Social Justice in Beginning Language Instruction: Interpreting Fairy Tales

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Abstract

This chapter bridges theories of social justice (e.g., Osborn, 2006) and intercultural citizenship (e.g. Byram, 2008) to classroom practices in an introductory German course at a research university. By interpreting a fairy tale [Cinderella], 16 university students reflected on issues of gender roles and (in)equality both in historical and current contexts. Several activities in a 75-minute online session are described. In this brief intervention, students demonstrated the ability to contemplate complex, real-life issues such as gender roles and stereotypes using the target language.

Key Words: intercultural competence, social justice, intercultural citizenship, beginning language instruction, online teaching, fairy tales

Background

> Yet we don't get our hands too dirty…We don't usually listen to stories of escaping war and finding refuge and racism in a new land, despite the fact that these events occur in settings where so many of the languages taught in classrooms around the world are spoken. (Ennser-Kananen, 2016, p.557)

In the quote above Ennser-Kananen (2016) laments the fact that world language (WL) educators tend to shy away from talking about painful and important issues in the WL classroom. Likewise, introductory WL textbooks often tend to cover rather simple topics, such as family, food, and similar aspects of life. WL educators have long advocated the inclusion of real-world scenarios (Oura, 2001; Willis & Willis, 2013), task-based instruction (Byrnes & Manchón, 2014; Nunan, 2006; Pica, 2008; Skehan, 2003), content-based instruction (Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Stoller, 2008; Stryker & Leaver, 1997; Tedick, Jorgensen & Geffert, 2001), and problem-based instruction (Hung, 2015; Hung, Jonassen, & Liu, 2008; Jonassen & Hung 2008; Schmidt, Van der Molen, Te Winkel & Wijnen 2009; Tiwari, Lai, So & Yuen, 2006). These concerns are also reflected in conversations on teaching WLs for a) social justice (e.g., Guilherme, 2002; Osborn, 2006), b) intercultural competence (Byram, 1997), and in-

tercultural citizenship (Byram, 2008), c) symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2011), as well as d) curriculum planning (e.g., Clementi and Terrill, 2013), just to name a few.

In this chapter we demonstrate one potential means for providing beginning language learning students with opportunities to express themselves in meaningful ways about topics that are important to them and society by using a communicative approach through content-based instruction (Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Stoller, 2008; Stryker & Leaver, 1997; Tedick et al., 2001) as well as drawing from theories of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) (Byram, 1997) and social justice (Chapman, Hobbel, & Alvarado, 2011; Glynn, Wesely, & Wassell, 2014; Guilherme, 2002; Nieto, 2010; Osborn, 2006). The goal was to challenge students to think critically about issues related to social justice, while engaging in negotiations in the target language (TL).

By applying theory in practice, we address the question "How can teachers help adult learners in an introductory world language course use the target language to discuss and learn about important issues, such as gender equality?" We share how beginning language learners can engage in critical reflection in the TL in the (online) classroom (at the example of one 75-minute synchronous online meeting, forthwith referred to as 'the online session'). We also provide information about the homework prior and after the meeting, some of which occurred in the TL and some in the students' language of choice. The theoretical framework for the reported activities integrates ICC (Byram, 1997), intercultural citizenship (ICit) (Byram, 2008), and teaching languages for social justice (e.g., Glynn, Wesely, & Wassell, 2014; Osborn, 2006). We describe the design of the activities in a unit that reviewed the content of clothing and appearances as well as telling a fairy tale using modal verb constructions. Additionally, some scholars have pointed out the importance of engaging with fairy tales in the classroom to "deepen students' understanding of the often complex nature of ethical decision making" (Henderson & Malone, 2012, p. 69), which can serve as a medium to discuss social justice and prepare for global citizenship.

Theoretical Framework

There are important commonalities between theories of social justice, intercultural competence, and intercultural citizenship. In the following sections we offer brief introductions to each theoretical concept applied in our unit.

Teaching Languages for Social Justice

A basic premise of teaching WLs for social justice is that one must reflect critically on one's actions as an educator in and outside the classroom and create activities for students so that they can do the same. More specifically, Osborn (2006) states:

> Our endeavors are not apolitical, and our decision-making should not stem from the marketplace. I do not mean to suggest that all marketable skills should be banished from the curriculum. Rather, I want to argue that multiple goals are not only advisable, but necessary to maintain an educated democracy. (p.8)

Textbooks, often unwittingly, teach certain perspectives, and leave out others. Language educators can try to provide the opportunity for students to have access to, and hopefully eventually look for, various perspectives, by critically examining

the content of the textbooks used in their language classes. Implementing a critical approach to language education, including the use of the TL to investigate, consider, and review language hierarchies and powers, as well as the "role of language in discourses, in discrimination, and in ideology" (Osborn, 2006, p. 8) ensures that social justice education becomes part and parcel of language education. The concept of social justice means "treating all people with fairness, respect, dignity and generosity" (Nieto, 2010, p. 46). This refers to the notions of openness and tolerance to ambiguity as well as teaching with a critical approach that fosters students' critical reflection and their roles in society, on socio- political issues.

Teaching Languages for Intercultural Communicative Competence and/or Intercultural Citizenship

According to Byram (1997) ICC combines linguistic skills of communicative competence, such as: (1) linguistic competence, "the ability to apply knowledge of the rules of a standard version of the language to produce and interpret spoken and written language," (2) sociolinguistic competence, "the ability to give to the language produced by the interlocutor—whether native speaker or not—meanings which are taken for granted by the interlocutor or which are negotiated and made explicit with the interlocutor," and (3) discourse competence, "the ability to use, discover and negotiate strategies for the production and interpretation of monologue or dialogue texts which follow the conventions of the culture of an interlocutor or are negotiated as intercultural texts for particular purposes" (Byram, 1997, p. 48) with the dimensions of intercultural competence (IComp).

