebecca, Portfolio, July 2012)

At several points in the interviews, as well as in her portfolio, it became clear that Rebecca is not satisfied with her performance as a teacher of languages to children and does not seem to be content with her personal progress. Even though the tutors said about her that she displayed the “steepest learning curve” of the whole cohort in view of her presentation and language skills (Tutor Interview, February 2012), she remained sceptical about her abilities as a teacher until the end of the case study. Her reasons for being an English teacher seem mainly rational and pragmatic.

Similarly, Daniela’s interview data indicated a lack of commitment to the teaching profession, as she was unable to develop an ideal self as a teacher, which became evident in her perception of her partner Nicole as “the classic teacher” in contrast to herself being “so scatterbrained sometimes” (see section 6.3.6). I found further evidence documenting this assumption in her learning log. In fact, Daniela explicitly reveals a clear lack of determination and motivation to become a teacher. At the start of E-LINGO in 2010, she commented on her professional development and her future goals in her learning log as follows:

I suppose that primarily I would like to consider myself a painter, although I am very interested in languages and teaching. I have a BFA from [a university in the USA] in Painting and a German minor. After a semester abroad at [a German university], I decided to come back to Germany to work as an English Teaching Assistant. That is ultimately how I ended up in an education-related field, although I originally intended to study art education at the university. [...] I hope that in the future I can do more with my art, as well, and I’d like to get a masters in fine art someday when they are offered in Germany. Right now my goal for the (post E-LINGO) future is finding a job at a public school where I can teach art and English.87 (Daniela, Learning Log, 16.10.2010)

The first sentence already indicates that she defines herself as an artist rather than a teacher. Her becoming a teacher of English to young learners seems not to have been

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87 Emphasis (bold print) added.
her first choice, as she states later on in the same learning log: “That is ultimately how I ended up in an education-related field, although I originally intended to study art education at the university.” The metaphoric expression “to end up”, as used by her as a native speaker, further supports the assumption that teaching languages has not been her original goal. From informal conversations with her, I know that she first met her husband, who is German, during her semester abroad in Germany. Considering this fact, it is comprehensible why Daniela might have chosen to enter the teaching profession in a bilingual kindergarten predominantly for pragmatic reasons. Being a native speaker of English it was probably easy for her to find a job in the field of education. However, this learning log entry was written at the very beginning of E-LINGO, and, at the time, Daniela had very little experience with teaching. In order to get a better understanding of her attitudes towards the profession as well as her personal and professional development, I further analysed her portfolio, in which she reflected upon her learning experiences at the end of E-LINGO. Here she states that her future goals have changed during the past two years:

I feel that the E-Lingo course has opened my mind to many different possibilities for using my degree. When I began the program, I was seeking expertise and qualification that would assist me in my work with kindergarten children and hopefully allow me to work with primary learners in the future. Additionally, I wanted to learn more about childhood bilingualism and how best to encourage and develop it. I think this is the area in which the E-Lingo course has helped me the most in meeting my goals. While I feel very prepared to raise my own daughter bilingually and help other young children learn English as well, lately I have begun to consider new applications for my studies. Inspired by my master’s thesis topic and research, I have even put some thought into developing materials for preschool immersion programs. Before embarking on the course, I never considered a career in writing or publishing, but now I find myself increasingly more curious about this field. I feel that my goals have changed over the course of the past 2 years and that although they have become less concrete, they are also far more open to new ideas and possibilities. One reason may be that my main concentration is on my family at the moment, at home on maternity leave with a very young child, but I feel very positive about my future career as well and am looking forward to finding out what lies ahead in whatever way I can best pass on my love of language learning to young children.88 (Daniela, Portfolio, July 2012)

The data revealed that Daniela is still exploring different options for her professional life (arts education, material design, etc.). Her lack of motivation and commitment as documented in the data can be explained by her uncertainty about the teaching profession in general and her personal circumstances during the E-LINGO course;

88 Emphasis (bold print) added.
having given birth to her first child at the time of data collection was certainly a life-changing experience for her.

6.4 Summary
In this chapter, I presented the data analysis procedure of the case study, featuring 12 (student) teachers and their professional development through cooperatively engaging in classroom action research. In section 6.1, I briefly outlined my methodological approach in organising the data and eliciting the key topics of my research. The result of the first analysis step is depicted in the topical overviews of section 6.2. I then provided detailed insights into the data analysis procedure using the Documentary Method in section 6.3 and presented central orientation frameworks, i.e. how the topics were dealt with in the data sources, in the form of critical learning incidents (CLIs).

Not only the shared experiences of the cooperation (see section 6.3.1 and 6.3.2), but also the individual (student) teachers’ understanding of theoretical concepts (see section 6.3.3) and changing attitudes towards action research (see section 6.3.4), were reconstructed as orientation frameworks in which the CLIs were embedded. Furthermore, various aspects related to the (student) teachers’ self-perception and confidence as teachers (see section 6.3.5, 6.3.6 and 6.3.7) were discussed. In section 6.3.8, I explored the notion of commitment to the teaching profession, a topic which is not necessarily related to the CARPs but played an important role for the motivation and commitment the (student) teachers displayed in their engagement of the cooperative tasks, as I will further explicate in the following chapter.

The orientation frameworks and CLIs presented and discussed in this section by no means completely and accurately reflect the complex learning processes involved in cooperative action research. Furthermore, they are of varying importance with regards to the individual’s professional development, which is unique to every (student) teacher. Yet the CLIs discussed provide an overview of critical aspects in individual and cooperative learning processes.

In the subsequent Chapter 7, I will summarise, consolidate and abstract the main findings in order to arrive at a multi-dimensional model of professional development. I will allocate the elicited CLI in this chapter to three main development types or rather dimensions and will relate my findings to issues currently debated in
the field of foreign language teacher education research. Moreover, I will discuss which factors have a stronger influence than others in the professional development processes of the (student) teachers. Based on the results of my study, I will offer an integrated model of professional development through action research (see section 7.4).
Chapter 7 – Research Results

The Different Dimensions of Professional Development

Professional development comes about differently for every (student) teacher (Tsui 2003; Borg 2006; Levin 2006; Kubanyiova 2012). It is a highly complex process that is not, and will never be, completely comprehensible and transparent to research, as it involves various cognitive and affective processes and is impacted by numerous aspects unique to a person’s personal and professional life. Yet this case study has provided a glimpse into different factors that play a role in the professional development processes of foreign language teachers. The principles of the Documentary Method (Bohnsack 1989) allowed for a systematic interpretation of 12 (student) teachers’ voices and the reconstruction of personal and contextual factors which influenced their respective professional development. Through the comparative data analysis, several topics and their orientation frameworks were elicited and thereby revealed indicators for professional development in the form of critical learning incidents (CLIs).

The data analysis process described in Chapter 6 focused on the topics addressed by the respondents as well as on how these topics were addressed, i.e. in which orientation framework they were discussed. Through the detailed formulating and reflecting interpretation of interview sequences in single cases analyses and a systematic cross-case comparison, I elicited and labelled the following groups of CLIs and discussed several examples in sections 6.3.1–6.3.8:

- ‘Teamwork means team work!’
- ‘We learn together and from each other’
- ‘Now I understand the theory!’
- ‘This is action research? I can do that!’
- ‘The camera is not the enemy’
- ‘I’m a central figure in the teaching and learning context’
- ‘My English isn’t good enough. Or is it?’
- ‘Is teaching English to children my cup of tea?’

The types of CLIs listed above, which I deliberately labelled with informal phrases to illustrate their relevance as ‘aha moments’ in the practice of the (student) teachers,
occurred in different forms in the data. Based on these incident groups, I reconstructed three main dimensions of professional development which the 12 (student) teachers’ experiences relate to. Some CLIs were connected to the cooperative nature of the CARPs and the development processes triggered through working with others (peers, tutors, colleagues, etc.). Other CLIs mainly took place on an individual level and led to change and development on a cognitive level. Yet other CLIs predominantly took place on an affective level and led to altered feelings and attitudes towards action research and/or teaching. Even though the objective of the Documentary Method is developing a multi-dimensional typology, I prefer using the term ‘dimension’ instead of ‘type’ in the presentation of my findings as the elicited areas of professional development are interconnected and overlapping, thus not allowing for a clear-cut distinction from one another. Based on the study’s findings, I found the following three dimensions of professional development to play a major role in the (student) teachers’ individual and cooperative learning processes:

1. **Interpersonal development:** For a number of the participants, the involvement in cooperative action research led to learning incidents on an inter-personal level, i.e. they learned how to overcome challenges of cooperative learning formats and how to benefit from collaborations with their team partners, their peers, and their tutors (see section 6.3.1 ‘Teamwork means team work’!, section 6.3.2 ‘We learn together and from each other’)

2. **Cognitive development:** For the majority of the respondents, the involvement in cooperative action research led to several learning incidents on a cognitive level, i.e. they gained theoretical and/or methodological knowledge through experiential learning (see section 6.3.3 ‘Now I understand the theory!’, section 6.3.4 ‘This is action research? I can do that!’).

3. **Affective development:** For a number of the participants, the involvement in cooperative action research led to several learning incidents on an affective/personal level, i.e. the awareness of teacher roles and/or the development of professional confidence in view of teaching competence and/or language proficiency (see section 6.3.5 ‘The camera is not the enemy’, section 6.3.6 ‘I’m a central figure in the teaching and learning context’, section 6.3.7 ‘My English isn’t good enough. Or is it?’, section 6.3.8 ‘Is teaching English to children my cup of tea?’)

In the following sections, I will summarise and discuss the main findings related to the three dimensions of professional development listed above with references to relevant literature. The dimensions of interpersonal development (see section 7.1),
cognitive development (see section 7.2), and affective development (see section 7.3) are closely interconnected, as the findings of the study, as well as the current literature on teacher learning and professional development, suggest. Additionally, they are strongly influenced by the socio-cultural context of the teaching situation, as I will discuss in section 7.4. I will then propose a model of language teachers’ professional development integrating the interpersonal, cognitive and affective dimensions, as well as socio-cultural factors of the teaching and learning situation.

### 7.1 Interpersonal Development

Within the dimension ‘interpersonal development’, I differentiated a number of critical learning incidents that relate to cooperative development in the widest sense. In my understanding, the notion of cooperation in E-LINGO not only refers to the cooperation between team partners, but also to interactions between the (student) teachers and the tutors, among each other as a cohort, and with colleagues. Indicators for development within these orientation frameworks in the form of CLIs described by the participants were:

- ‘Teamwork means team work’, i.e. (student) teachers learned how to solve team conflicts productively by communicating openly and investing into team building.
- ‘We learn together and from each other!’, i.e. (student) teachers learned with and from team partners, the programme’s tutors, and/or colleagues.

The findings of the study suggest that being put into a team in order to cooperatively prepare, evaluate and present a complex task such as a classroom action research project in a blended-learning environment posed a challenge to a number of the E-LINGO teams. At least two teams participating in this case study encountered problems in their cooperation at some point. Whereas one team was able to communicate these problems and solve them in favour of a productive cooperation (Patricia and Simone, see section 6.3.1), the other avoided the conflict and, in fact, the cooperation altogether until the group constellation changed (Karen and Ursula, see section 6.3.1). However, both teams managed to eventually overcome the difficulties and to develop not only well-functioning teams but also friendships, as I will further discuss below. Other teams found ways of working together without sharing thoughts on it in the interviews, learning logs and portfolios. Yet, since all interviews were
conducted in groups, analysing how the respondents interacted with each other still allows drawing conclusions on their cooperation and cooperative development. Whether or not the respondents referred to shared orientation frameworks became apparent in different interaction patterns in the interviews. The presence as well as the absence of shared experiences in the participants’ descriptions can be interpreted in view of the quality of the cooperation (Bonnet 2009: 225). In some groups, the respondents mostly answered the questions individually without or with little reference to each other or their shared experiences while working with the CARPs (e.g. Nicole and Daniela, see section 6.3.3). Other interviews developed naturally as a dialogue between the respondents with both of them discussing the same topics, referring to shared experiences, asking each other questions, etc. (e.g. Simone and Patricia, see section 6.3.1).