As can be seen in Figure 1, IComp consists of attitudes, such as openness and curiosity, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and finally, critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997). It is important to note that while knowledge is one dimension of IComp, the skills (interpreting and relating, discovering and interacting) as well as attitudes of openness and curiosity are also important for learners to achieve critical cultural awareness in a specific topic. Critical cultural awareness, not coincidentally depicted in the center, shares a number of qualities with theories of social justice in that students are required to judge events critically and based on specific evidence (for an overview of practical applications of this theory see Wagner, Perugini, & Byram, 1997).
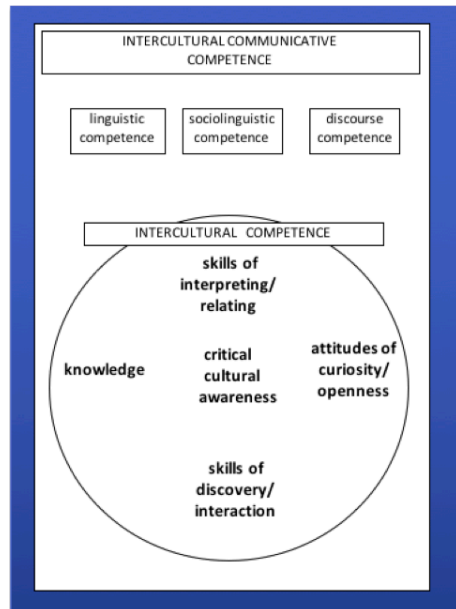

Figure 1: Intercultural Communicative Competence, Consisting of Linguistic Competences and Intercultural Competence, adapted from Byram, 1997

For our students to become critically culturally aware they need to apply the necessary skills and attitudes, which, as we hope to show in this chapter, can be fostered in language education. ICit (Byram, 2008) in WL education combines the skills of ICC with action in the here and now in an intercultural situation (for classroom projects related to this see Byram, Golubeva, Han, & Wagner, 2017), thereby including aspects of *active citizenship* or *political and civic engagement* (Barrett & Zani, 2015). Such an approach provides opportunities for students to use their critical cultural awareness to take action in the world (for an overview of practical applications of this theory combined with a model of critical thinking [Barnett, 1997] see Byram, Golubeva, Han, & Wagner, 2016).

Content-Based Instruction

In content-based instruction (CBI), language is the carrier of content. Instruction is centered on a theme or topic, and is carried out in the TL. It is commonly used in immersion programs, bilingual and foreign language classrooms and has made its way into realms of educational practices, where it has been considered an efficient language teaching approach in immersion contexts (Tedick et al., 2001).

Fairy Tales

Fairy tales hold the potential to foster students' critical thinking and investigate more complex topics in the TL. Moreover, they facilitate comprehension of moral and ethical choices (Henderson & Malone, 2012) and promote the development of "mores, values, and habits in a given society" (Ruterana, 2012) and can thus aid in the pursuit of becoming a responsible and global citizen. However, literature in general (Ruterana, 2012; Tsao, 2008), and as we show fairy tales in specific, provide a fertile soil for stereotyping gender, which needs to be addressed. Originally fairy tales were composed for adults (Zipes, 2013). However, fairy tales also provide opportunities for children and adults to learn how to interpret literature. They enable students to connect issues addressed in literature to the world (Diaz, 2014). Therefore, the use of fairy tales allows for pedagogical and content connections between issues of social justice, IComp, and the topics already covered in this German course.

Example of Application in German Language Teaching

Context

In an introductory German course taught fully online during a six-week intensive summer class, the instructors covered about one chapter per week and spent an average of five to six hours with students in synchronous online meetings in which German was the main language. Specifically, the online sessions were entirely held in German except for the last few minutes of each meeting in which the instructors checked in with students to discuss their progress and any questions they had. Two instructors taught the course, with only one instructor present for any given session. The session we report on was prepared and taught by the first author. Sixteen students were enrolled in the course, 13 were present in the session described. These online meetings took place via a Blackboard Collaborate Room, an online platform that allows students to interact with the instructor and each other, in various verbal (speaking, chatting, whiteboard) and nonverbal (pointing, voting, drawing) ways.

Over the six-week period there were generally three weekly synchronous online meetings, each varying in length from one and a half hours to three hours. Students spent three to six and a half hours (maximum) per week in regular online synchronous meetings with the instructor and fellow students. The summer class was co-taught by the first author and another graduate student at the university.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the university determined the project to be exempt from full review. However, as advised by an expert on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the authors contacted the whole group of students to inform them of this publication. Students provided written permission for each journal quote provided below.

The activities presented here are part of a larger unit on using fairy tales to discuss social justice that will be implemented in future introductory German I (offline and online) classrooms. At the time of the implementation, students had only two and a half weeks (or in other words, seven online meetings) worth of experience with the German language, with no prior knowledge in the language. To embed our unit within the overall course content, we chose a module in which the focus was on clothes and appearances (online Module 2), which corresponds to Chapter 2 in the *Kontakte* textbook (Tschirner, Nikolai, & Terrell, 2012). The module was separated into three two-hour long sessions (part 1, part 2, part 3). Our activities were implemented during the first 75 minutes of the second session (part 2). Additionally, we present here homework students were given prior to the online session to prepare for the topic and after the session, to evaluate their understanding and application of dimensions of IComp.

The original online course was designed by the program director, the third author, in collaboration with a colleague to provide students as much opportunity as possible to interact with the instructors and with other learners. During synchronous online meetings students chatted with each other, completed tasks in pairs and groups, and engaged in whole group interactions facilitated by the instructors. The chosen online platform allowed instructors to put students in rooms so that they could work in pairs or groups. The students in the various rooms could be provided with the same or varied instructional material. In many ways, the online environment was similar to a regular classroom environment, with a board, students raising their hands (in this case electronically by clicking a button), participating verbally, or in written form, or voting for a certain option by clicking a voting button.

Objectives

The unit objectives were as follows:

1. The learner will reflect on and discuss issues of social justice critically in the TL.

2. Using the grammatical structures and vocabulary acquired thus far, the learner will describe clothing and appearance of fairytale figures as well as contemporary people in photos.

3. The learner will interpret information related to appearance and gender in the fairy tale *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella] and compare this information to issues of gender inequality.

4. The learner will use the structures they learned to present information as well as communicate spontaneously with their classmates and instructor in written and spoken language, and critically judge gender roles in fairy tales and compare them to contemporary gender roles based on their experience as well as specific evidence from their online research.

Overview of Social Justice Goals around the (or Prior, During, and Post) Activities in the Online Session

Before the online session, the instructor provided students with essential questions related to social justice and gender norms, which were not discussed explicitly in the session (e.g.: What does gender have to do with family, work, and free time? How do you define "gender equality?" Do you consider gender equality important?). The instructor also asked students to research the topic prior to the online session. The language for this research was not specified and students were allowed to use the TL or other languages in this assignment if they wished.

In the online session students completed various activities in the TL. These activities are described in detail below. The social justice objective of these activities was for students to challenge and question societal and personal gender norms and standards. After the online session, students created a journal entry, in which they critically reflected on the topic of gender equality and social justice. While students were encouraged to use the TL in the journals, no one did for this particular journal. The journal entry included a personal account and reflection on one of the following topics: a) gender injustice, b) personal opinion on the importance of gender equality between men and women, c) personal opinion on the importance of Western perspectives on gender equality and elaboration on perspectives from other cultures, d) analysis of the success of the gender equality protection law in Connecticut. Additionally, all students were asked to come up with ideas for action components to address gender inequality in the context of their journal question. A summary of all activities, the language used, the social justice goals and the relationship to intercultural theories can be found in Appendix A.

Detailed Description of Activities as well as Relevant Student Responses

Pre-session Activity

Question to ponder at home: Gender in Aschenputtel [Cinderella]

To foster students' reflection on the topic of social justice prior to the online session, we designed the 'Gender in *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella]' activity. We asked students in English via email to 1) familiarize themselves with the German fairy tale *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella] by doing online research such as (re-)reading the story, or a summary in the target language or in their L1; and to 2) consider the following questions: Which "serious" topics are covered in *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella]? How do you define "gender equality"? Do you think gender equality is important? Why/why not? Can you think of any examples of injustice linked to gender? What does gender have to do with family, work, and spare time? While the questions themselves were not directly discussed in the synchronous meeting, the students' reflections helped them prepare for the activities that followed.

Students received a version of the story in German, featuring grammatical constructions to which they had been exposed in prior meetings, as well as new grammatical constructions such as modal verbs. For this part students employed interpretive reading. Moreover, our version offered illustrations of the sentences through artistic reinterpretations of the fairy tale. While our main intention with this activity was to help students start thinking about questions of social justice, we also integrated aspects of intercultural competence such as knowledge, interpreting and relating, and attitudes of openness and curiosity (for more details on each component see Byram, 1997).

In-Class Activities

1.a. Warm-Up, Pictures I: Identifying Famous People (8 min)

As a warm-up activity, the students were provided with the description of a person, whom they were asked to draw (e.g., Ich trage einen blauen Blazer und einen blauen Rock, blaue Schuhe und eine Handtasche [I am wearing a blue blazer and a blue skirt, blue shoes and a handbag]). For this activity, students used interpretive listening. In the description the instructor used the "I am" construction to avoid providing, and giving away, the gender. Students were allowed to ask the instructor questions. They then interpreted what they had heard and drew the person which was described (Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor) by using the online equivalent to a "whiteboard" with the electronic equivalent to "whiteboard markers."

The goal of this activity was listening to and interpreting oral descriptions of appearances in the TL. In this part of the activity we checked the students' understanding of the vocabulary used, related to clothes and appearance, as finding the correct answer required them to look closely at similarities and differences in appearance. Here students also applied the competence of knowledge as described in Byram's (1997) model of IComp by (re)familiarizing themselves with the physical appearance of a significant person of German politics (Angela Merkel).

1.b. Warm Up, Pictures II: Describing Famous People in the TL (5 min)

In the second part of this activity, students worked in group rooms in pairs. One student in each pair shortly before the activity received an email with a photo of a person whose appearance they now, in the online classroom, orally described to their partner in the TL, while their partner was allowed to ask clarifying questions while drawing the person described. Here, students used interpretive listening and presentational as well as interpersonal speaking skills. The images included male and female, transgender and drag-personas, as well as various ethnicities. The students were asked to use the "I am" construction to describe in German physical characteristics of the person in the photo without providing the gender of the person. While doing so they practiced vocabulary of the current unit, such as body parts, clothes, colors, and adjectives. Additionally, they were allowed to use online dictionaries for words they did not know. Students had been introduced to how to use the dictionary in ways that support their learning, and it was suggested previous to class that they use dictionaries to look up words they might believe to be helpful in the discussions. They were also prompted to ask the instructor for vocabulary and sentence structures where needed either by raising their hands through the appropriate tool, or in the chat. It is important to note that both, more 'traditional' gender images as well as

those which do not completely conform to such norms, were represented. To name a few examples, there was a picture of Will Smith in his role as 'fresh Prince of Bel Air', of Hugo Weavings as 'Elrond' with long hair, of Demi Moore with the distinctive haircut of 'GI Jane', of American Olympic decathlete Caitlyn Jenner after her reassignment surgery, and of German Olympic pole vaulter Balian Buschbaum after his gender reassignment.

The way students described and drew the people in the pictures varied. Some people were drawn with prominent stereotypically male or female features such as full beards, or very long hair, while others were drawn in a more gender-neutral way. While some of the drawings by students did not look anything close to the original pictures, the features they chose to highlight were unique for each person. For example: Will Smith was drawn as a character with very wide shoulders, a prominent edged/square chin, short black hair, a button-up shirt, and a hat. Elrond was first drawn as Hugo Weavings with a gender neutral body and short brown hair and then again as the character Elrond with long brown hair, a slender oblong edged face, piercing blue eyes, wearing a coronet and a brown robe. Similarly, the group who had to describe the picture of Demi Moore portraying GI Jane (who in the original picture was bald) chose to incorporate long hair in the drawing (presumably because the gender was accidentally revealed during the description process) in addition to giving her a slender body, wearing jeans and a long-sleeved shirt.

In this activity we aimed to help students apply openness and curiosity (Byram, 1997), as they had to guess the gender of the person described to them to challenge students' preconceived notions when they were confronted with descriptions that did not match their expectations. Students had to interpret information, partly from another culture, and relate it to their own culture and experiences (Byram, 1997). In order to do so they had to engage in close listening which is not only an important activity in learning a new language but also for developing mutual understanding and which is, according to Nieto (2010), essential to "treating all people with fairness, respect, dignity and generosity" (p. 46) as well as for giving and maintaining "basic rights, and opportunities" (Flores et al., 2014, p. 1000). Moreover, in the interactions students had opportunities to discover and interact in the target language (Byram, 1997) in order to gain more information about the topic at hand.