As the data analysis indicates, the way an interview developed and which topics were addressed greatly depended on the interpersonal dynamics within the group. As Josephine, one of the programme’s tutors, points out in the tutor interview at the last on-campus session, a central aspect of successful cooperation is communication and joint reflection on the learning processes (see section 6.3.2), which is strongly supported by the findings of my study. Zibelius (2013: 192) also found that overcoming ‘digital invisibility’ in E-LINGO through sharing private information, such as someone’s time constraints due to family obligations etc., is an important factor for successful teamwork in blended-learning formats of teacher education. This aspect has also been proven to play a role in solving team conflicts, as the examples of Simone and Patricia as well as Ursula and Karen have shown; both teams enhanced their cooperation through communication and sharing personal information and eventually becoming friends (see section 6.3.1). These and other teams (e.g. Barbara and Anita) shared thoughts on the benefits of working on the CARPs cooperatively in the interviews, learning logs and portfolios, supporting the assumption that teamwork may enhance ‘positive interdependence’ (Hare 1976) and can thereby trigger learning processes, which enhance professional development on an interpersonal level.

Recent research in various fields further supports these findings. Ado (2013: 143) found that collaborative action research between experienced and inexperienced teachers leads to “a ‘reciprocal exchange’ between novice and experienced peers about teaching and curriculum that increases feelings of support.”
Hecimovich and Volet (2011: 187f.) further state that a combination of hands-on experiences and peer-assisted learning have proven to increase professional development in the field of health education. Similarly, Colbeck, Cabrera and Terenzini (2001: 187), in their study on the links between teaching practices, self-perception and gender in various fields of higher education, argue that

students are more likely to experience their own accomplishments, for example, when engaging in hands-on learning experiences rather than when passively listening to lectures. Collaborative learning experiences provide opportunities for observing behaviors modeled by others. Students who see peers performing a task are likely to believe they can also accomplish the task.

While the latter might be true for particular tasks, the results of this study suggest that learning from and with each other also strongly depends on the quality of the teamwork, the (student) teacher’s commitment towards her profession, and notions of professional confidence. As the detailed analysis of an interview passage with Nicole and Daniela (see section 6.3.3) indicated, inexperienced teachers may not necessarily benefit from more experienced teachers, if they feel intimidated by the perceived superior status of their team partner. I will further discuss these issues in sections 7.2 and 7.3 in the context of the cognitive and affective dimensions of professional development.

Not only the cooperation with the team partner played a role in E-LINGO, but also the interactions with tutors, peers and colleagues in the (student) teachers’ particular institutional contexts had an impact on their interpersonal development. As Scarino (2014: 394) emphasises:

In addition to working with their own distinctive linguistic and cultural make-ups, language teachers also work as individuals or members of distinctive communities with their own local, educational, and institutional cultures. They necessarily enact their teaching and learning through their own interpretive framework of knowledge, understanding, practices, and values built over time, and based on their diverse experiences.

In the context of this study, in particular the E-LINGO community, i.e. the overall group of the (student) teachers in this cohort and the programme’s tutors, is of interest in terms of its function as a ‘community of practice’ (Lave & Wenger 1991). Several students addressed the positive atmosphere in E-LINGO and appreciated the fact that the tutors were approachable and established personal relationships with the (student) teachers, instead of being distanced and formal (e.g. Simone, Interview
II, Topic H, Utterance I, cf. Table 7; Clarissa, Interview II, Topic H, Utterance 1; Elisabeth, Interview III, Topic E, Utterance III, cf. Table 8). This is particularly important in a blended-learning teacher education programme, such as E-LINGO. As the data have shown, a sense of cooperation and community within the teams as well as in the whole group is considered conducive for learning (cf. 6.3.1 and 6.3.2). Not only during the on-campus sessions, but also and particularly during the online phases, a feeling of community and support is crucial for the motivation of the (student) teachers (Bäcker 2008b; Zibelius 2013). As discussed in section 3.4, the tutors in E-LINGO fulfil an important role not only in establishing, but also in maintaining this community of practice. This was further emphasised by the excerpt of the tutor interview with Josephine and Valerie in section 6.3.2, in which they discuss the challenge of communicating and giving feedback in a blended-learning environment. Besides offering administrative, pedagogical and didactic support, they also play an affective-motivational role for the (student) teachers (Müller-Hartmann 2008: 94f.). The data has revealed that some (student) teachers felt neglected in terms of task support, whereas others were satisfied by the guidance and help provided by the tutors (see section 6.3.2). Yet other (student) teachers shared in informal conversations that they openly communicated private problems with the tutors, which I interpret as an indicator for a trustful relationship between tutors and (student) teachers.

As the examples of CLIs in the context of teamwork and cooperative learning show, interpersonal development strongly depends on the relationships of the persons involved, as well as the individual (student) teachers’ personalities, their commitment to the shared task and their needs in terms of support. These aspects are tied in with cognitive and affective development processes, as I will further discuss in the following sections. The data contained a number of CLIs incidents indicating the growth or readjustment of conceptual and methodological knowledge as well as shifting attitudes through the engagement in action research, as I will explore below.

7.2 Cognitive Development

Most certainly, all E-LINGO (student) teachers learned something from being engaged in action research for the first time. This learning, however, took place on various levels and in different ways, as the detailed analysis of exemplary data samples illustrates (see sections 6.3.3 and 6.3.4). The cognitive dimension of a teacher’s
professional development involves various aspects, such as her knowledge, beliefs and attitudes constituting the “unobservable dimension” (Borg 2005: 190) or the “hidden side” (Freeman 2002) of her work. Yet the systematic interpretation of the data examples allowed for the reconstruction of underlying structures of implicit or practical knowledge leading to the CLIs discussed in section 6.3. Within the framework of the following three CLI groups, different aspects related to the (student) teachers’ individual cognitive development were discussed:

- ‘Now I understand the theory!’, i.e. (student) teachers gained conceptual and methodological knowledge and/or were able to make connections between existing and new knowledge through the experiential learning processes involved in action research.
- ‘This is action research? I can do that!’, i.e. (student) teachers gained understanding of what research is and that they are capable of doing research in the scope of their practice
- ‘I’m a central figure in the learning context’, i.e. (student) teachers realised what they say, do and represent as teachers may have a direct impact on their students.

Within the first two groups, numerous critical learning incidents were related to theoretical and methodological learning, e.g. a growing understanding of how action research works. The latter group of CLIs covers both cognitive and affective dimensions of the (student) teachers’ development processes and will therefore also be discussed in section 7.3. Furthermore, I found several indicators for commitment, ambition and goal-orientation documented in the data, e.g. in statements of (student) teachers reporting that they would like to do further research or be involved as teacher educators themselves. However, in view of my research objective, i.e. finding out if, how and under what circumstances action research may foster professional development, interpreting these indicators raises a few questions: Does being engaged in action research help enhance (student) teachers’ commitment, ambition and goal-orientation in view of their career in the field of FLTE? Or do only committed, ambitious and goal-oriented teachers enrol in a course such as E-LINGO and are willing to expand their repertoire of knowledge and practices? To borrow Mark Clarke’s (2010) words: What do we take as evidence for change? These questions are very difficult to answer within the scope of this study, as they would require an in-depth and long-term research engagement with the (student) teachers.
As described in section 2.2.1, the research on teacher cognition and identity is vast and complex. Kubanyiova (2012: 8) explains that conceptual change “requires a transformation of existing belief systems.” In the context of FLTE, the teachers’ prior knowledge and the socio-cultural context of their teaching are considered important factors for the formation of their cognition (ibid.: 13). Therefore, my explications on the cognitive dimension of the (student) teachers’ professional development processes are limited to current incidents of becoming aware and/or changing of knowledge, beliefs or attitudes through the CARPs. My findings can, however, not offer a prognosis for long-term development and change processes that may have been triggered through the engagement in action research.

First of all, I found indicators for the (student) teachers’ knowledge and attitude shift in view of research in general and action research in particular. Several (student) teachers (e.g. Simone, Elisabeth, Ursula and Anita) initially displayed a concept of research that was strongly characterised by the quality criteria of the positivistic research paradigm, e.g. the principle of objectivity, using large-scale quantitative research design, etc., and had difficulties understanding that action research can be subjective and context-bound. In this context, the concept of ‘troublesome knowledge’ (Perkins 1999), i.e. new knowledge which is difficult to conceptualise, becomes relevant for professional development. Experiencing action research within a different framework led the (student) teachers to change their conception of research and action research, as they came to understand that the purpose of the CARPs is not necessarily to produce large amounts of quantitative data, but rather to gain an understanding of a specific situation (e.g. Barbara, Anita, Simone) and hence overcome their initially sceptical attitude towards action research (see section 6.3.4). Furthermore, they may become more receptive to theories and research in general. As McKay (2009: 281) explains, “[o]nce teachers become aware of the challenges that exist in doing classroom research – from formulating research questions to gathering and analysing relevant data – they will become more critical readers of existing research.” The data supports this assumption, as discussed in section 6.3.3.

According to Kubanyiova (2012: 31), drawing on findings from the field of psychology, attitude change can be either based on an engagement with a persuasive message, or on heuristic cues, i.e. “our mood, our feelings towards the person behind
the message, or our prior experience, knowledge and beliefs about the subject.” Kubanyiová (ibid.) assumes that

the content of teacher education can be taken to represent a certain form of persuasive message in that teachers or student teachers are expected to cognitively engage with it, and consequently, form, change or reaffirm their attitudes towards a particular educational phenomenon it advocates.

I argue that E-LINGO, promoting an experiential approach to learning how to teach through action research, provides both – a persuasive message and heuristic cues. As the (student) teachers can decide on the focus of their action research projects, it can be assumed that their research questions and hypotheses are closely related to their prior experiences and knowledge. Some examples in the data analysis indicate that the persuasive message of the course content was only perceived through the practical engagement with it in the respective teaching context, hence was influenced by heuristic cues within the teaching and learning context. For example, the usefulness of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in the primary school was only approved of by one of the (student) teachers, Nicole, after she had experienced that it is possible to work with tasks with young learners, if the process is well-planned and structured (see section 6.3.3). Even though Nicole had knowledge of TBLT before, her experiences as a teacher had led her to believe that TBLT cannot be used in the primary school, but rather with more advanced language learners. This example shows that conceptual knowledge (theory) as well as perceptual knowledge (practice) is relevant for a teacher’s learning and professional development (Freeman & Johnson 1998: 405, see section 2.1.2). Nicole’s learning incident displays the generation of knowledge for teaching rather than knowledge about teaching (cf. Ball, Thames & Phelps 2008) in that she understood a concept through an experiential learning opportunity in her teaching context. As this and other examples indicate, action research may help reshape and readjust existing knowledge and attitudes through critical reflection. As Cabaroglu (2014: 86) further argues:

[A]ction research helps teacher candidates to reflect on the issues that originate from their specific contexts and that are important to them. Involvement in action research promotes deeper reflection and the ability to deal with genuine problems creatively in real classroom contexts. Inquiry-oriented practices may help teacher candidates to move away from prescriptive stances toward collaborative inquiry.
In the context of this study, several learning incidents supporting this assumption could be elicited. For example, Patricia gained awareness from critically reflecting on her CARP focusing on gender stereotypes, which ultimately altered her self-perception as a teacher in that she understood her great responsibility in shaping her learners’ attitudes and personalities (see section 6.3.6.). Again, the question is whether or not this learning incident may be taken as evidence for change (cf. Clarke 2010). As Borg (2009: 165) notes, caution is required as observable changes in behaviour may not be indicative of a meaningful and lasting cognitive impact on teachers. This is particularly the case when trainees are being assessed and therefore are under pressure to conform with the principles and practices promoted by those assessing them.

Patricia referred to the learning incident described above in the interviews, as well as in her portfolio. As explained in section 4.4 and 5.4, the learning logs and portfolios were accessible by the programme’s tutors and were therefore only considered as supplementary data sources in order to reduce the risk of incorporating data which might have been produced in aspiration of positive assessment. The portfolios as well as the presentations on the CARPs were graded and part of the overall assessment, hence the (student) teachers’ utterances and performances must be considered in this framework, as Borg (ibid.) suggests. However, as the interviews took place without the tutors present and were characterised by a relaxed and trustful atmosphere, the notions of social desirability and assessment played no or only a minor role (see section 5.5). The question of whether or not engaging in action research had a “lasting cognitive impact” (ibid.) on Patricia’s and other (student) teachers’ attitudes cannot finally be answered at this stage, but will only become evident over time.

The data analysis further revealed that some (student) teachers are more capable than others of reflecting on their learning processes, which became observable, for example, when I asked individual respondents for concrete examples of learning incidents and ‘aha moments’ (see section 6.3.3). The portfolios further revealed that the depth of reflection varies tremendously among the (student) teachers. As discussed in section 2.2.2, the principle of reflection is central to teacher learning and also plays an important role in action research (see section 2.3). As Somekh (2006: 14) rightly states, “[t]he quality of action research depends upon the reflexive sensitivity of the researchers, whose data collection, analysis and
interpretations will all be mediated by their sense of self and identity.” Thus, it can be assumed that those (student) teachers capable of critically reflecting their practices and decisions benefitted more from the CARPs than (student) teachers who are not familiar with the principle of reflection, as became evident in the data examples of Rebecca (cf. 6.3.7 and 6.3.8).

As Kubanyiova (2012: 191) further argues, long-term conceptual change is “a process emerging from the dynamic interaction of diverse and interconnected agents in the social cognitive systems in which teachers’ activity is embedded.” Thus, the limitations of my study become obvious again. The data analysis could not provide insights into all aspects influencing the (student) teachers’ “reflexive sensitivity” (Somekh 2006: 14) and into the “social cognitive systems in which teachers’ activity is embedded” (Kubanyiova 2012: 191). The (student) teachers’ change and development processes during the involvement in a teacher education programme, such as E-LINGO, are difficult or even impossible to observe in their entirety. However, what I could observe was the (student) teachers’ openness and readiness for development and change seem to be mostly connected to affective factors, as I will further discuss in section 7.3.

To summarise, several indicators for cognitive development were documented in the data, for example a growing understanding of theoretical and methodological concepts. As the data analysis showed, some of the (student) teachers changed their perception of research in general and action research in particular, as well as their self-perception as teachers and researchers. As discussed in section 2.1, professional development is a complex process, in which several factors and dimensions are interwoven. Hence, it can be assumed that the cognitive development processes documented in the examples of this study were interconnected with various aspects of affective development, as I will explain in the following section.

7.3 Affective Development

The third dimension of professional development that I identified within this cohort is affective development, i.e. change on a personal and emotional level. Many of the CLIs described in the previous sections are not only relevant in view of interpersonal and cognitive development processes, but are also tied in with the individual (student) teachers’ affective development. The comparative analysis showed that a
number of the (student) teachers describe CLIs that relate to emotional experiences and feelings about different aspects of the teaching profession:

- ‘The camera is not the enemy’, i.e. (student) teachers learned to overcome their reluctance to work with videography and became aware of the benefits through their experiences.

- ‘I’m a central figure in the learning context’, i.e. (student) teachers realised what they say, do and represent as teachers may have a direct impact on their students.

- ‘My English isn’t good enough. Or is it?’, i.e. (student) teachers displayed insecurities about their language proficiency, which was in some cases overcome through positive feedback and experiences of success.

- ‘Is teaching English to children my cup of tea?’, i.e. (student) teachers are unsure their capabilities and/or willingness to be an English teacher.

These groups of CLIs became particularly obvious in interview passages with a strong narrative character and high density of affective language use and metaphorical expressions (cf. Bohnsack 2010a: 104, Nohl 2010: 205), as well as in learning log entries and portfolio excerpts in which the (student) teachers relate to their personal experiences. My findings suggest that, independent of the level of professional experience, the engagement in action research can trigger various changes on an affective level. In particular, factors influencing the perception of self and one’s own learning process, such as different levels of confidence, played a central role for the (student) teachers’ learning processes and shall be discussed in detail below.

According to Kubanyiova (2012: 24), the role of affective factors with regards to teachers’ conceptual change is a widely under-researched field. My findings strongly suggest that action research may lead to increased confidence in different areas. As the data examples discussed have shown (see sections 6.3.5–6.3.8), the majority of the (student) teachers reflect on issues related to their self-perception within the profession. Professional confidence or rather a lack thereof seems to be a central theme within the CLIs listed above. Indicators for a lack of confidence varied among the participants, and related, for example, to feeling uncomfortable when being filmed, perceiving their language proficiency as insufficient, feeling insecure about their theoretical knowledge and being undecided about whether or not the
teaching profession is the right choice for them. All aspects relate to the concept of self-efficacy or professional confidence as I have discussed in detail in section 2.2.1.

In the context of this study, I prefer to use the term 'professional confidence' instead of 'self-efficacy', as it best captures the centrality of beliefs in one's capabilities within a specific professional context – here, teaching English to young learners. According to research, professional confidence may increase (e.g. feeling comfortable in a situation) or decrease (e.g. feeling stressed and insecure) depending on several interconnected factors (Holland, Middleton & Uys 2012: 219). Studies on influencing factors on confidence suggest that the cultural and educational background of students and their parents (Santiago & Einarson 1998), as well as the teacher's behaviour (Schunk 1998), have an impact on how student teachers perceive themselves and their abilities. As for example Pajares (1996), Brophy (1998) and Dörnyei (2001) argue, achievement and feelings of self-worth can be increased by mastery experiences or experiences of success. Colbeck, Cabrera and Terenzini (2001: 185f.) further found that clear instructions, feedback and cooperative learning formats help (student) teachers develop professional confidence.

In the context of my study, the question arises if the engagement in cooperative action research can enhance the (student) teachers' professional confidence. As my data analysis revealed, a number of (student) teachers experienced positive learning incidents through action research and discovered aspects of themselves as teachers they were not aware of. For example, through the use of videography, Melanie realised that she succeeds in promoting enthusiastic and engaging teaching, in spite of feeling stressed at times. Furthermore, Patricia realised that teachers have a strong influence on students' attitudes and therefore need to become aware of their powerful position within the educational context (see section 6.3.5). These two examples indicate that (student) teachers may (re)discover aspects of their selves or their teaching through the engagement in action research. Zeichner (2003: 317) states:

Teacher research, under certain conditions, seems to develop or rekindle an excitement and enthusiasm about teaching and to provide a validation of the importance of the work that teachers do that seems to be missing from the lives of many teachers.

As argued before, the engagement in the CARPs did not necessarily create new knowledge, but rather helped the (student) teachers to adjust and interconnect
existing knowledge with new insights into areas they choose to focus on. Cabaroglu (2014: 86) explains that action research enables (student) teachers “to exercise human agency” and to take “control over which intervention to make in one aspect of their own teaching.” The notions of choice, agency and ownership in action research have been highlighted by several scholars (e.g. Zeichner 2003; Nunan 2006; Somekh 2009a; Burns 2010) and played a crucial role in the CARPs in E-LINGO. As (student) teachers were required to do action research in the scope of the programme and as the topic area for each project was prescribed (see section 3.5), it could be argued that they neither had a choice, nor owned the research project. However, as they were able to choose the focus of their topic, negotiate the research procedure within their teams, and independently implement the projects in their respective teaching context, they became ‘agents of knowledge’ (Burns 2009a: 116) as well as ‘producers of knowledge’ (Golombek 2009: 159).

I therefore strongly agree with Zeichner (2003: 318), who considers “the ownership of the research by teachers [...] essential to teacher research which makes a difference for teachers and their students.” As the review of the literature on the challenges involved in action research has shown (see section 2.3.3), the majority of (action) research projects are still planned, initiated and guided by teacher educators and researchers rather than by the teachers themselves. In the context of E-LINGO, the research was part of the (student) teachers’ assessment and was therefore initiated and monitored by the programme’s tutors. However, the tutors merely provided the (student) teachers with feedback during the preparatory phase of finding a research question, formulating hypotheses and indicators, as well as in designing lesson plans. They were not involved in the implementation of the CARPs, i.e. they were not engaged in the process of teaching and/or collecting and evaluating data. This granted the (student) teachers a sense of agency and ownership, as they were responsible for the organisation and implementation of the project. As the data analysed revealed, two (student) teachers (Simone and Patricia) discussed explicitly that they enjoyed the CARP on TBLT the most, as they were able to choose the topic and the focus of their research freely (see section 6.3.6). This indicates that they became aware of the benefits of investigating those aspects of their teaching they personally consider interesting and important.

The notions of choice, agency and ownership also entail the important question of sustainability of action research as an instrument for professional
development, i.e. whether or not the (student) teachers will continue working with action research in the future to further develop their practice. As the data analysis revealed (cf. Table 8, Interview III, Topic K), all of the (student) teachers consider action research as very time-consuming; two of them state that they will probably not be working with it in the future. However, most of the (student) teachers say that they will be using elements of action research (e.g. videography) in case they face a difficult situation or a problem in their teaching practice. Two (student) teachers reported to be using the CARP concept or elements of it already with their own teacher trainees (Ursula and Nicole), and one (student) teacher even feels called to promoting action research among other primary school teachers after her experiences with E-LINGO. She states, “For me it’s like a mission” (Patricia, Interview III, February 2012) and elaborates on career opportunities (e.g. doing a PhD, getting involved in teacher training), allowing her to share her knowledge and experiences with action research with other primary school teachers.

To what extent the ambitions and efforts of these (student) teachers will persist in the future is impossible to predict at this stage. As these examples indicate, the individual (student) teachers’ personalities, commitment to the teaching profession and their self-perceptions seem to play an important role in this context. Those who are passionate about teaching and have goals for the future, i.e. have an image of their ideal self (Higgins 1987; cf. also Dörnyei 2001; Kubanyiova 2012), show more indicators for development than those who are not sure about whether or not the teaching profession is the right choice for them and rather define themselves through ought-to selves (ibid.), i.e. an image of how they are supposed to be as teachers (see section 6.3.3). Hence, it seems that the professional confidence of the (student) teachers in this study is related to how they perceive themselves as teachers and whether or not they consider the teaching profession as their right profession, i.e. how committed they are to teaching. As Bullough and Hall-Kenyon (2012: 7) state, teachers’ “calling” or “vocation” for the teaching profession is a widely under-researched field. According to Vieluf, Kunter and Vijver (2013: 101), cross-national research suggests that “teacher self-efficacy relates positively to teachers’ job satisfaction and classroom teaching practices.” With regards to the finding of my study, I argue that the relationship between professional confidence and job satisfaction is reciprocal: those (student) teachers who are confident about themselves and their teaching seem satisfied with their profession and formulate
future goals in reference to their ideal selves. The other way around, positive and satisfying experiences in different areas, can lead to increased professional confidence (see sections 6.3.5–6.3.7). As Zeichner (2003: 317) explains, the impact of action research on teachers’ confidence and teaching competence can be manifold:

[T]he experience of engaging in self-study research helps teachers to become more confident about their ability to promote student learning, to become more proactive in dealing with difficult situations that arise in their teaching, and to acquire habits and skills of inquiry that they use beyond the research experience to analyze their teaching in an in-depth manner.