1.c. Warm Up, Pictures III: Describing Famous People in the TL (5 min)

Back in the main virtual room, students presented their drawings to the whole group, by the instructor copying the whiteboard from the group room to the main room. The students used interpretive listening skills when reacting to the instructor's verbal prompts. Using the voting feature in the online platform, they voted on whether the person was male or female based on the images they drew.

For some drawings the class agreed on one gender (such as for the drawing of Will Smith representing a male character with clearly male features) whereas others were more difficult to decide on (such as Conchita Wurst, an Austrian drag-persona with beard and dress, or Hugo Weavings/Elrond from Lord of the Rings)

Here we intended students to use their critical thinking skills to determine the gender represented in the drawings, and more importantly to question their own perceptions on gender norms regarding appearances. This is in accordance with

Byram's (1997) interpreting and relating, as students had to interpret a picture and explain and relate it to their own culture and cultural as well as societal expectations and norms related to gender. We considered this an important step towards their critical cultural awareness, which we planned to facilitate and evaluate through the additional activities shared below.

2. Gender Norm Activity I in the TL (4 min)

In order to activate prior knowledge we asked the students to list qualities typical of men/women according to views held in the societies the students live in, in the TL, by writing on the whiteboard of the online classroom. The next task was for students to reflect critically on these roles. Sample scaffolding questions included: What does society deem as typically male/female? [*Was sagt die Gesellschaft ist typisch Mann/Frau]?* A man is…? A female is…? [*Ein Mann ist…? Eine Frau ist…?]* A man has…? A female has …? [*Ein Mann hat …? Eine Frau hat…?*]. - While students engaged in the activity in the group rooms, speaking and writing in the TL, the instructor rarely interrupted these negotiations, mainly for clarification purposes during which the instructor remained mostly in the TL, clarifying the instructions to students. Here, students used interpretive listening and presentational as well as interpersonal speaking skills.

Students described characteristics related to gender by listing adjectives and other vocabulary they were familiar with (clothing, colors, descriptive words and phrases for people, body, and body parts), as well as vocabulary new to their current chapter (Kapitel 2). Examples include: *lange Haare* - long hair, *kurze Haare* - short hair, *ein Bart* - a beard, etc. Students critically looked at the various words before moving them (via click and drag as a class) into the categories of male/female.

2.a. Students agreed on the following characteristics society holds about typical males/females:

- Typical male: tall, short hair, hairy, a beard, wears a tie (in German: *groß, kurze Haare, haarig, ein Bart, trägt eine Krawatte*)
- Typical female: long hair, wears a skirt, a dress, earrings, beautiful, small (in German: *lange Haare, trägt einen Rock, ein Kleid, Ohrringe, schön, klein*)

This activity required students and the instructors to think critically (Byram, 1997) about social values associated with gender, both those present in society and those they might consciously or unconsciously hold. Subsequently, our goal was for students to begin to critically analyze and potentially question these norms, which is part of developing critical cultural awareness (Byram, 2008).

3. Warm Up, Pictures IV: Describing Famous People in the TL (3 min)

After students recollected previously discussed gender norms of society, we showed the pictures of the actual people from the activity before. We asked students to decide on the gender of the people depicted in the images again, based on the previous gender norm activity. Students used the interpretive mode for this activity. As a teacher observation, we would like to note that based on the speed of responses it appeared that most of the students found it easier to determine the gender more quickly, but Conchita Wurst (with a beard, long hair, and a dress) raised some uncertainties and hesitations in the decision-making. Students listened to

teacher prompts, such as the question "Is this a man or a woman?", and followed requests to "vote" using the online voting tool. They responded to direct questions such as "Student X, what do you think?" by showing their opinion through the voting tool.

Our intention with this activity was for the students to develop an awareness of stereotypical gender images they might hold and to continue to question their gender norms. Again students discovered information and interacted and discovered in the target language (Byram, 1997).

4. Gender Norm Activity II in the TL (2 min)

In the final step connecting the gender norm activity to the description activity we asked students to decide which of the six stars are trans-gender, using the interpretive listening skills when reacting to the instructor's verbal prompts. Students had previously guessed the gender of the stars and consequently we revealed the trans-gender and drag-personas within the groups of celebrities in this activity. During this activity we attempted in a safe and non-threatening way to challenge some of the stereotypical gender images previously determined to be held by society as well as students.

In accordance with Byram's model (1997) students had the opportunity to *acquire knowledge* by learning about some traditional images from the target culture as well as their own. Furthermore, students continued to develop an *awareness of* stereotypical gender images. We hoped that they would start to *suspend any disbelief about gender issues they might hold* (Byram, 1997), and consequently change their own *attitudes* (Byram, 1997) about cultural norms in their own culture as well as others.

5.a. Aschenputtel [Cinderella] I in the TL (4 min)

We now entered the fairytale part of the unit. In the first activity related to *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella], students described two pictures. One showed *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella] before attending the ball (in ragged clothes, doing chores; this was a painting by a German painter Alexander Zick called *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella] (1886)); the second depicted *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella] at the ball (in a beautiful ball gown coming down the stairs; from the 2015 Disney motion picture *Cinderella*). The instructions were "Describe *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella] at home" and "Describe *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella] at the ball." Here, students used interpretive and presentational writing and speaking skills.

5.a.1. Student work. Students' written description of *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella] were of her in ragged clothes, doing chores around the house with the help of her doves included the following vocabulary: long hair, not clean, no shoes, dirt, can talk with animals (in German: *lange Haare, nicht sauber, keine Schuhe, Schmutz, kann mit Tieren reden*). The students' verbal description concluded: She is dirty, she has dirty/curled hair, she is skinny. In addition, the written students' description of *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella] in a ball gown coming down the ballroom stairs included the following vocabulary: long hair, dress, clean, blonde, pretty (in German: *lange Haare, Kleid, sauber, blond, schön*). The students' verbal descriptions concluded: She has a blue dress and blonde hair, she is pretty.

Again, students practiced their observation skills, as well as their skills of interpreting a document from another culture (Byram, 1997). However, because of our prior conversations in class, our instructional goal was for them to be prepared to

pay attention to aspects such as gender, which are not traditionally thought of when thinking of fairy tales, or children's literature (skills of interpreting and relating and skills of discovery and interaction in Byram, 1997). It has to be noted, though, that this notion has changed significantly in the last few decades (Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz, 2003; O'Connor, 1998; Westland, 1993).

5.b. Aschenputtel [Cinderella] II in the TL (4 min)

Subsequently to writing descriptions of both pictures, we asked students to sort the adjectives into categories which were presented on the whiteboard, such as "body," "clothes," "face," and "state of mind" by dragging them below the relevant category. Students used interpretive reading skills in this activity. We also asked how and why *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella] was different at home compared to at the ball.

5.b.1. Student work. The answers to this question were wide-ranging and included references to her two different roles and resulting obligations, as well as her (lack of) opportunity due to class or social standing. The adjectives and other vocabulary were sorted into these categories. Image 1: Body: long, dirty, curly, hair; Clothes: no shoes/barefoot, brown clothes, brown dress, dirty; Face: long blonde hair, dirty. Image 2: Body: long, blonde, curly, hair, clean, short; Clothes: shoes; Face: long blonde hair, pretty [in German: Image 1: Body: *lang, schmutzig, lockig, Haare*; Clothes: *keine Schuhe, braune Kleider, braunes Kleid, schmutzig*; Face: *langes blondes Haar, schmutzig*. Image 2: Body: *lang, blond, lockig, Haare, sauber, kurz;* Clothes: *Schuhe*; Face: *langes blondes Haar, hübsch*].

With this activity students practiced structuring thoughts and ideas in order to find arguments. This is crucial for an interculturally aware person when trying to mediate between two different cultures (Byram, 2008). It is also relevant to Byram's skills of interpreting and relating (Byram, 1997) and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997).

5.c. Aschenputtel [Cinderella] III in the TL (10 min)

In the next step we moved away from the main person *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella] to more general gender roles within the fairy tale. We asked students in teams to come up with the roles of men and women in *Aschenputtel*. Here, students used interpretive and interpersonal speaking and writing skills.

5.c.1. Student work. Students' responses here showed a clear link between males and freedoms/power, and women and objectification/subjection. Moreover, stereotypical gender roles were discussed again in this activity, linking men to being protectors (*Vater* - father), having influence (*König* - king, *Prinz* - prince), and wealth (*haben Diener* - have servants), and women to being subservient (*unterwürfig* - subservient, *dienen* - serve), mothers (*Mutter*), homemakers (*sind Koch* - are cooks) and objects (*schön* - beautiful). Gender norms according to the fairy tale were thus as follows. Men: prince, father, have women/marry women, rich, protector and ruler, have servants; Women: sisters, mother, step mother, women cook, women serve, subordinate, submissive, pretty/beautiful.

With this activity we aimed for students to look past appearances. Students had to apply the skills of IComp (particularly the skills of discovery/interaction and attitudes) and show a willingness to critically examine their own values and beliefs and contemplate how they might look from someone else's perspective (Byram, 1997).

5.d. Aschenputtel [Cinderella] IV in the TL (9 min)

In order to help students remember the storyline of *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella], as well as to practice modal verbs and sentence structure, we provided an activity in which students had to match (via drag and drop) various sentence parts to recreate part of the story. Furthermore, the revision of grammatical concepts allowed students to feel more prepared for upcoming discussions. Here, students used interpretive reading skills.

5.e. Aschenputtel [Cinderella] V in the TL (10 min)

This activity focused on historical, traditional and modern roles of men and women, based on the fairy tale and students' own experiences. In teams they were asked to list verbs, adjectives, and nouns related to clothing, appearance, family (Kapitel 2, Einführung B [Chapter 2 (of textbook), Introduction B]), etc. for historical and traditional gender roles and compare them to modern roles of men and women. For this activity, students used interpretive listening, presentational, as well as interpersonal speaking and presentational writing skills. This gave students the chance to express opinions and ideas in the target language and allow the expression of more complex ideas without the need for more complex sentence structures.

5.e.1. Student work. Students suggested that historically typically male characteristics, duties, and expectations were as follows: Must be king, must be the possessor/owner, is protector, is strong, works, is tall, has a family and wife, no families with two fathers [in German: *muss König sein, muss der Besitzer sein, Beschützer, muss stark sein, muss arbeiten, ist groß, hat eine Familie und eine Frau, keine Familien mit zwei Vätern*]. Subsequently, students described historically typically female traits, jobs, and prospects such as: she cooks, is shy, cleans, listens to her husband, does not work, is very pretty, small, slender, long hair, long dress, skirt [in German: *eine typische Frau kocht, ist schüchtern, sie reinigt, sie hört auf ihren Mann, sie arbeitet nicht, sehr schön, klein, schlank, lange Haare, langes Kleid, einen Rock*]. More modern ideas of typical males included: can have a business, wears a suit, is strong, works, is a father, drives a car, wears T-shirts and jackets, is married, men have work [in German: *ein Mann kann ein Geschäft führen, er trägt Anzüge, stark, arbeitet, Vater, fährt ein Auto, T-Shirts und Jacken, verheiratet, Männer haben Arbeit]* whereas the modern ideas of typical women were: can wear pants or dresses, can work or stay at home, can work for big companies [in German: *Heute kann eine Frau die Hose oder das Kleid tragen, sie kann arbeiten oder bleibt zu Hause, eine Frau kann für ein großes Geschäft arbeiten*].

The purpose of this activity was to interpret and relate (Byram, 1997) by comparing and contrasting earlier and modern times and students' opinions related to gender roles, maybe also in the different contexts in which the students shared experiences. Subsequently, the results were reviewed in class.

6. Comparison of Belief-system in the TL (7 min)

As the final activity of the unit, we revisited the societal norms of typically male and female gender roles and expectations and compared them to the students' concepts and ideals. Students were asked if they could identify any overlapping concepts between the views identified in the previous exercises and where non-traditionally/non-typically male, female, and trans-gender figures fit in these understandings of gender norms.

To find out more about the students' ideas of typical gender roles, we asked them to vote on some of the various characteristics they suggested as societally typical for both men and women, and made them state whether this was typical in their opinion, or not. Students used interpretive listening skills responding to teacher prompts in the TL.