The aspects described by Zeichner (ibid.) refer to long-term development processes, which go beyond the scope of this study, but may be considered in further empirical research, as I will suggest in section 8.2. As the data analysis further revealed, another aspect particularly relevant in the context of foreign language teaching and learning is the connection between professional confidence and being a native or non-native speaker of English. Murdoch (1994: 259) assumes that there is a direct link between language proficiency and teaching competence:

In our concern for fostering interactive methodological practice and the ability of teachers to develop their students’ knowledge of the language system, we may tend to underestimate how inadequate teachers themselves will feel if they lack confidence in their own language performance. We must question the effectiveness of a pedagogical focus which fails to address this core anxiety. All the evidence suggests that a greater concern with language training, particularly during early phases of the training programme, would produce more competent teachers.

The findings of my study confirm that not the actual language proficiency but the (student) teachers’ perception thereof is decisive in view of their professional confidence. The majority of the (student) teachers did not explicitly address the issue of language proficiency, indicating that they are either content with their level of English or consider working on their proficiency as a natural part of their profession. One (student) teacher who had realised shortcomings in some areas of her language proficiency, Nicole, considered improving her language skills a positive challenge that lies in her zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky 1978). In contrast to that, Barbara, who perceived her language proficiency as insufficient and felt insecure about her quality as an English teacher, displayed very low professional confidence. Richards et al. (2013: 245) rightly suggest that “building teachers’ language proficiency is a long-term investment” which is influenced by various factors, such as
professional confidence. As discussed in section 1.1, in the profession of foreign language teaching, in which the subject matter is related to notions of identity, community and power, the (perceived) language proficiency of the teacher plays an important role. Issues related to being a non-native teacher of English have become apparent in the data (see section 6.3.7) and are also very prominent topics in the literature (cf. Duff & Ushida 1997; Kamhi-Stein 2009; Miller 2009). It would be interesting to further explore the non-native language teacher identity as well as their development of professional confidence systematically, as I will further elaborate in section 8.2.

Furthermore, the use of video analysis triggered numerous critical learning incidents within this framework, as the examples in section 6.3.5 have shown. Warneke (2006: 365) found that the “fear of the camera” as well as insecurities about teaching in general play an important role in the successful implementation of action research, especially for novice teachers. From my own findings I conclude that the fear of the camera is overcome quickly and that (student) teachers quickly learn to appreciate the benefits they can gain from the change of perspective the camera offers on their teaching and themselves as teachers. The camera or rather the video-recordings seem to even have contributed to some of the (student) teachers’ increased professional confidence by showing them how well they do as teachers and how positively their pupils responded to their teaching. Especially for novice teachers, these aspects are hardly visible in the teaching situation as they are concerned with managing the classroom (Flores & Day 2006: 227).

As the discussion of the three dimensions of professional development has shown, the commitment toward the tasks, as well as toward the teaching profession in general, seems to be playing a major role in terms of willingness to engage in professional development, such as action research. Furthermore, affective factors such as professional confidence play an important role. The (student) teachers’ data reveal different rationales of why they chose the teaching profession. Whereas some are passionate about teaching and/or love children, others have rather pragmatic reasons (see section 6.3.8). Hence, the biography of the (student) teachers, as well as other socio-cultural aspects play a major role in the successful implementation of action research in FLTE (cf. Schocker-von Ditfurth 2001: 64ff.), as I will further discuss below in presenting an integrated model of language teachers’ professional development based on this study’s results.
7.4 A Model of Language Teachers’ Professional Development

As discussed in depth in section 2.2, the term professional development is used differently in the research literature. For the context of this study, I defined professional development as teacher learning which is manifested in the form of critical learning incidents (CLIs). All 12 participants completed the programme successfully, and all obtained a Master’s degree in the field of teaching English to young learners. The results of ongoing assessment tasks during the two-year programme (module hand-ins and CARP presentations), the grade of the final portfolio, in which the (student) teachers summarise and reflect upon their overall learning process, as well as the grade for the M.A. thesis, in which the (student) teachers showed their ability to get involved in the academic discussion, all counted towards the overall grade of the Master’s degree. The knowledge and skills necessary to complete the different tasks in E-LINGO certainly contributed to the personal and professional development of the (student) teachers; hence, the degree itself could be considered as evidence for professional development and learning.

However, as I have argued in the course of this thesis, in my understanding, professional development is much more than obtaining a degree or certificate. As reflected in the critical learning incidents (CLIs) analysed in Chapter 6, professional development takes place in different forms and on various interconnected levels. The analysis led to the generation of three dimensions of professional development, which I discussed in relation to relevant literature in the previous sections. Without doubt, this multidimensional model of language teachers’ professional development is only one possible result of many which could have developed from the data. In acknowledging my own subjectivity and reflecting on my role as a researcher (see section 5.2), I am aware that I had an impact on the data gathering, sampling and analysis processes (Finlay 2002; Schart 2001). Yet, with the chosen methodological approach, I hope to have made my decisions and procedures transparent and inter-subjectively comprehensible (cf. e.g. Nohl 2010: 203). The following model depicts the interconnected dimensions of affective, interpersonal and cognitive development, as documented in the form of the (student) teachers’ critical learning incidents in the data:
As the figure illustrates, the different dimensions of professional development are interconnected. Based on my findings, I consider affective development as the strongest dimension of professional development, and therefore depicted it within the largest arrow in a dark shade of grey on the left. Interpersonal development is positioned between affective and cognitive development, as it comprises several aspects of the other two dimensions, which are in turn influenced by aspects of interactions with others. As the data examples have shown, interpersonal development is also a very important dimension of professional development. Cognitive development is depicted in white on the right hand side, indicating that critical learning incidents within this dimension were not as frequent in the data in comparison to the other two dimensions. However, the figure does not aim at creating a hierarchy among the three dimensions. As the data examples have shown, the development processes are unique to the individual (student) teachers and, therefore, the role of these three dimensions varies from individual to individual. In the following, I will briefly comment on the influencing factors impacting on the (student) teachers’ learning processes, the interconnection of the three dimensions of
professional development as well as on the role of the socio-cultural context and the communities of practice in which these development processes are situated. According to the findings of my study, affective development seems to be constituted by the notion of professional confidence, positive attitudes towards the teaching and learning context, commitment to the teaching profession, as well as the perceived and ideal self or ought-to self of the (student) teacher. All these factors are interwoven and influence not only the affective, but also the cognitive as well as the interpersonal dimensions, of development. As explained in sections 7.1-7.3, attitude change may be triggered either by a persuasive message, i.e. on a cognitive level, or by heuristic cues, i.e. on an affective level (cf. Kubanyiova 2012: 31). Similarly, commitment is determined by “strong psychological ties” (Razak et al. 2009: 345), which may either relate to cognitive aspects, e.g. career advancement, or to affective aspects, e.g. an emotional attachment to and identification with the teaching profession (cf. ibid.: 350). Hence, the notions of attitude and commitment are influencing factors of all three dimensions.

The perception of self and others as well as the degree of a (student) teacher’s professional confidence, however, seem to be connected predominantly to affective development processes, as the examination of the selected data examples have illustrated. As Goodnough (2010: 181) states, “[n]ew experiences, such as action research, can become a context for teachers to change the self and allow them to select among future behaviour that may affect temporary and long-term change.” The notion of self is tied in with the individual (student) teachers’ personalities and identities. The in-depth exploration of the (student) teachers’ identities would go beyond this study, yet I would like to comment on some interesting observations made in this context. Not only the interviews but also observations of the (student) teachers’ presentations of their CARP results made obvious the role of personality and identity. Apparently, their personalities and self-perceptions as teachers are shaped by their own language learning experiences as well as their professional experiences as foreign language teachers in their particular contexts. The degree of openness and willingness to engage with techniques different from their own experiences varied among the (student) teachers. For example, a module task in E-LINGO required them to work with a hand puppet. As my observations, informal conversations as well as the (student) teachers’ reflections in the portfolios and learning logs showed, the use of the hand puppet evoked different reactions and
feelings of the (student) teachers. Whether or not the (student) teachers felt comfortable with a hand puppet was closely connected to their sense of teacher identity and the perception of their selves. Whereas most of the (student) teachers were enthusiastic about bringing a puppet to life in their classrooms, three of them were quite reluctant to work with a hand puppet as they felt their personality would not allow them to do so. Interestingly, one (student) teacher mentioned in an interview that she would not feel comfortable with a German speaking hand puppet, whereas she does not mind an English speaking puppet. Research on language teacher identity could benefit from further exploration of this issue, as I will further discuss in section 8.2. As mentioned above, professional confidence and self-perception seem to be closely interconnected. Not only professional experience, but also theoretical knowledge, was described as an amplifier for confidence by the (student) teachers. Anita for example explained, when asked in the third interview in February 2012 for what happened during her E-LINGO enrolment:

I feel a lot more secure than before E-LINGO. I gained a lot of knowledge, I gained a lot of confidence through the knowledge that I gained and the CARPs helped me to find out a lot about my teaching, I did a lot of projects with my students which I have not done without E-LINGO and they have been really successful; it was very interesting, it was great for the kids, it was challenging and both, the students and me, we learned a lot through the CARPs. (Anita, Interview III, Topic J, Utterance I).

This utterance and other examples discussed in section 6.3.6, indicate yet again the connection between cognitive and affective factors in the (student) teachers’ learning processes. Interestingly, the concept of confidence seems to play a central role in the data of the (student) teachers and is in need of further exploration, as I will emphasise in section 8.2.

Interpersonal development refers to development processes that take place through cooperation with others. Interpersonal or cooperative development is enhanced through engagement with the team partner, peers and tutors, a positive attitude and commitment to their shared task. As the data analysis indicated, communication not only within the teams, but also with tutors and peers, was a key element of interpersonal development (see sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2). As mentioned before, the dimension of interpersonal development is positioned between affective and cognitive development in the model, as the development processes of the individuals are also reflected in the interactions with others. In view of cognitive
learning processes, several factors played a role, as the data examples have shown. Development is fostered through the right kind of input within the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky 1978), i.e. tasks with the appropriate level of difficulty for the individual (student) teacher. In view of the CARPs, this means that – depending on the (student) teachers’ prior knowledge and experiences, as well as their commitment to the task and the teaching profession – the benefits gained from engaging in action research varied. For example, (student) teachers who were able to connect experiential knowledge from the CARPs with prior knowledge gained a deepened understanding of theoretical concepts (see section 6.3.3). Furthermore, the ability to critically reflect on learning incidents differed among the (student) teachers and had an influence on their learning and development processes. As discussed in section 2.2.2, reflective practice goes beyond just thinking about one’s practice. Furthermore, reflection can be understood as a form of articulation and communication (Johnson 1996; Edge 2002). As Zeichner and Tabachnick (2001: 83) explain: “Reflective teaching, like any teaching, is a social activity.” The data analysis indicated that the ability to reflect and consider feedback from tutors and peers is an important aspect for cognitive development. It seems that this process is enhanced through successful communication within the teams and with the tutors (see sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2). Therefore, cognitive development is connected to interpersonal development, which again emphasises the overlapping nature of the three development dimensions.

All teacher learning and professional development is further embedded in the socio-cultural context and within their respective ‘communities of practice’ (Lave & Wenger 1991). On the one hand, E-LINGO represents a community of practice for the (student) teachers, on the other hand their individual teaching contexts also constitute communities of practice. Depending on the individual (student) teachers’ networks with colleagues and engagements in other professional development opportunities, I speak of communities instead of community of practice. As indicated in the data, many (student) teachers consider the teaching context as well as their learners as the decisive factors in the educational context. As the responses to my question to what extent their own cultural and education background plays a role in their teaching (cf. Interview II, Topic H) indicate, the majority of the (student) teachers consider adapting their practices to the needs of the learners in a particular context as their prime task, referring to various personal experiences gained in
different cultural settings (e.g. Germany, Austria, UK, Denmark, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Romania, Brazil, US). Whereas four (student) teachers state that their teaching styles are influenced to a certain degree by their own language learning experiences, i.e. they either adopted styles they consider beneficial for learning or they disregarded styles they did not perceive as beneficial, three explicitly highlight the central role of the individual personality for the formation of teacher identity. As interesting as the further exploration of this issue would have been, the design and the scope of this study did not allow for a detailed analysis of the underlying orientation frameworks of the (student) teachers’ utterances in this context. However, the topic may be a subject for further research, as I will further highlight in section 8.2.