All students agreed that typically women today can work. While all of them responded that they were unsure whether men can wear dresses, they were more divided on whether women can wear pants and skirts. Only two (2) students responded that it is typical for women to wear pants and skirts, Three (3) said it was untypical for them to wear skirts and pants and seven (7) were unsure. Unfortunately, these results could not be discussed further in class due to time limitations.

The goal of this activity was to further critically engage with notions of male and female, and to raise awareness of stereotypes. Students became conscious of their own and societal values and views, and saw where their opinions as individuals, but also the class consensus, differed and overlapped with societal norms. Furthermore, students became aware of how influential their own and societal norms were in the creation of their own world view. With this final activity, students continued to challenge the notions of 'normal' or 'traditional' in relation to gender. Awareness of attitudes is another important aspect of Byram's theory on ICit (Byram, 2008) and IComp (Byram, 1997).

Post-session Activity

Journal Reflections

Following the online session, students had a choice of two reflection activities for their weekly journal entries (A and B, which were further divided into suboptions), which focused on issues of gender discriminations and/or injustices. These activities were part of their homework and we felt comfortable to use English strategically outside of our regular class meetings (Garrett-Rucks, 2013, 2016, 2017). Students used interpersonal writing skills, some students also used interpretive reading skills for their research.

In option A students were invited to reflect on personal experiences linked to gender (The prompt was: "Reflect on the following questions: Have you ever experienced any injustices linked to your gender? Or witnessed any injustices someone else experienced due to their gender? How did you/they react to it? Would you react differently if the situation occurred again? What would you advise others to do in such a situation?").

Option B prompted students to state a personal opinion related to 1.) the importance of gender-equality for males/females (The prompt was: "1. Is gender equality equally important for men and women? Please explain."), 2.) specific occurrences of gender inequality and discrimination (The prompt was: "2. How important are historic Western ideas of men/women for you? Do you also know about different cultural expectations related to gender? If you can, please compare some aspects of gender expectations in cultures with which you are familiar."), and 3.) the effectiveness of gender-equality policies (The prompt was "3. "In 2000, a court ruling in Connecticut determined that conventional sex discrimination laws protected transgender

persons. However, in 2011, to clarify and codify this ruling, a separate law was passed defining legal anti-discrimination protections on the basis of gender identity." Do you think the implementation of the law was successful? What could be done to further ensure this in everyday life? Transgender rights in the United States - Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transgender_rights_in_the_United_States"). For Option B, all answers needed to be supported by research and outside sources. Students answered tasks 1.) and 2.) from Journal Entries Part B but not tasks 3.).

Regardless of which option students chose for their reflection, they were asked to come up with action items to address issues of gender discriminations or injustice. They could either name concrete examples or describe more general scenarios. For the journals, students were allowed to use both, English and German. As in prior journal entries they were urged to use as much German as possible, but also to reflect in English should they be unable to express a thought otherwise.

Students choosing Journal Entries Part A wrote very personal accounts, important topics covered were for example bullying in school, or discrimination due to non-traditional gender orientations. One student described the reactions of family when not conforming to '(stereo-)typical' dress codes or gender norms: "my mom complains [...] when I wear jeans and a baggy shirt instead of a skirt."

Action items (ICit, Byram 2008) included confrontation, expression of personal feelings, and seeking support in others who experience the same. Additionally, one student noted the difficulties women face in the workplace due to their gender: "[I] found that I would personally have to work 10 times harder than my male peers in order to prove my worth at the same job." The student describes a profound observation that women still have to overcome straining obstacle in order to be valued and accepted in workplaces.

Some students suggested action plans (ICit, Byram 2008) which included contacting supervisors, authorities, or reporting to the appropriate places. Yet again other students focused on action plans for themselves to become more conscious and critical of personal views and opinions held, or familiarize oneself with the topic through reaching out to LGBT communities, for example. Some students also suggested plans which included raising awareness of gender discrimination and injustices on a wider level, such as gender-based violence and gender discrimination within institutions. Addressing the issue through education (at home and at school) was one of the most prominent choices by students, and action plans also included the education of friends and family within the personal realm, or of people within (youth) organizations, schools, and universities, as well as trying to redefine what gender is.

One student in particular shared a personal account on gender constructs, which are perpetuated by society:

> "Being a girl you grow up with gender inequality. Although you might not notice it as a child, the issues become more apparent as an adolescent. As a young girl, when adults ask you questions like what you want to be when you grow up or what kinds of toys you like to play with, they expect you to answer 'nurse', 'teacher', 'Barbies' and are caught off-guard when you respond with, 'firefighter', 'scientist', or 'cars'. These constructs created by society are present throughout

a girl's life. [...] It has become 'okay' for men to call out women in the
streets telling them how nice their butt is or how sexy they look today.
[...] If women were to do something similar, they would be scolded
and shamed. [...] One way to address these injustices is to redefine
what gender is."

In this example a student critically assesses the choice of a profession related to
gender. For them this choice is influenced by certain gender norms that have been
instilled by society early on in life. This however brings forth a gender inequality.
The student also calls out other gender injustices and verbal assaults, calling for the
redefinition of gender.

Students who decided to complete Journal Entries Part B gave critical answers
and comments as well, most prominently to the question: "Is gender equality equally
important for men and women? Please explain." Students focused on the roles men
and women have according to society: "Gender equality is equally important for
men and for women, but in different ways, due to the persistent power difference
between men and women. [...]"

The student points to the underlying reasons which make the issue important
for all genders, namely the antiquated gender roles instilled by modern society. The
student's solution to this problem is contrary to the perpetuated idea of women being
moms and caregivers and men being breadwinners and having careers:

"the restoration of the idea that women belong in the workplace and
men belonging in the family. The association between men and paid
work and women with family is still around, although it is a relatively
new idea. Naturally, women can work at the same capacity as men,
and have worked before the Industrial Revolution in the field of ag-
riculture alongside men. In the same way, in most families, there is a
man in the role of husband and father. By making it completely ac-
ceptable for women to work outside of the home and for men to be
present in the lives of their families, men and women alike would be
able to enjoy fuller and more complete lives. When a part of life so
important as career or family is forcibly denied to someone, the con-
sequences are extreme and negative."

This student questions the benefits of the 'clear-cut' and 'old-fashioned' roles
and their respective tasks and introduces the idea of allowing gender-role restric-
tions to open up in order to have a positive effect on life. Similarly, other students
commented on the effects of gender norms and restrictions on men. Students point-
ed out the often neglected social and societal expectations of 'being male' and social
norms men are intrinsically demanded to meet:

"Gender equality is equally important for men and women. When dis-
cussing gender inequality the most common things we hear about are
the ways that women are treated differently/what they are supposed to
do. However, there are many social norms that men are 'supposed to
meet'. For example, men are supposed to be the more physical gender,
they are supposed to be the breadwinners of the household, the man

is supposed to propose marriage. Having to live up to these norms can be stressful for a male, just as many norms women have to face can be stressful. For there to be gender equality there has to be a balance of these norms and that is not possible without getting rid of the norms for men."

Additionally, the social expectations and gender inequalities of spouses were a topic covered by students. Action items to address the gender inequalities discussed above included the ones mentioned in A, but also went further, for example: "Two action items to promote gender equality, would be to share a good article about gender equality on social media, and to have a group discussion with your friends and family about the importance of gender equality."

The actions suggested by the student were aimed at creating an online presence/community, which could be chosen and participated in, addressing issues of gender equality. Students all agreed on the importance of the topic for both women and men, and one student founded gender equality on basic human rights: "Yes, gender equality is equally important for men and women because all humans deserve equal treatment."

Through the journal activities, students considered and discussed their personal knowledge and views. This challenged students to go beyond their comfort zones as well as beyond the hypothetical talking "about" an issue. Instead, students were required to think of action items that could be implemented to address issues of gender discriminations or injustices in daily life and within students' capacities. In addition to being linked to theories of social justice (e.g., Nieto, 2010; Osborn, 2006 etc.), the journal activities also promoted the development of ICit (Byram, 2008) integrating the important step of planning an action item to address social injustice.

The journal entries highlight the relevance of the topic for students. They give a glimpse of the importance and impact of the topic on the students and prove that it is possible and necessary to address questions of social justice in the undergraduate language classroom. The students interpret and relate personal experiences, while relating them to experiences of "other" and "self" in order to question a status quo (ICC in Byram, 1997). This lays the foundation for critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997). Information is evaluated which enables critical thinking (Byram, 1997), taking action (Byram, 2008), and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 2008). Their reactions show their attitudes, willingness, and determination to take action and change the injustices they describe. They also related and interpreted practices and perspectives in their own cultures and others (Byram, 1997).

In the case of voicing their opinions grounded in research, students looked at outside information and related and interpreted it to the topic of the journal (Byram, 1997). Students discovered new perspectives (Byram, 1997) when pondering people's reactions or reading information that was different from their own. They began to engage in a discourse that could be continued with classmates in the classroom (Byram, 1997). Therefore, the foundation was laid for students to become critically culturally aware. Lastly, the activity of creating action items (Byram, 1997) put the central idea of ICit (Byram, 2008) into practice.

Discussion

The question we addressed with our unit was "How can we help students in an introductory German course use the target language to discuss and learn about important issues, such gender equality?" To summarize our observations from the described class: Using vocabulary (clothing, appearances) and formal aspects of language (adjectives and adjective endings, or modal verbs in the simplified story) relevant to the chapter covered in the textbook for the course we developed and implemented activities in which students pondered social justice issues. In the course of the short implementation (75 minutes of the synchronous online session and homework before and after the session), students also acquired the knowledge and applied the attitudes and skills necessary to develop intercultural communicative competence. To allow students to cover complex topics within the linguistic constraints of proficiency at the novice level we carefully planned scaffolding activities which enabled them to reflect critically on questions of gender roles and gender inequality historically (around the time portrayed in the fairy tale *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella]) as well as in modern times.

Strategic use of the students' L1 outside the synchronous meeting was an important factor, as it enabled students to think and talk about the topic in all its linguistic complexity for part of the time which in turn facilitated their discussion of the complex issue using simple language in the synchronous meeting.

Using the fairy tale provided us with the opportunity to activate students' prior knowledge and relate to concepts of appearance related to gender, gender roles, etc. and to compare these concepts using simple language and supporting materials such as images.

These activities corresponded to Byram's dimensions of IComp (1997) most prominently, to apply critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997) because we asked students to critically evaluate, on the basis of specific criteria, the "perspectives, practices, products" (see also NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements for Intercultural Communication, 2017) represented in the fairy tale as well as in modern society (Byram, 1997) as they addressed gender injustices within the story and in their lives. Moreover, students developed "knowledge of social processes" (Byram, 1997). Students collectively noted and reflected upon the societal traditional and modern gender norms and images, as well as critically assessed their own beliefs, attitudes, and values they shared because of belonging to social groups and society (Byram, 1997). By critically examining those beliefs and disbeliefs in the activities students could learn to suspend judgment until they had looked at different perspectives and enough evidence before drawing conclusions.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we asked students to take the next step and devise an action plan through which they can address gender inequalities. This step is a requirement for the development of ICit (Byram, 2008) through which students apply their ICC in the here and now. We believe that this is a crucial component for a number of reasons: 1) Through this action component what students learn in their beginning German class contributes something to their "real" life rather than limiting their German learning experience to the classroom and to possible applications in the future. 2) Additionally, students' language use is bound

to an activity which also holds social, cultural, and personal value to them. Learning here is grounded in action (Byram, 2008; Byram et al., 2016). As has been shown in prior research (Byram et al., 2016), this motivates students by allowing them to connect topics covered in the German classroom to topics of personal importance. Students in turn realize that addressing complex and sometimes difficult/sensitive issues is part of the language learning experience and that we do not shy away from such topics but instead also address difficult and important issues in the WL classroom as suggested by Ennser-Kananen (2016) and Byram et al. (2016). Students thus do not "only" learn how to communicate effectively in German but also to discuss crucial, at times controversial, topics. 3) Furthermore, some interactions suggested in the action component by the students involve connections with others in various socio-cultural contexts, thus contributing to students discovering and also actively becoming part of ICit communities (Byram, 2008).