It became clear that the individual teaching and learning contexts, i.e. the (student) teachers’ respective communities of practice, their biographies, their experiences, attitudes and self-perceptions, interact with, contribute to and are shaped by the school and learning cultures (Appel 2001; Avalos 2011) of these contexts. As Freeman (2002: 11) summarises:

If contexts for any learning are socially developed and situated, if teacher learners are bringing their ‘contexts of mind’ to their formal learning in teacher education, then it is clear that what is being learned challenges and transforms what is known over time.

The notion of ‘contexts of mind’ (ibid.) relates to different aspects in view of the present study. Not only did the (student) teachers bring various educational and cultural backgrounds to E-LINGO, they also lived and worked in various educational settings in different countries all over the world. Hence, their experiences with classroom action research need to be contextualised within the broader framework of the socio-cultural settings of their teaching and learning contexts. For example, whether or not the (student) teachers had a teaching post or had to find a school and a class to be able to conduct their projects will have influenced the interactions between students and teacher in the classroom. In the scope of this study, it was not possible to observe the (student) teachers in their teaching situations; however, research on how beneficial action research is in familiar and unfamiliar teaching contexts respectively would be valuable for expanding the knowledge base on action research in FLTE. Furthermore, the socio-cultural contexts in which the CARPs were carried out varied. Not only did the (student) teachers live and work in different countries during their enrolment in E-LINGO, they also worked in different
institutions and with different learner groups, hence in different school and learning cultures (Appel 2001; Avalos 2011). As I was not able to observe the (student) teachers in their respective contexts, I cannot draw conclusions in view of the influencing factors these contexts exerted on their professional development processes.

As the explications on the dimensions of interpersonal development (see section 7.2) have shown, the notion of cooperative learnings plays an important role in establishing a “sense of community and belonging” (Ado 2013: 143). The (student) teacher’s team partner, their peers and the tutors have proven to play a central role in creating a community conducive to interpersonal development processes. In particular, open communication about the cooperative tasks, among the group members as well as with the tutors, was elicted as a key element for successful cooperation. This is confirmed by Warneke (2006: 364), who found that apart from a systematic introduction to the concept and mindset of action research, an adequate balance between praise and critique in the feedback, a positive atmosphere in the cooperation between (student) teachers and supervisors and mutual commitment of student teacher and supervisor to cooperatively evaluate the project are essential for the implementation of action research in teacher education. Additionally, Warneke (2006: 427) asks for more research regarding the practicability of action research in foreign language teacher education. As the concept was well-implemented in E-LINGO, the practicability was not a question I was concerned with in my study. Yet I agree with Warneke, insofar that more research is needed on the overall organisation and task support structures of action research projects in teacher education, as I will further elaborate in section 8.2. This is particularly important in online and blended-learning teacher education environments, which pose additional challenges in terms of communication and cooperation.

As the integrated model of language teachers’ professional development implies, professional development of (student) teachers depends on much more than the setting and the persuasive message of teacher education programmes – it depends on teachers’ conceptions, attitudes and the notion of possible and ideal selves, which drive the (student) teachers’ commitment to the teaching profession and their interactions within their respective socio-cultural setting. As Tsui (2007: 1064) adequately expresses,
the developmental paths that teachers take depend on the ways in which they personally interact with their specific contexts of work, of which they are a part, and the ways in which they see the possibilities that can be opened up for their professional learning. It is essential for teacher educators to recognize the situated and personal nature of teachers’ professional growth and not be prescriptive, to understand the “situated possibilities” that are opened up for each individual teacher, and to help them to maximize the opportunities for professional learning.

Hence, FLTE can provide certain preconditions and support structures for teacher learning, aiming at providing the (student) teachers with opportunities to explore their selves and their paths of professional development in the context of teaching and learning. Zeichner (2003: 306) rightly calls for the overall framework of teacher research to take into consideration the notions of choice, agency and ownership:

> The key questions to ask with regard to the philosophical realm are concerned with the degree to which teachers feel respected, intellectually challenged as well as supported, and the degree to which they have control over their own research both in terms of its substantive focus and the methods used to carry it out.

In this sense, E-LINGO with its integrated action research component which gives (student) teachers the chance to support selected aspects of their practice in a supportive environment can be seen as a socio-cultural environment “appropriate and conducive to learning” (Avalos 2011: 10).

### 7.5 Summary

In this chapter, I summarised the results of the case study and described the three main dimensions of professional development which became evident in this study. The first dimension, interpersonal development, was reconstructed on the basis of how the (student) teachers experienced their teamwork and to what extent they were committed and capable of learning with others within or outside their ‘community of practice’ (see section 7.1). The second dimension, cognitive development, refers to individual experiences described by the respondents, which indicate the acquisitions of different types of knowledge through the involvement in action research (see section 7.2). The third dimension, affective development, refers to growth on an emotional level, such as the development of professional confidence, as indicated by the (student) teachers’ descriptions of their self-perception (see section 7.3).

With regards to the research questions, it can be summarised that cooperatively engaging in classroom action research triggers different learning processes and may foster professional development on different levels.
(interpersonal, cognitive and affective). However, it strongly depends on the individual (student) teacher's personality type, her level of commitment and various contextual factors if and how these learning and development processes take place. Affective factors, in particular the notions of professional confidence and self-perception, seem to play a central role for the (student) teachers' professional development. In the following, I will conclude by summarising the indicators for professional development and recalling the relevance of the study's findings for the field of foreign language teacher education (see section 8.1), outlining the limitations of the study and suggesting further areas of research (see section 8.2), and giving some final remarks on this case study (see section 8.3).
8 Conclusion

“In understanding something so intensely personal as teaching it is critical we know about the person the teacher is.” (Goodson 2000: 16)

As the presented case study demonstrates, various forms of knowledge, the (student) teachers’ perceptions of self and others, as well as the socio-cultural context of their practice are central to their cognitions and identities. It lies in the nature of qualitative-interpretative research that the results deducted from a limited number of respondents are rather specific and context-bound. Yet the findings can become relevant for other contexts and may be further explored in future research on language teachers’ professional development. As the introductory quote implies, to understand the activity of teaching, we need to understand the teacher and the complexities of her cognitive and affective dispositions. Crucial for this understanding is not only a focus on the teacher’s knowledge about teaching, but on her knowledge for teaching (Ball, Thames & Phelps 2008), i.e. the actual use of knowledge in practice, and how this knowledge shapes and, in turn, is shaped by the socio-cultural context of the teaching situation (Freeman & Johnson 1998; Freeman 2002; Ball, Thames & Phelps 2008). As my findings strongly suggest, action research creates experiential learning opportunities which contribute to the formation of such knowledge. However, neither the design nor the scope of my study allowed for an extensive examination of all aspects relevant to the language teachers’ practice. This can only be accomplished by in-depth long-term studies, as Kubanyiova (2012: 28) rightly suggests:

In order to avoid fragmenting the activity of [foreign] language teaching in our research designs, then, we may have to embrace more holistic approaches which will facilitate a deeper level of analysis and interpretation and allow us to examine the complexity of language teacher cognition more meaningfully. Our designs will inevitably have to be characterised by more in-depth and prolonged involvement with teachers, typical in ethnographic approaches and in-depth case studies that integrate a range of data from multiple sources for advancing our understanding of what teachers in their specific teaching contexts believe, know, feel and hope, what and how they develop, and how this relates to what they do and what their students learn.

Even though the case study only focussed on selected aspects in 12 (student) teachers’ professional lives over a relatively short time, some of the insights gained appear highly relevant for foreign language teacher education in general. The elicited topics and orientation frameworks suggest that the engagement in cooperative action
research may lead to professional development on different levels. However, as Edge (2002: 15) states, learning from experience does not happen automatically, but requires a reflective stance on one’s own practices and decisions. The data examples discussed in Chapter 6 indicate that CLIs foster the (student) teachers’ professional development processes, when identified and reflected upon accordingly (Shapira-Lishchinsky 2011: 649). Given that the (student) teachers are capable of analysing their practice, CLIs can help them develop their individual teacher identities (Schocker-von Ditfurth 2005: 425). The integrated model of language teachers’ professional development (see section 7.4) depicts the interplay of cognitive, affective and interpersonal factors shaping the (student) teachers’ learning processes. These always interact with the socio-cultural setting of the teaching and learning context, which is not only defined by a particular national or regional culture, but also by the school and learning culture(s) (Appel 2001; Avalos 2011) co-created by the teacher and the learners in the classroom. In the following, I will briefly summarise the relevance of my study in the context of FLTE research by briefly recalling the central implications of the integrated model of language teachers’ professional development that I propose based on my findings (section 8.1). Afterwards, I will describe the limitations of the study and outline areas for further research (section 8.2). I will conclude with some final remarks on this project in section 8.3.

8.1 Relevance of the Findings

“Action research [...] is a mind-set as much as it is a method. It is a way of approaching teaching with a desire to be accountable for professional practice and motivated by the desire to improve such service.” (Parsons and Brown 2002: 5f.)

Even though the 12 (student) teachers featured in this case study are not representative of all foreign language teachers, the study identified a number of critical aspects in FLTE. As I examined the professional development of (student) teachers of various age groups, levels of professional experience, educational backgrounds, etc. in a methodologically guided procedure, the abstracted professional development dimensions as summarised in the integrated model of language teachers’ professional development (see section 7.4) can be generalised to a certain degree and may be transferred to other contexts. As the data examples discussed in Chapter 6 and the contextualisation of the results in Chapter 7 have
shown, professional development may take place on various interconnected levels. Not only do (student) teachers learn about theoretical concepts and research methodology, i.e. gain and/or consolidate cognitive knowledge, when engaging in action research, they also benefit from working and learning in teams and in ‘communities of practice’ (Lave & Wenger 1991). Moreover, they may develop on an affective level, through increased levels of professional confidence and altered self-perceptions. As discussed in section 2.3, a large body of literature, but only a limited number of extensive empirical studies (e.g. Warneke 2006; Rochsantiningsih 2004) exist on action research in FLTE. This study makes a contribution to the empirical evidence base on the implementation of action research in practical contexts. The results mainly confirm the overall tone in the literature suggesting that action research can be highly beneficial for the development of reflective practice, practical knowledge and awareness of the teacher’s roles and responsibilities in the classroom (e.g. Nunan 1993; Burns 2010). Additionally, they highlight the complexity of the action research procedure and the learning processes involved. The results of my study are relevant for the context of FLTE in different ways.

First, my results support the assumption that cognitive development can be facilitated through experiential learning opportunities in which the (student) teachers become ‘agents’ of their knowledge (Burns 1999). The fact that the (student) teachers not only gained new knowledge, but were able to refine existing knowledge and link it to new input, further strengthens the call for the implementation of practical learning experiences in FLTE (cf. e.g. Gebhard, Gaitan & Oprandy 1990; Legutke 2003a, 2003b; Schocker-von Ditfurth & Legutke 2006; Legutke & Schocker-von Ditfurth 2009; Gebhard 2009).

Secondly, my findings emphasise the strong impact of affective factors in language teacher education, as depicted in the critical learning incidents (CLIs) discussed in Chapter 6 and in the integrated model of language teachers’ professional development (see section 7.4). An increased acknowledgement of the affective dimension of professional development and further research on the central concept of professional confidence may help us understand better the complex nature of the language teacher’s personality and how it affects her daily practice (cf. Goodson 2000: 16), as I will further explain in section 8.2.