The fact that students were able to complete all activities (except for the journal) fully in the target language, and at the very beginning of their language learning career, is also worth mentioning. It shows that complex topics such as gender (in)equality can be covered in an introductory language classroom, even in one hour and 15 minutes, given careful planning, an underlying theoretical framework (such as ICit in combination with social justice theories), and proper scaffolding of activities. It is important to note that the theoretical commonalities of theories of ICit (Byram, 2008) and social justice (e.g., Chapman et al., 2011; Glynn, Wesely, & Wassell, 2014; Guilherme, 2002; Nieto, 2010; Osborn, 2006) facilitated the planning as well as the implementation of the unit. For example, the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of IComp (Byram, 1997) as well as the action component of ICit (Byram, 2008) provide tools for students to address social justice topics.

However, such a short treatment of a complex topic in an L2 and in an online course brings with it a number of challenges. It is difficult to allow for extended in-depth reflections in class because of time constraints but also because of linguistic limitations in the TL. This can lead to confusions. We therefore decided to email students ahead of time and explain to them in English that serious material will be covered in the course and that there might be instances in which misunderstandings could occur. We urged students to communicate with the instructor and the program director in case they had any concerns. In this case, the implementation went smoothly. Within the time constraints, students were able to meet the goal, reflecting on issues of social justice related to gender inequality in the TL. The lack of time is not only an issue with regard to the time students can spend with the material but also the time teachers spend planning and implementing the unit.

While planning and implementing theory of ICit (Byram, 2008) and social justice (Osborn, 2006) in practice was time-consuming, the authors believe it was rewarding to the students' engagement and critical reflection. Another challenge that bears mentioning is the use of the TL in and outside the WL classroom. There were a number of planned activities outside the synchronous meeting in which students were allowed to use their L1. It also needs to be said that sometimes students fell back into using English instead of the target language or in their individual group rooms in the synchronous meeting strayed from the topic they were asked to discuss. The reason for their use of the L1 seemed to be related to one of the following reasons:

need for clarification of the assignment instructions (usually once this happened the conversation returned to the TL), their interest in the topic was beyond their language capacities in the TL and consequently their engagement with the topic became so passionate that the conversation was carried on in the L1, which allowed for a more efficient way of communicating their point of view.

Conclusion and Further Perspective

As the need for successful intercultural communication grows we aim to equip our students with the tools to mediate between different cultures and opinions, and become intercultural citizens by applying their ICC in the here and now. Judging by the short implementation of our unit and reflections and questions of/by students, we come to the conclusion that the students not only were more interested in discussing real-life complex topics, but also gained more insight into matters related to addressing questions of social justice than comparable online classes from previous years. In this short unit students had a number of opportunities to think about real life scenarios, and to reflect on questions related to gender, gender equality, and social justice within the fairy tale *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella], but also related to real life contexts (Byram, 1997). Due to our underlying theories and theoretical frameworks of our unit and the relation of our unit exercises to these theories (e.g., Byram, 1997, 2008; Osborn, 2006) we were able to create activities that enabled students to explore the topic of gender and gender inequality within the target language while also coming up with action items to address social injustices and gender inequalities in their everyday lives.

Despite the obvious time constraint and work-intensive preparation of our unit, we believe it to be a success. It not only helped students address, think of, and learn about issues related to social justice, it also allowed us as instructors to reflect deeply on our teaching, and think of ways of providing students with such opportunities to not shy away from important topics in future language courses and to follow colleagues' calls for the use of critical pedagogy in language courses. Empirical research on the specific outcomes of implementations of social justice and ICit theory in terms of language and content objectives, as well as studies on what kinds of scaffolding activities support the students' use of the TL to meet these objectives would be helpful in guiding future curricular efforts.

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Appendix A: An Activity Overview

Activities	Language	Social Justice Goal	ICC/ IComp/ICit
Pre-session homework: Question to ponder at home asynchronous	TL (Story) \ TL or other (rest)	Read the version of Cinderella we provided you with ● Consider which 'serious' topics are covered in the fairy tale and its adaptations ● Reflect: What does gender have to do with family, work, and free time? How do you define "gender equality?" Do you think gender equality is important?	● knowledge ● interpret and relate ● attitudes
Session: 1. Warm Up (refers to activities 1.a. Pictures I, 1.b. Pictures II, 1.c. Pictures III) synchronous	TL	● Consider gender norms and traditional gender images, appearances, body images, and standards ● Consider country-specific body images, stereotypes, and standards	● knowledge ● interpret and relate ● skills of discovery/ interaction ● attitudes
2. Gender Norm Activity I synchronous	TL	● Consider qualities which, according to society, are typical of men/women ● Societal values associated with gender	● knowledge ● interpret and relate ● skills of discovery/ interaction ● attitudes
3. Warm-up activity Pictures IV synchronous	TL	● Consider qualities which, according to society, are typical of men/women ● Societal values associated with gender	● knowledge ● interpret and relate ● skills of discovery/ interaction ● attitudes ● beginning intercultural awareness
4. Gender Norm Activity II synchronous	TL	● Consider qualities which, according to society, are typical of men/women ● Societal values associated with gender	● knowledge ● interpret and relate ● skills of discovery/ interaction ● attitudes

5. *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella] I-V (refers to activities 5.a. Aschenputtel [Cinderella] I, 5.b. Aschenputtel [Cinderella] II, 5.c. Aschenputtel [Cinderella] III, 5.d. Aschenputtel [Cinderella] IV, 5.e. Aschenputtel [Cinderella] V) synchronous	TL	● Consider qualities which, according to the fairy tale, are assigned to the various types of women and men represented in the fairy tale (rich, poor, mother, father, servant, ruler, etc.) and their corresponding appearances and obligations in society ● Societal values associated with gender and socio-economic standing	● skills of discovery/ interaction ● attitudes
6. Comparison of Belief-system synchronous	TL	● Consider societal norms of (stereo-) typical male and female gender roles and expectations ● Compare to the students' and modern-day concepts and ideals. Further dismantle preconceived notions of male and female, raise awareness of, as well as break down stereotypes.	● interpret and relate ● skills of discovery/ interaction ● attitudes
Post-session homework: Journal Reflection asynchronous	English, TL if students choose to	● Reflect on injustices linked to students' own gender; Reflect: Is gender equality equally important for/to men and women? Research/ relate: historic Western ideas of men/women; Research/ relate: different cultural expectations related to gender; Investigate: gender equality in our state	● interpret and relate ● attitudes ● action component ● critical cultural awareness