Thirdly, the cooperative development dimension reveals interesting insights into cooperative learning processes through being engaged in action research within
a blended-learning teacher education programme. In line with Zibelius’s (2013) findings, my analysis of critical learning incidents within the interpersonal dimension indicates that learning from and with the team partners, tutors, peers and colleagues is important in view of the professional development of the (student) teachers. Especially in a blended-learning environment, such as E-LINGO, the communities of practice the (student) teachers are involved in offer important support structures. Not only open communication and commitment to the shared task, but also the ability to consider and incorporate feedback from others have proven to have a strong impact on the interpersonal development of the (student) teachers. Of further relevance for the field of FLTE are the indicators manifested in the critical learning incidents (CLIs) which led to the generation of the integrated model of language teachers’ professional development (see section 7.4). The indicators relating to the different dimensions of professional development (cf. Table 9) may have important diagnostic functions for teacher educators and programme designers in FLTE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Development</th>
<th>Affective Development</th>
<th>Interpersonal Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicators for development as manifested in critical learning incidents (CLIs), i.e. the participants demonstrate/display:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Increased/refined conceptual knowledge</td>
<td>▪ Decreased inhibitions to use videography as an analysis tool for teaching</td>
<td>▪ Willingness to solve tasks cooperatively (instead of avoiding cooperation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Increased/refined methodological knowledge</td>
<td>▪ Ability to discover positive aspects about one’s teaching/teacher identity</td>
<td>▪ Engagement in open dialogue with team partner and reflecting on difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Ability to reflect on the teaching and learning context to learn from positive and negative aspects using videography</td>
<td>▪ Engagement in open dialogue with the tutors and reflecting on difficulties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Increased understanding of the purpose of research in general and action research in particular</td>
<td>▪ Increased understanding of the teacher’s roles and responsibilities in the learning context</td>
<td>▪ Willingness and ability to make use of support structures provided (materials, tutors, peers, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Increased reflectivity towards theories, concepts and methods</td>
<td>▪ Willingness and ability to consider and incorporate feedback from team partner, tutors, peers and colleagues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Consideration of shortcomings in language proficiency as a challenge (instead of an unsolvable problem), which may be solved individually or with the help of others</td>
<td>▪ Ability to adapt strategies to improve language proficiency and ability to monitor progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Commitment to and enthusiasm for the teaching profession</td>
<td>▪ Engagement in further individual and/or cooperative professional development opportunities (e.g. involvement in further research, such as doing a PhD, teacher training, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Ability to critically reflect on individual and cooperative learning processes</td>
<td>▪ Shifting opinions and attitudes towards theories, methodology, the perception of self and others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Overview of Indicators for Professional Development
As the table shows, the indicators for development I elicited in the scope of this study refer to different dimensions of professional development. Whereas some indicators predominantly play a role within the affective dimension, other factors rather relate to the cognitive or interpersonal dimension of professional development. Yet others relate to two or three dimensions at the same time. As well as the integrated model of language teachers’ professional development (see Figure 7 in section 7.4), the categorisation depicted in Figure 9 is certainly only one possible way of organising the CLIs and indicators elicited in this study and it may be argued that it is a simplified portrayal of the complex interplay of the various factors involved. Yet I believe that such an overview contains a lot of potential for exploration. An interesting question for further research is, for example, how teacher educators and programme designers can monitor the professional development processes of (student) teachers using this or an alternative matrix displaying indicators for development. Furthermore, it would be interesting to explore if and how teacher educators can support and facilitate these learning and development processes and cater for the individual needs of the (student) teachers, as I will further discuss in section 8.2.

The indicators for professional development discussed in Chapter 6 and as displayed above support the assumption that action research can be used as an instrument for professional development in foreign language teacher education. It can trigger various learning incidents, lead to increased knowledge and foster critical reflection and attitude change. However, in my understanding, the goal of action research in pre-service and in-service teacher education is not to change the (student) teachers’ knowledge and attitudes, but to provide them with a tool that allows them to systematically investigate their practices and self-initiate the change if they feel the need for it. In this sense, action research should be conceptualised not only as a method, but as a mindset, as Parsons and Brown (2002: 5f.) aptly express, enabling (student) teachers to develop autonomy in their practice (cf. Castle 2006; James & McCormick 2009). In this regard, as I have argued before, the notions of choice, agency and ownership in action research are crucial for generating knowledge which is meaningful to the (student) teachers in view of their teaching practice and which may alter their attitudes towards action research as an instrument for professional development.
My findings further imply that action research not only has advantages, but also entails a number of challenges. The (student) teachers’ voices interpreted for this case study clearly call for a meaningful support structure before and while engaging in classroom action research in order not to feel overwhelmed by the complex task (cf. Ado 2013: 143). In order to lead to critical learning incidents, professional development and lasting conceptual change, sufficient task and team support is needed (Bevins & Price 2014). This requires a community of practice, in which educational policies and decision makers allow for communication and cooperation, as James and McCormick (2009: 982) summarise:

> The key challenge for leadership is, therefore, to create the space and climate for school staff to reflect on and share aspects of their practice. This includes encouraging and stimulating dialogue and risk taking. In this way, innovations can be tested, embedded and sustained. Without it, they remain surface changes that decay and disappear when the next initiative comes along.

The increasing demands foreign language teachers face – not only in view of their complex field of work (see section 1.1) but also as actors in a “culture of performativity” (Cain & Harris 2013), where achievement standards and measurable competences are becoming increasingly important – certainly do not make cooperative action research an easy endeavour. The results of the study, as well as current research, confirm that action research involves a lot of work, which can be very demanding especially for inexperienced teachers (cf. Ulvik 2014). Therefore, appropriate support structures are necessarily for the successful implementation of action research projects.

In sum, the results of my study strongly suggest that action research and reflective practice are very promising instruments for (student) teachers of various levels of teaching experience, different cultural and educational backgrounds and in various socio-cultural teaching contexts. As my findings suggest, the balance between challenge and support (Cain & Harris 2013: 357) is crucial for successful action research, in order “to avoid the process becoming a matter of survival rather than of learning from experience” (Ulvik 2014: 4). By providing (student) teachers with meaningful experiential learning opportunities in the context of teaching and learning, the theory-practice dichotomy may eventually be transcended. Furthermore, the indicators for learning as manifested in critical learning incidents (CLIs) may have diagnostic functions to inform and guide the actions of teacher
educators and programme designers. However, having said that the study only covers a fragment of the complex process of professional development through action research in teacher education, I would like to provide an overview of topics and ideas that arose from my research and may be of interest for further investigation.

8.2 Beyond this Study

Even though my case study brought to light some interesting aspects on the professional development of (student) teachers through action research, there are still many other areas that remained unexplored and require further consideration. First of all, the overall organisation of action research projects within teacher education programmes, such as E-LINGO, should be further explored. The findings of this study have shown that the concept of teacher research can be highly beneficial at any stage of teacher education, if the respective teacher is committed to exploring her practice and passionate about teaching and if appropriate support structures are provided. As I argued in Chapter 7, this motivation and commitment can be enhanced through appropriate task support in the process of preparing, implementing and evaluating action research. The data have shown that several (student) teachers in this study considered help and feedback from tutors and peers as highly valuable (see section 6.3.2).

Due to pragmatic reasons, in E-LINGO the tutor feedback is restricted to the planning procedure of the CARP as outlined by the (student) teachers and the presentation of the CARP results. In other words, the tutors provide feedback for the theoretical preparatory work of the (student) teachers (e.g. formulating the research questions, hypotheses and indicators) as well as on the presentation of the results at the respective on-campus sessions, but do not observe the actual implementation of the CARP in the teaching situation. Accompanying every (student) teacher in their CARP lessons would hardly be feasible, given the fact that they teach not only all over Germany, but all over the world. However, working with videography as promoted by many scholars (e.g. Bailey, Curtis & Nunan 1998; Raith 2011; Helmke 2012; Dinkelager & Herrle 2009; Mühlhausen 2012) and cooperatively reflecting on selected scenes that illustrate critical incidents is an option to further support the (student) teacher's learning process, as discussed in the tutor interview in February 2012. It would be interesting to find out to what extent tutor-guided video analysis
can contribute to the individual (student) teacher’s professional development by additionally supporting their reflective competences.

Further research on the impact of positive or negative concepts of self, including ideal and ought-to selves, and how professional confidence can be systematically fostered, would help clarify how (student) teachers’ insecurities and anxieties can be systematically met in FLTE. As the results of this study suggest, the concept of professional confidence plays an important role for professional development of (student) teachers. Not only a perceived lack of language proficiency, which plays a central role for language teachers, but also a perceived lack of teaching expertise or/and theoretical knowledge, have a negative effect on the (student) teachers’ confidence. Affective factors, such as anxiety, are widely considered in the research of language learning, and should also play a more prominent role in the context of teacher education and research (cf. Kubanyiova 2012: 24).

As the results of my study suggest, even experienced language teachers may have confidence issues and feel insecure about their language proficiency and/or their level of teaching expertise. An important question in this context is, how educators who lack confidence in their language proficiency and in their teaching expertise can possibly promote and model confidence in the language classroom. I consider this research area as highly important given the notions of identity and power (Kramsch 1998; Hawkins & Norton 2009; Norton & Toohey 2011) involved in the process of language teaching and learning. The matrix summarising the indicators for professional development presented in section 8.1 may be a starting point to further investigate the (student) teachers’ individual and cooperative learning processes and may help teacher educators and programme designers monitor the success of educational measures and provide appropriate support structures.

Another potential field of research in the context of teacher identity seems to be the work with hand puppets, as many (student) teachers reported that they found working with them particularly interesting. Some experienced the hand puppet very positively, whereas others described reluctance and discomfort to use them in their teaching. The use of hand puppets as fictional characters to support communicative and intercultural learning in the primary foreign language classroom is a relatively new field of research (e.g. Vogt 2009; Legutke & Vogt 2011 etc.) and could be further explored in the framework of professional confidence and teacher identity.
Also, examining the relationship between life experiences and/or professional experience and professional development and teacher learning would be highly interesting. As the (student) teachers enrolled in E-LINGO had different educational backgrounds and different levels of professional experience, their learning through engaging in the CARPs and with the E-LINGO contents took place in many different ways. One teacher, Elisabeth, who had approximately 20 years of professional experience, displayed a unique account of her learning biography in the portfolio. She hardly addressed any learning incidents gained during her time enrolled in E-LINGO, but described in detail her learning biography and critical learning incidents from the time before E-LINGO. On the contrary, Nicole, who also had many years of professional experience and is about the same age as Elisabeth, had a strong focus on E-LINGO and her current learning experiences instead of referring to her prior experiences. It would be very interesting to investigate this phenomenon further and engage with both (student) teachers in longer narrative interviews (Schütze 1977) in order to find out about the orientation frameworks of their learning in more detail.

The complex issues of the teachers’ cultural and educational backgrounds could only be touched upon marginally. Further studies based on the rich data material at hand might include the relationship between cultural background and attitudes towards teaching. Rebecca’s elaborations on the differences between the Romanian and the German educational system, as well as Karen’s learning and teaching experiences gained in Bosnia Herzegovina, Austria and the United Arab Emirates, have the potential to be explored in view of the impact of changing educational settings on the development of a teacher’s professional identity.

The possibilities for further research within the field seem endless. As initially stated, for a more detailed understanding of the (student) teachers’ development processes and of their personalities, in-depth and long-term research which goes far beyond the scope of this case study is required (cf. Kubanyiova 2012: 2). In the last section, I will sum up the main points of this thesis.

8.3 Final Remarks
As does any other form of research, action research creates knowledge (cf. Gillham 2000: 2). It is a particular kind of knowledge in that it is produced by teachers for teaching. As Burns (2009: 116) precisely formulates, action research is empowering because it allows teachers to become ‘agents’ of their own knowledge, which is
generated through the reflection of critical learning incidents (CLIs) in an interplay of experience (action) on the one hand, and systematic inquiry and critical reflection (research) on the other hand. As the data analysis has revealed, these learning incidents may lead to interpersonal, cognitive and/or affective professional development of the (student) teacher(s) involved.

Like in other forms of qualitative research, the knowledge gained through action research is highly contextual, as it is anchored in a specific teaching situation. However, through cooperatively reflecting before, during and after the action research process, as well as through sharing the results with others, the findings of an action research project are made transferable to other contexts and may trigger new projects and learning incidents. Reconstructing how the 12 (student) teachers participating in this case study developed professionally through cooperatively engaging in action research within a blended-learning environment only provided a glimpse of various factors influencing the teachers’ professional paths.

Did all of them become (better) teachers? This question can hardly be answered. However, as the findings strongly suggest, cooperatively engaging in action research seems to facilitate the process of becoming a (better) teacher. For inexperienced teachers the concept has shown to be helpful in creating knowledge and shaping their perceptions of themselves as teachers and researchers. For experienced teachers, on the other hand, it has shown to be supportive in questioning and/or reshaping their existing knowledge and perceptions of themselves as teachers and researchers. However, two preconditions need to be met in order for action research to lead to professional development. First, the educational context needs to provide sufficient support structures for teachers preparing, conducting and evaluating action research – especially in the beginning of working with the concept. Secondly, the (student) teachers involved in action research need to be committed to their professional development and passionate about teaching. The former is the responsibility of teacher educators through efforts in creating learning opportunities for professional development processes, as discussed in Chapter 7. The latter lies in the (student) teachers’ hands – or rather in their hearts and minds. As Bailey, Curtis and Nunan (1998: 554) aptly summarise: “Ultimately, all professional development is self-development. Just as teachers cannot do the learning for the learners, teacher educators cannot do the learning for preservice or in-service teachers.” What teacher educators can do, though, is fostering and supporting the “cognitive and emotional
involvement of teachers individually and collectively” and help shape “educational policy environments or school cultures” (Avalos 2011: 10), for example through the engagement in cooperative action research. Moreover, teacher educators and educational researchers need to work further on understanding the (student) teachers’ hearts and minds in order to be able to prepare and support them accordingly in their professional development processes.

With even more questions and ideas in mind than at the beginning of my research journey, knowing that I have only touched upon fragments of the (student) teachers’ stories and knowing that there is so much more to explore, I would like to finish my thesis by borrowing Julian Edge’s words (2002: 282), which accurately express my state of mind:

To finish writing a [thesis] is to come face-to-face with all the things you have not said, all the promises to your text that you have not kept. There is an inevitability about this, because to write a [thesis] is anyway to be engaged in the development, via articulation, of the ideas with which you started out. Because my topic is development, I should be inured to this problem. For the same reason, perhaps because the [thesis] deals with working on ideas out at the edge of a person’s current thinking, I find it particularly difficult to break away from the ideas that are there just beyond the page, waiting to be articulated, wanting to be expressed.

89 Original wording: book.
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10 Appendix
**Appendix A: Interview Guide I**

**E-Lingo Interviews February 2011**

**Guiding Questions**

How do you feel after the first semester?

Do you have a teaching post or did you have to find a class for the CARP?

Could you comment on the first CARP?

What went well? What did you like about it?

What went wrong? What did you not like about it?

How would you rate the success of your CARP? Choose one of the following statements that describes best, how you feel after the first CARP:

1. I’m absolutely pleased with my first CARP. There is nothing I would change for the next one.

2. I’m satisfied for the most part, but there is still room for improvement, for example...

3. I’m rather unhappy with the CARP, I still need to work on some aspects, for example...

4. I’m not happy with the CARP at all, I still need to work on a lot of aspects, for example...
## Appendix B: Interview Guide II

### E-Lingo Interviews July 2011

**Guiding questions**

1. You have just finished your second CARP presentation – how do you feel?

2. The presentation was the final part of your second CARP. If you think back of preparing and conducting this CARP – what was the difference compared to the first one? (Was it easier/more difficult to prepare/carry out? Was it more or less beneficial in view of the collected data? Was it more/less fun?)

3. This year in March, I conducted an online-survey on the CARPs with former E-LINGO students. 81% of the respondents said that they were intimidated by the CARPs in the beginning (45 % absolutely agreed, 36% partly agreed). Would you agree? Has your attitude changed after the second one or not?

4. Did you have any kind of teaching experience before starting E-LINGO? (When? Where? How long? How many hours a week? What kind of teaching post? Which institution?)

5. There’s a view among researchers that a person’s cultural and educational background has an enormous impact on their teaching. Could you comment on that from your experience? Within your tandem/tridem, are there any apparent differences in terms of teaching philosophy/approach? Could you explain to what extent? (e.g. You had the same research question, but chose different methods and got different results!)
Appendix C: Interview Guide III

E-Lingo Interviews February 2012

Guiding questions

You have just finished your third and last CARP presentation – congratulations! Take a moment and try to think back to the first face-to-face meeting in October 2010. You were sitting here, probably not knowing what to expect from the course, from the tutors and your peers.

Now, you’re at the end of the third semester. Please have a look at this scale and tell me where you were at the beginning of E-LINGO and where you are now.

- Do you think working with CARPs had an influence on you?
- Where there any key moments/special learning incidents you remember?
- What defines you as a teacher?
- How much of a teacher are you/were you before E-LINGO?
Appendix D: Self-Evaluation Scale

Me as a Teacher of English to Children

a) Before E-LINGO
b) After the third semester/CARP

10 expert
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1 novice
Appendix E: Interview Guide Tutor Interview

E-LINGO Tutor Interviews February 2012

Guiding questions
1. How would you describe what happens when (student) teachers, who all have different educational and cultural backgrounds, engage in cooperative action research projects?

2. Referring to (student) teachers of this cohort, could you explain if and to what extent working with CARPs is related to the (student) teachers’ professional development? Was there any observable change within the tandems/tridems? What do you think are the reasons for the change?

3. Are there any examples from the last cohorts you would like to refer to?
Appendix F: Transcription Guidelines

Transcription Guidelines (adopted from Dresing, Pehl & Schmieder 2013: 27f.)

1. Transcribe literally – do not summarize, but do not transcribe phonetically. Dialect and colloquial language are to be accurately translated into standard language. If there is no suitable translation for a word or expression, the dialect or colloquial language is retained.

2. “Merged” words are not transcribed as such, but approximated to standard written language. For instance: “I’m-a-goin’ to the movies” is transcribed as “I am going to the movies”. The general construction of a proposition is retained, even if it contains syntactic “errors”, for example: “To the shopping mall I went.” [Note: Merged words were transcribed as such in this thesis, in order to illustrate the language use of the individual participants as authentically as possible].

3. Discontinuation of sentences or abrupt stops within a word are indicated by a slash: /

4. Punctuation is polished up in favor of legibility. A short drop of the voice or an ambiguous intonation is rather indicated by a full stop than a comma.

5. Pauses are indicated by full stops in parentheses, corresponding to the pause length from 1 second (.) to three (…) seconds. Longer breaks are indicated by the pause length in parentheses (15).

6. Consentient or confirmative vocal interjections by the interviewer (like ‘mhm’) are not transcribed. Interjections by the interviewee such as ‘mhm’, ‘ehm’ and ‘uh’ are also not transcribed. Monosyllabic answers, however, (positive: ‘mh = hm’, ‘ah = ha’ or negative: ‘hm = mh’, ‘eh = eh’) are always included in the transcript, if appropriate as ‘mhm (affirmative)’ or ‘hm-m (negative)’.

7. Emphasized words and utterances are capitalized. In the case of the emphasis of the personal pronoun “I”, (or an emphasized “a” in the beginning of a sentence) we recommend to underline it in order to indicate emphasis.

8. Every speaker receives his/her own paragraph. There is a blank line between the speakers. […]

9. Emotional, non-verbal utterances (of both the interviewee and the interviewer) that support or elucidate a statement (such as laughter, giggling or sighs) are transcribed in brackets.

10. Overlapping speech can be separately transcribed and separated by speakers. Passages with overlapping speech are indicated by double slashes at the beginning and end of the overlap: I: // Oh, then you // P: // Exactly, then we // finally arrived.

11. Incomprehensible words are indicated as follows: (inc.). You should indicate the reason for not being able to comprehend the audio if you come across
longer inaudible passages, e.g. (inc., cellphone ringing) or (inc., train passing by). For longer incomprehensible passages, you should also indicate how long the respective passage was, e.g. (inc., train passing by, 19 sec).

12. If you assume or guess a certain wording, the word or passage should be put in brackets and be supplemented with a question mark in brackets. For example: (xylomentazoline?) [...]

13. Disturbances are noted in parentheses: (passing train, 10 seconds)

14. The interviewer is marked with an “I:”, the interviewed person with “P:“ (for participant). If there are several speakers, (e.g. in group interviews), a number can be added to the name: (e.g. “P1:”) You can choose other, unambiguous names or abbreviations as well (e.g. “Peter:“). [In this thesis, I used the initials of the respondents’ first names]

15. The transcript is saved in rich text format (.rtf file). This ensures compatibility with most word processing programs and even older qualitative data analysis programs. The name of the saved transcript should correlate with the audio file name. For example: interview_04022011.rtf or interview_smith.rtf
Chapter 10 – Appendix

Appendix G: Detailed Data Analysis Example

Example Interview Transcription and Interpretation (Nicole and Daniela, Interview III, February 2012, Topic J, Utterances 1–2)90

I: Congratulations! You’re third and last CARP (.) you just finished. I bet that feels good! (.) I just brought a visual impulse today and I’d like you to think back to October 2010, where we met for the very first time, you were sitting in that other room and you were just starting off with E-LINGO. So, probably not really knowing what to expect from the course, so now you’re sitting here, three semesters later and I brought (.) a scale from one to ten where I would like you to mark where you would see yourself as a teacher of English to children, right now and in October 2010 (.) So, that’s related to your prior teaching experience, of course. (..) And if you could just comment on where you see yourself or were you have seen yourself before you started.

N1: Yeah, that’s quite a problem, because I’ve been an English teacher (.) before the course

I: Also a teacher of English to children?

N2: Yeah, I the licence to teach before /

I: //But that’s fine//

N3: //and I would never say// that I’m an expert. NEVER! [inc.] So maybe today, should I mark it here? (points at scale) Maybe at the moment I’m here (marks the scale at 8,5) and before E-LINGO I’ve been here (marks the scale at 6,5).

I: Ok, and what happened through E-LINGO, throughout the time?

N4: For me the CARPs were the most important part (.) I was not used to the concept of classroom action research and I saw that this method was VERY helpful to analyse (.) my lessons and to analyse my teaching and to improve it. And for me that was the MOST important part, because the work on the units and the work on literature that was all I’ve (.) yeah, I’ve done before, but the CARP was really new and that was really the point to see on special aspects of my teaching.

I: Ok, could you describe any learning incidents you had through the CARPs?

N5: Yeah, for example the CARP about task-based language learning was VERY impressive for me, because I would have never suggested that it is possible to use the approach of task-based language learning in the primary. And using this for the CARP – it was a given topic, so I had never chosen it – I realised, ok, it is possible when I break it down to the very, very base (.) That was my main

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90 Nicole’s as well as Daniela’s answers were bundled as only one utterance respectively in the topical overview, as no turn-taking between the respondents took place. However, for the detailed formulating and reflecting interpretation, their individual utterances and turns were numbered accordingly.
learning incident (.) and that it is possible to analyse lessons and teaching DURING the doing, so during the process.

I: Ok, thank you. How about you, [Daniela]?

D1: Ok, A [the beginning of E-LINGO] is easier, because I was definitely in the novice area (.) and I didn’t have a background as a teacher and (.) but at the point when we started I have been working with kindergarten kids for one year and I went to some seminars which is (.) would help me the most and then (even?) go programming and doing research, so I was gaining more experience and getting to know what I was doing, so (laughs nervously) I put myself not quite completely a novice, but somewhere in there (marks the scale at 2). And then I'm not sure where to put myself now, because (..) like when I look at what [Nicole] does, she's a great partner (to have?), because she has so much experience (laughs) and so much of a background in education and (.)

I: But you had completely different starting points, I mean /

D2: Yes, but I mean like she's always so organised and she always has everything (.) she's thought of everything! You know like the classic teacher. She's just extremely well-prepared and I just feel so scatterbrained sometimes and I just think, you know, of course that's what comes from teacher training and years of practice and I didn't have all that (.) So I don't wanna put myself too far up the scale (.), but I mean I feel like I did GAIN and I gained from the experience especially that I had for two years working with kindergarten kids, so maybe three or four (ranks herself at 4), which MAYBE is modest, I feel like (..) but especially cause I've only been working with the younger children, so I have no experience (laughs) practically at all with (.) primary.

I: So, would you say the CARPs had any kind of influence on you and this development or was it more the overall E-LINGO course, the modules, the materials, the texts?

D3: For me (...) Yeah, probably the CARPs helped the most, because (..) Like when we do lesson plans for the modules, you never use the lesson plan, so it just seems like busy work and that's really frustrating (laughs) which we've often discussed (.) The CARP you actually did a lesson, so everything had a point and a purpose and was planned out for a reason, so I would say that was more (laughs/giggles) helpful than the modules.

I: Could you describe, like [Nicole] did, a critical learning incident? (.) Like an “aha moment” where you really had a key (.) experience within the classroom during the CARP? Or was that just your general impression?

D4: An actual “aha moment”? I don’t know. But for me, like the overall process, ‘cause for me what I like is just that going into a lesson with everything very well planned out, like not that I didn't do that on my own, but the CARP kept everything very focused for me, so I would say it's helping me get on the right track (laughs/giggles), but I don't know (laughs), I don't always get great feedback, so/
Detailed formulating interpretation (f) and reflecting interpretation (r):

N1f: Nicole does not know how to rate herself, as she had been a teacher before.

N1r: Nicole hesitates for a moment and seems to struggle with linking her professional experiences to the scale from 1 to 10.

N2f: She clarifies that she has been a teacher of English to children before E-LINGO.

N2r: Due to her prior experience, she seems to find it difficult to position herself on the scale and relate to the terms ‘novice’ and ‘expert’.

N3f: Nicole further explains that she would not call herself an expert, even though she has worked as a teacher for several years.

N3r: Her utterance indicates that she considers the term ‘expert’ an ideal, which cannot be reached. The statement reflects her attitude towards learning to teach and professional development. It strongly indicates that Nicole conceptualises her own learning process as ongoing and lifelong. Furthermore, her answer is quite emotional, as the word “never” is emphasised.

N4f: Nicole states that the CARP concept is of particular importance for her learning process, because it was new to her. She states to have learned how to use action research to analyse and improve her teaching.

N4r: The fact that Nicole points out that the CARP concept, in contrast to the other course content, was new to her, makes clear that she had gained a lot of teaching experience before. By saying that she has learned to use action research as a tool to analyse and improve her teaching practice, she indicates an awareness of her learning process. The description of this learning process continues in her next utterance (N5) and is in line with her attitude expressed in her third utterance (N3) that even after having been a teacher for a while there are always new things to learn (“I would never say that I’m an expert. NEVER!”).

N5f: She reports to have experienced a learning incident during the third CARP on TBLT, when she realised that it is possible (against her prior assumption) to use task-based language learning in the primary school.

N5r: This example gives evidence of the fact that Nicole had prior knowledge and assumptions about TBLT. At the same time, a gap between her theoretical and practical knowledge becomes apparent. She had learned about TBLT before, but she had never tried out working with tasks in the primary school, because she assumed that it would not work. Through the CARP on TBLT she experienced that TBLT does work in the primary school under certain preconditions (“it is possible when I break it down to the very, very base”)

D1f: Daniela has little professional experience (“working with kindergarten kids for one year”) and theoretical knowledge (“seminars”) and therefore rates herself relatively close to being a novice (at 2 on the scale from 1 to 10) at the
beginning of E-LINGO. She compares herself to Nicole, who has more professional experience and has been trained in the field of education.

D1r: In contrast to Nicole, Daniela struggles and hesitates much longer to rank herself on the scale. She uses different frameworks of reference to come to a conclusion. First, she refers to her professional experience from working in a kindergarten. Secondly, she refers to theoretical knowledge she had gained from different seminars and ranks herself on the scale for the beginning of E-LINGO. Raking herself after the third semester seems even more difficult for her. She introduced a third framework of reference and starts comparing herself to her team partner Nicole.

D2f: After I had pointed out that Nicole and Daniela had completely different starting points, implying that it is normal that their professional development differs, Daniela continues to compare herself to Nicole. She describes Nicole as well-organised and well-prepared (“classic teacher”) whereas she describes herself as unorganised and/or disoriented (“scatterbrained”) at times. She is unsure as to how to rank herself after the third semester and considers ranking herself at 3 or 4, which she describes as “maybe modest”. Because she has two years of professional experience in the kindergarten but no experience in the primary school, she finally ranks herself at 4.

D2r: Daniela explicitly uses the orientation frameworks established in her previous utterance by comparing herself to Nicole and making references to her prior experiences. Her description of Nicole and the use of the expression “classic teacher” make clear that she has developed a certain perception of the typical characteristics of a teacher. She implies that Nicole incarnates these features whereas she herself has rather opposite characteristics, (e.g. “scatterbrained”). Whether or not she evaluates Nicole’s features as positive or negative is difficult to say. She argues that these features are closely related to teacher training and professional experience. Based on her utterances and through the direct comparison with Nicole, her self-evaluation and the ranking at 3 or 4 seem plausible. However, her comment on her choice (“which is maybe modest”) indicates that she might have ranked herself higher on the scale if she had not compared herself directly to Nicole. Interestingly, in comparison with the other (student) teachers, she ranked herself the lowest after the third semester. Other (student) teachers with similar professional experiences, rated themselves higher at the end of E-LINGO, e.g. Clarissa: 7, Simone: 7.5, Karen: 7, Rebecca: 7, Barbara: 5.5. This may indicate Daniela’s lack of confidence in her abilities as a teacher.

D3f: Daniela states that the CARPs have helped her more than the modules in developing as a teacher, because she experienced the CARPs as purposeful work. She considers designing lesson plans that are not actually put into practice as “frustrating” and describes them as “busy work”.

D3r: Daniela only further elaborates further on this issue, because she was directly asked (I: “So, would you say that the CARPs had any kind of influence on you and this development or was it more the overall E-LINGO course, the modules, the materials, the texts?”). This is a leading question, as it implies that either the CARPs or other elements of E-LINGO (e.g. the modules) had led to her
perceived development. Therefore, the interpretation of her response requires caution. However, her reasoning illustrates that only a purposeful activity has a learning effect for her. The lesson plans designed within different modules do not seem to be purposeful for her and are considered "busy work". She refers to Nicole and said they had talked about this issue beforehand. This is a shared orientation framework, even though Nicole does not comment on it.

D4f: Daniela cannot recall a critical learning incident while being engaged in the CARPs. She states that having the lesson "well-planned out" helped her remain an overview and stay focused in the lesson. At the same time, she also expresses doubts by saying that the tutor's feedback on her CARPs and on the lesson plans is not always positive.

D4r: Daniela cannot describe a learning incident in relation to the CARPs, but describes a learning incident that is of very general nature in teacher learning. She addresses the issue of lesson planning and states that it is important for her to clearly structure her lesson and stay focused. Of course, lesson planning is part of every CARP, but was not the focus of the three E-LINGO CARPs. Daniela's description of a rather general learning incident instead of a more CARP-related learning incident can be interpreted in different ways. One possibility is that she was unable to focus on a specific detail of the teaching and learning context, simply because she is at the very beginning of learning to teach and needs to develop an overall understanding of teaching and being a teacher first. Her reflections on the importance of lesson plans could be an indicator of her professional development, not necessarily through engaging in action research, but in general. Another explanation for her partly unspecific answers could be a lack of motivation to do the CARPs and/or a lack of commitment towards the teaching profession in general.
Appendix H: Consent Form

Consent Form – Research Project Nora Benitt

Researcher:
Nora Benitt
Position: Research Assistant
Justus Liebig University
Department of English
Otto-Behaghel-Straße 10 B
35394 Gießen
Phone: +49-641-9930332
E-Mail: nora.benitt@anglistik.uni-giessen.de

Full title of project (working title):
“Connecting Theory & Practice – Action Research as a Tool for Professional Development in Foreign Language Teacher Education”

Project aim:
The aim of the research project is to find out to what extent action research projects help (student) teachers connect theoretical concepts and practical experience and foster the development of teaching skills.

Supervision:
The project is being conducted to meet the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy/ Dr. phil. under the supervision of:

Prof. Dr. Michael K. Legutke and Prof. Dr. Martina Möllering
Justus Liebig University, Gießen Macquarie University, Sydney
Professor Emeritus Head of Department of
Phone: +49-641-9930341 Phone: +61-2-9850-7012
E-Mail: michael.k.legutke@anglistik.uni-giessen.de E-Mail: martina.mollering@mq.edu.au

Participation in study & data collection:
Participation in the study is voluntary. Every participant is free to withdraw any time without giving a reason. Data is collected via the online platform (learning diaries), at the face-to-face meetings (observation, group interviews), and through the learning portfolios at the end of the programme. The time commitment involved in the study is estimated a maximum of two hours per person throughout the whole period of data collection.

Confidentiality:
All data will be treated strictly confidential. Apart from the researcher, no one has access to the full data. The supervisors will have access to the anonymised data only; names and any revealing biographical information will be changed. Parts of the data, including anonymised quotes, will be published in the PhD thesis and possibly also in articles related to the research topic. All participants have the right to contact the researcher at any stage of the project in order to receive information about the results. Every participant receives a copy of this consent form, signed by the researcher.

Please note:
The ethical aspects of this study will be approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone [02] 9850 7854, fax [02] 9850 8799, email: ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.
1. I confirm that I have been informed about the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. [YES] [NO]

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. [YES] [NO]

3. I agree to take part in the above study. [YES] [NO]

4. I agree to the group interviews being audio recorded. [YES] [NO]

5. I agree to my learning diary and portfolio being read and examined by the researcher. [YES] [NO]

6. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications. [YES] [NO]

7. I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) and may be used for future research. [YES] [NO]

__________________________  _____________________  _____________________
Name of Participant          Date                   Signature

__________________________  _____________________  _____________________
Name of Researcher           Date                   Signature
Appendix I: Ethics Approval Letter

Ethics Application Ref: (5201200807) - Final Approval

Dear Prof Mollering,

Re: ('Connecting Theory and Practice- Action Research as a Tool for Professional Development in Foreign Language Teacher Education')

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee and you may now commence your research.

Please note that the consent forms signed by the participants in February 2012 cannot be used as they cannot be approved retrospectively by this committee.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Ms Nora Benitt  
Prof Dr Michael Legutke  
Prof Martina Mollering

NB. STUDENTS: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP A COPY OF THIS APPROVAL EMAIL TO SUBMIT WITH YOUR THESIS.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 7th November 2013  
Progress Report 2 Due: 7th November 2014  
Progress Report 3 Due: 7th November 2015  
Progress Report 4 Due: 7th November 2016  
Final Report Due: 7th November 2017

NB: If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.
Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:
http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/
human_research_ethics/forms

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew
approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final
Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit
on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in
an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are
continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the
Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for
Amendment Form available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/
human_research_ethics/forms

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse
effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the
continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your
research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University.
This information is available at the following websites:

http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/
human_research_ethics/policy

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external
funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the
Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of
this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will
not be informed that you have final approval for your project and funds
will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has
received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of Final Approval to an external
organisation as evidence that you have Final Approval, please do not
hesitate to contact the Faculty of Arts Research Office at ArtsRO@mq.edu.au

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of
final ethics approval.

Yours sincerely

Dr Mianna Lotz

Chair, Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee