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*Published in:*  
TESL-EJ

*Publication date:*  
2019

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for pulished version (APA):*  
Blume, C., Gerlach, D., Roters, B., & Schmidt, T. (2019). The ABCs of Inclusive English Teacher Education: A Quantitative and Qualitative Study Examining the Attitudes, Beliefs and (Reflective) Competence of Pre-Service Foreign Language Teachers. *TESL-EJ*, 22(4). <http://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/issues/volume22/ej88/ej88a6/>

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## **The ABCs of Inclusive English Teacher Education: A Quantitative and Qualitative Study Examining the Attitudes, Beliefs and (Reflective) Competence of Pre-Service Foreign Language Teachers**

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### **Abstract**

In light of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007) as well as increased immigration and concomitant diversity, schools in Germany are addressing the challenge of educating learners in increasingly heterogeneous settings. Given the status of English as a foreign language (EFL) as a core school subject as well as a necessary skill for participation in the global community, the need to prepare future second language teachers to address this heterogeneity is of critical importance. To address this, a blended learning seminar for pre-service teachers (PSTs) in EFL was developed within a community of practice. The concomitant research focuses on an examination of the PSTs' attitudes towards inclusion, their beliefs towards language learning, and the development of their reflective competence. Given the exploratory nature of this research, a mixed-methods study was designed to triangulate data from multiple instruments to analyze these items, and the ways in which they develop over the course of a semester. Using a pre-/post-intervention questionnaire, descriptive statistics and qualitative content analysis were carried out to understand the ways in which attitudes towards

inclusive EFL, beliefs about inclusive language learning, and reflective competence for inclusive EFL changed over time.

**Keywords:** reflective practice, pre-service teacher education, special educational needs in EFL, beliefs about language learning

## Introduction

There are two primary factors currently shaping Germany's educational landscape and changing priorities in teacher education. On the one hand, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), adopted by Germany in 2009, has initiated a process of desegregation for students with a wide range of special educational needs (SEN), leading to significantly more heterogeneity in mainstream schools. On the other hand, increased migration has substantially changed the demographic composition of German schools, with one-third of school-age children now having an immigrant background (Statistisches Bundesamt [Destatis], 2016). As a result of these developments, teachers in Germany are faced with much more diverse populations than they have previously encountered. These recent developments, in terms of both SEN and multilingualism, pose a challenge to a system that is traditionally relatively homogeneous and rigidly organized according to cognitive, motor, sensorial, and behavioral differences.

Given the primacy of English for political, social, economic, and cultural integration, and in light of the status of English as one of three core school subjects (in addition to German and mathematics), second language teacher education (SLTE) in Germany must prepare pre-service teachers with the skills to meet these students' diverse needs. Although the importance of affective components of teacher knowledge have been variously established in the literature (c.f., Akbari & Allvar, 2010; Silverman, 2016) and in policy (Roters, 2015), SLTE in Germany has not systematically addressed teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, beliefs about language learning, or reflective dispositions regarding inclusion. At the Leuphana University Lüneburg in Lüneburg, Germany, the impetus to reform SLTE with a focus on these areas was provided by the Initiative for Excellence in Teacher Education of the German Ministry for Education and Research ([Federal Ministry](#), 2017). The course emerging from this initiative focuses specifically on addressing PSTs' attitudes towards inclusion, beliefs about language learning, and reflective competence. While declarative knowledge and core practices (c.f., Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009) are also addressed, the hope is that an emphasis on these affective elements would, early in the PSTs' course of studies, generate acceptance of inclusion and beliefs conducive to the language learning of all learners. The underlying assumption is that dedicated instruction to develop PSTs' reflective competence regarding inclusive EFL instruction will positively shape their attitudes and beliefs. Thus, the unifying element is a focus on reflective activities, embedded whenever possible within a reflective task cycle (c.f., Gerlach, 2018).

This article will briefly summarize the following theoretical frames: (1) attitudes towards inclusive (EFL) instruction in Germany, (2) extant research on beliefs about language learning, and (3) reflective SLTE, before describing a course developed to address these elements of PST knowledge at one university. Focusing then on the design and research of this learning opportunity, pre- and post-intervention measures of these three constructs are introduced, and the results of the cohort's development in each of these areas will be reported. Subsequently,

the initiative and the outcomes will be contextualized, with an eye towards understanding both the efficacy of the seminar for twenty-first century SLTE, and the quality of the tools designed to measure its outcomes. Finally, some conclusions will consider the course's goals and methods in the wider paradigm of inclusive SLTE.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **Attitudes towards Inclusion**

Attitudes towards inclusive EFL instruction in Germany are shaped largely by a historically stratified educational system that, in addition to differentiating students by the age of ten according to academic achievement, has also maintained a parallel system of special education schools for students with physical, sensory, emotional-behavioral, and cognitive impairments. It is only in the wake of the UN CRPD, adopted in 2009, that widespread efforts have been made to dismantle the SEN-school system and include students in “mainstream” schools. These efforts have thus far borne mixed results, with a number of structural and philosophical hindrances to rapid change.

Although there is recent, albeit often contradictory, research documenting teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in Germany, only two studies focus specifically on subject-specific teacher attitudes towards inclusion in EFL (c.f., Gerlach, 2015; Kötter & Trautmann, 2018). While Gerlach (2015) found that German EFL teachers with experience in inclusive settings tend to have positive attitudes towards the concept, and identify beneficial subject-specific methods and practices as well as challenges in the implementation of inclusion, EFL teachers in the study by Kötter and Trautmann (2018) express greater reservations, citing a lack of expertise and concerns about the progress of more able learners. Both studies were conducted on a small scale; their differing conclusions reflect the inconsistencies in other findings regarding teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in both Germany and abroad. These two studies focus on current practitioners and do not include PSTs, whose attitudes are likely to differ.

### **Beliefs about Language Learning**

The dearth of empirical data about PSTs' attitudes about inclusive EFL in Germany mirrors the situation in terms of PSTs' beliefs about language learning. Although research on beliefs about language learning is well-established (c.f., Borg, 2015), few studies examine the beliefs of EFL learners or teachers in Germany. The focus in this seminar is specifically on how PSTs' beliefs about language learning might relate to inclusive attitudes towards language learning. This focus emerges from findings that illustrate that teachers' beliefs influence their practices, their perceptions, and their judgment (Richards, 1998). Thus, it seems likely that there is a relationship between (pre-service) teachers' beliefs about the nature and difficulty of language learning (c.f., Horwitz, 1988), and their receptivity to inclusive EFL. Enhancing this receptivity requires understanding PSTs' beliefs regarding these issues, and developing SLTE that takes these beliefs into account (c.f., Farrell 2018).

The limited international research undertaken specifically to examine language learning beliefs conducive to inclusivity focuses on mindsets, concluding that informants hold inconsistent beliefs systems across subdomains (c.f., Mercer & Ryan, 2010). While this research was carried out in Austria and Japan (further highlighting potential cultural differences), the results also

indicate that social comparison plays a role in determining students' beliefs about the nature of language learning. This suggests that German PSTs, who traditionally come from the most selective college-preparatory schools, would have had less exposure to struggling learners and would thus be less likely to have mindsets conducive to inclusive needs.

### **Reflective Competence for Inclusive EFL**

Pajares (1992) famously described beliefs as a “messy construct,” and the same can be said of the notion of reflective competence, especially in terms of its empirical evaluation. In SLTE in Germany, reflective elements are, theoretically, considered a critical component that enable PSTs to develop their pedagogical content knowledge (Roters, 2015). Whereas pedagogical content knowledge in the American sense emphasizes the interrelationship of pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge, the German tradition (*Fachdidaktik*) further highlights the mediating roles of the teachers and learners (Shirley, 2009), and thus also considers the affective elements of reflection that Farrell (2018) adds to the aspects discussed by Dewey and Schön. Thus, while models of reflective competence development are infrequently found in university training, a comprehensive model of what reflective competence entails is well established.

While this cultivation of *Fachdidaktik* has traditionally been separated from actual teaching practice, which typically takes place subsequent to university studies, recent reforms have sought to combine theoretical approaches to developing reflective competence with practical observation and initial experience. These elements are connected by an emphasis on active inquiry which seeks to inculcate habits of “planning, decision-making, hypothesis testing, experimentation, and reflection” (Richards, 1998, p. 3) that take into account personal and situated features and sociocultural mediation (Woods, 2003). Although some studies warn against premature reflection (c.f., Akbari, 2007), the need to address attitudes and beliefs at an early stage through both actual teaching and approximations of practice (c.f., Grossman et al., 2009) is gaining traction. The majority of students in the course described in the following sections have had at least one short-term school-based internship at their chosen grade level (elementary or lower secondary) and school form (comprehensive or vocational school).

### **Course Description: Conceptual Framework & Content**

Although SLTE in Germany has been slow to address the needs of learners with SEN, there are a number of methodological principles that lend themselves, theoretically, to inclusive instruction. A competence orientation (Amrhein & Bongartz, 2014), differentiation (Blell, 2017), task-based language learning (Blume, Kielwein, & Schmidt, 2018), plurilingualism (Genesee, 2013), computer-assisted language learning (Ortega, 2017), and intercultural communicative competence (Gerlach, 2015) are all paradigms that hold significant promise for teaching students with varying abilities, prior knowledge, and SEN. However, explicit bridges between these language learning approaches and inclusive EFL have yet to be widely conceptualized or implemented. At the Leuphana University Lüneburg in Lüneburg, Germany, the aforementioned demographic and structural reforms provided the impetus for the development of a seminar to address these issues. Embedded early on in their university studies, the seminar is designed to address PSTs' attitudes, beliefs, and reflective competence regarding inclusive EFL while taking into consideration the limited practical opportunities afforded them at this stage.

To achieve these goals, a blended learning approach was adopted. In addition to offering theoretical and empirical texts and media with comprehension activities, a course management system (Moodle) was utilized to connect to personal accounts of learners with SEN as well as to offer links to online simulations. In online forums, PSTs were encouraged to respond to these items and to their peers' comments. These online tasks were designed to facilitate reflection by, for example, incorporating interactive elements, offering elective opportunities, and encouraging, but not requiring, interdependence (c.f., Satar & Akcan, 2014).

The course was designed within a community of practice (Wenger, 2011) consisting of teachers, teacher educators, researchers, university students, and representatives of school governing bodies. In this way, a bridge between theory and practice was built (c.f., Schmidt, 2017). Despite a range of topics with varying levels of specificity, the community adopted as underlying principles a broad understanding of inclusion and a commitment to elements of universal design (c.f., Timpe-Laughlin & Laughlin, 2018). This "broad understanding" led to the creation of aims, tasks, and activities that emphasize the diversity of all learners and that raise awareness of kinds of difference unrelated to cognitive or sensorial impairment (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Topics of the Seminar: Teaching in Inclusive English Settings**

1. Introduction: What is meant by inclusive EFL?	8. Gender sensitive EFL instruction
2. Task-based language learning in inclusive EFL settings	9. Effective methods in inclusive EFL classrooms
3. A case study of hearing impairment in the inclusive EFL classroom	10. Using a video conference to practice teaching in inclusive EFL settings
4. Making use of multi-professional teams in the inclusive EFL classroom	11. Digital tools for inclusive EFL classrooms
5. Reading and spelling difficulties (dyslexia) and learning EFL	12. Small group microteachings
6. Linguistic diversity in the EFL classroom	13. Video-based reflection of microteachings
7. Understanding subject-specific disruptions in the inclusive EFL classroom	14. Closure

Moreover, the maxim that good inclusive pedagogy meets the needs of all learners served as a guideline to disabuse PSTs of the notion that multiple forms of individualization for myriad special needs is feasible, necessary, or necessarily effective (c.f., Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). Instead, an emphasis was placed on conveying principles and practices conducive to more holistic instantiations of differentiation and accessibility, such as multimodal approaches (Blume & Würffel, 2018) and models for validating learners' authentic language learning (Grau & Legutke, 2015).

With a focus on developing the PSTs' attitudes, beliefs, and reflective competence vis-à-vis inclusive EFL, a range of reflective activities were incorporated. These included opportunities to reflect on one's own identity as a foreign language learner, using e.g., language portraits to enable PSTs to take into account the role of their own identities and experiences in shaping

their attitudes and beliefs (c.f., Krumm, 2001). Reflective task cycles focusing on critical incidents were also incorporated (c.f., Gerlach, 2018). Online, PSTs responded in discussion forums to non-heteronormative student voices and experiences of learners with SEN, which provided the basis for socially-mediated reflections in class. PSTs collaboratively analyzed authentic samples of student work from learners with reading-spelling-difficulties and used case studies to identify the needs of learners with hearing impairment in the communicative EFL classroom.

Atypical forms of classroom videography were interwoven throughout the course. Multi-perspective videos, which have the potential to facilitate a more complex analysis of instruction than traditional classroom videography (c.f., Paulicke, Ehmke, & Schmidt, 2015), were combined with specific viewing tasks. A videoconferencing system was also used, allowing current EFL practitioners to implement lessons designed by the PSTs. This approach is illustrative of an approximation of practice that reduces the demands on the PSTs while simultaneously encouraging socially-mediated reflective processes (Benitt, 2019).

## **Research Study**

The concomitant research was designed to examine the PSTs' attitudes towards inclusive EFL, their beliefs regarding EFL, and their reflective competencies in these areas. Given the paucity of empirical research on these topics, as well as their potential impact on teaching behavior, it is critical to understand what attitudes PSTs hold, what they believe, and how they are able to reflect on their attitudes and beliefs. Thus, the first research focus was to examine the status quo, and subsequently, the effects of the seminar. It was anticipated that there would be changes in the areas of attitudes, beliefs, and reflective competency. However, the nature of these developments could not be predicted. Therefore, the research questions sought to explore the effects of a seminar designed to address these constructs, and were formulated as follows:

- How do PSTs' attitudes towards inclusive EFL develop over time when taking part in a subject-specific learning opportunity on inclusive education?
- How do PSTs beliefs about language learning develop over time when taking part in a subject-specific learning opportunity on inclusive education?
- How do PSTs' reflective competencies develop over time when taking part in a subject-specific learning opportunity on inclusive education?

Given the lack of pre-existing models, the study is exploratory in nature, seeking to describe observations and pose hypotheses for future study. It would be simplistic to suggest that one seminar with a variety of variables, conducted with a small cohort, can demonstrate the efficacy of a particular method regarding the cultivation of favorable attitudes, beliefs, and reflective competency in inclusive SLTE. However, it is hoped that by beginning to collect data on these themes, trends and issues could be identified for further research and development.

In order to validate the findings despite the lack of a control group and an inability to control for extenuating conditions, a mixed methods study was designed to facilitate the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data (c.f., Flick, 2014). The data was derived from a convenience sample of students at one German university with a strong background in SLTE for EFL, and included the entire third semester cohort (N=46). Designed with pre- and post-intervention

measures, the study retains an exploratory character by implementing adapted instruments to posit potentially efficacious approaches to addressing the described constructs.

## Instruments & Findings

### Attitudes towards Inclusive EFL

In order to measure the PSTs' attitudes towards inclusive EFL, an existing instrument was adapted. The Attitudes Toward Inclusion Scale (Schwab, Tretter, & Gebhardt, 2014) was selected because it requires respondents to indicate on a Likert scale their agreement regarding items from descriptive vignettes. This approach is somewhat less likely to result in socially desirable responses than measures that ask respondents more directly for their opinions regarding inclusive issues (c.f., Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Statistically validated for use regarding attitudes towards educational inclusion in general, the adaptation here was undertaken to focus specifically on inclusive EFL. The items asked PSTs to assess the degree to which, in their opinion, a student with specific strengths and challenges in learning EFL would feel motivated and competent as well as be able to acquire EFL skills. Cronbach's alpha (Pre-intervention  $\alpha = .77$ ; post-intervention  $\alpha = .816$ ), and exploratory factor analysis using a Varimax rotation that loads on one main component suggest that the test remains valid despite these modifications.

An analysis of the outcomes reveals the PSTs' stated attitude towards inclusive EFL in both the pre- and post-intervention measure are largely neutral (Pre-test:  $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = .557$ ; post-test:  $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = .603$ ). While measuring such a small cohort ( $N = 46$ ) with a quantitative tool can only indicate potential trends, a paired sample t-test was performed to examine the ways in which these attitudes developed over the course of the semester (Table 2).

**Table 2. Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Attitudes towards Inclusive EFL**

	Pre- intervention		Post- intervention		95% CI for Mean Difference				
Outcome	M	SD	M	SD	n		r	t	df
	3.054	.5249	3.070	.6211	32	-.247, .215	.381	-.142	31

$P > .05$

This analysis reveals that these attitudes did not measurably change over the course of the intervention.

### Beliefs about Language Learning

To examine the cohort's beliefs regarding language learning, items from the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) (Horwitz, 1988) were utilized. Due to the length of the scale and the interest on focusing on items that might indicate the existence of beliefs conducive to inclusive EFL learning, the original instrument was, using validation through experts (c.f., Drost, 2011) pared down to 10 items and adapted to focus specifically on EFL learning. Given the unique use of the scale for this construct, analysis was carried out on these ten items post-implementation to evaluate the validity of the adapted inventory. Due to a poor statistical fit, three items were subsequently removed to achieve an adequate Cronbach's alpha (Pre-



intervention  $\alpha = .661$ , post-intervention  $\alpha = .662$ ) and a component model that loads on three factors, as indicated in Tables 3 and 4.

**Table 3. Factor Loadings Based on a Principal Components Analysis with Varimax Rotation for 7 Items from the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), Pre-intervention (N = 46)**

Items	Learning English is challenging	Methods of learning English	Certain groups can learn English more easily than others
Learning English is easy/difficult	.823		-.127
People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent	.733	.255	.227
I have a language learning aptitude	.637		
Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning many grammar rules	.115	.909	
Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words		.907	
It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language	-.161	.159	.886
People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages	.471		.737

**Table 4. Factor Loadings Based on a Principal Components Analysis with Varimax Rotation for 7 Items from the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), Post-intervention (N = 35)**

Items	Methods of learning English	Learning English is challenging	Certain groups can more easily learn English than others
Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words	.885	.284	
Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning many grammar rules	.840		.255
People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent	.148	.849	
I have a language learning aptitude	.343	.660	-.356
Learning English is easy/difficult		.624	.351
People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages	-.161	.194	.781
It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language	.359		.647

In both pre- and post-intervention surveys, the 7 items load on three factors in the same pattern, however, the order of the factors shifts. The three factors suggest that these 7 items reflect three types of beliefs. One component seems to suggest that learning English is challenging and best pursued or realized by intelligent or capable learners; another component suggests that there are specific ways by which English language learning can be accomplished; a final component indicates the belief that certain groups of people are better at learning EFL than others. In all three cases, an interpretation in terms of an inclusive mindset was applied to the items. In other words, if the respondent believes that children learn faster than adults, this would reflect a mindset that allows for little individual variation. Likewise, believing that some individuals have an aptitude for language learning implies that it is an innate factor not conducive to change.

The results of a paired sample t-test reveal that the PSTs' beliefs regarding language learning moved from a more exclusive to a more inclusive set of beliefs over the course of the seminar. There was a significantly less exclusive mindset in the scores of the post-test ( $M = 2.92$ ,  $SD = .42$ ) compared to the pre-test ( $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = .45$ ) beliefs;  $t(32) = 2.359$ ,  $p = .025$ , indicating that the learning opportunity led to the development of beliefs conducive to inclusive EFL.

### **Reflective Competence Regarding Inclusive EFL**

In order to evaluate the respondents' reflective competence, existing tools were likewise adapted to reflect the population of this sample. Items originally used in the TEDS-LT study (c.f., Roters, Nold, Haudeck, Keßler, & Stancel-Piątak, 2011) to assess the knowledge of practicing EFL teachers were reformulated as open-ended items to analyze the PSTs' ability to

evaluate various pedagogic approaches within the context of an inclusive EFL classroom. Respondents were prompted to analyze instructional scenarios and identify alternatives that would meet the needs of all learners. Using qualitative content analysis, these open-ended responses were coded in alignment with the levels of reflective competence previously described by Roters (2015, p. 42).

Whereas the initial work by Roters entailed an international, comparative analysis of PST EFL reflective competence across five levels of sophistication, the analysis here added a focus on inclusive EFL, and led to the identification of six potential levels of reflective competence:

- Level 1: Reflection is largely descriptive
- Level 2: Reflection is self-focused, i.e., analyzes events from the observer's perspective
- Level 3: Reflection is instrumental, i.e., responds to an event with a narrowly-applicable solution
- Level 4: Reflection is dialogical-reflexive and engages in an inquiry process
- Level 5: Reflection is transformative, considering fundamental issues and themes
- Level 6: Reflection is inclusive innovative; considers the interaction of subject-specific and SEN-related issues

A good degree of interrater reliability of .77 was established using the average measure of intraclass coefficient. The results of a paired sample t-test indicate significant growth from the pre-test ( $M = 2.40$ ,  $SD = .837$ ) to the post-test ( $M = 2.81$ ,  $SD = .931$ ) levels;  $t(31) = -3.455$ ,  $p = .002$ . This indicates that the PSTs' ability to engage in reflective thinking was enhanced over the course of the seminar. At the same time, a substantial standard deviation is indicative of significant differences within the cohort.

## Discussion

### Attitudes about Inclusive EFL

The findings regarding the PSTs' relatively neutral attitudes towards inclusive EFL are in line with other empirical results (c.f., Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011). Forlin, Sharma, and Loreman (2007) suggest national differences in attitudes could result from the degree to which school-based inclusion has been practiced, with more positive attitudes present in countries with a longer history of practicing inclusion. The neutral attitudes found here are in line with those of countries without an extended history of inclusive education, which includes Germany (c.f., Powell, 2011).

The fact that the PSTs' attitudes did not change over the course of the semester is sobering. While research findings are inconsistent, several similar interventions have reported a change in PSTs' attitudes (c.f., Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). It is possible that individuals' attitudes changed here as well, with some perhaps becoming more receptive towards inclusive EFL and other less so, but that these movements in both directions cancelled each other out in the statistical operations. Other explanations raise the question as to whether the instrument actually measures acceptance. Rather, it is potentially possible that something more like concerns, which have been found to increase slightly post-training in some studies (c.f., Forlin & Chambers, 2011), inform the PSTs' responses.

Further analysis might likewise reveal interaction effects posited by Martschinke and Kopp (2009), whose analysis concludes that reflective and inquiry-based approaches might increase concerns among those PSTs who are unsure about inclusion to begin with and who possesses moderate or low self-efficacy beliefs. Given the neutral attitude identified here and the immaturity of the PSTs in question and their inexperience with inclusive approaches, this hypothesis is a plausible explanation for a lack of measurable growth in this area.

Given the dearth of subject-specific studies regarding PSTs' inclusive attitudes, it is also possible that the complexity of inclusive EFL raises more substantial concerns or that attitudes are mediated more significantly by low self-efficacy beliefs than in other subject areas. While some studies regarding inclusion have differentiated informants' attitudes according to the type of SEN, none have examined specifically the ways in which these SEN interact with subject-specific issues. In EFL, where, for example, listening and speaking activities are arguably more central than in some other subject areas, students with social issues who are otherwise relatively acceptable to teachers or PSTs (in terms of attitude) might pose a bigger potential concern than in other subjects (c.f., Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

### **Beliefs about Language Learning (BALLI)**

No prior studies using BALLI have been published in Germany. This is significant, given that the instrument has been shown to be potentially culturally sensitive (c.f., Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). In this case, the analysis of PSTs' beliefs regarding inclusive language learning generated three underlying dimensions: difficulty of language learning, methods of language learning, and group-based differences in language learning. This is a reinterpretation of the original categorization developed by Horwitz (1988), and thus necessitates further analysis. Specifically, the assumption that the selected items reflect a more or less inclusive mindset regarding foreign language learning requires an examination of the relationship between PSTs' language learning beliefs and their attitudes towards inclusion. This is especially important given research that suggests the impact of beliefs on language proficiency (c.f., Wesely, 2012) and classroom instruction (c.f., Borg, 2015).

The fact that the PSTs' beliefs in these terms developed over time to become more inclusive is an indication that reflective learning opportunities can affect subject-specific beliefs. Given the paucity of research regarding belief change, and difficulties identifying when and how this occurs (c.f., Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005, p. 9), this outcome is noteworthy. However, it is likely that more than a moderate belief change in this one area is necessary to effect more inclusive teaching practices. The lack of deep-rooted attitudinal changes regarding inclusive EFL, as described above, and the challenges in changing teaching practice in light of equally deeply-rooted school- and subject-related norms are likely to influence the future pedagogy of these PSTs.

### **Reflective Competence**

The fact that reflective competence developed over the course of the semester is a positive indicator. However, the results do not shed light on whether, or which, specific elements of the learning opportunity contributed more substantially than others to this maturing reflective ability, and whether these items are consistently effective for individual PSTs with varying prior experience and knowledge.

Moreover, despite significant change in this skill, the overall measurable level of the PSTs' competence remains relatively low. It is questionable whether the PSTs, with a mean reflective competence between the Levels 2 and 3, are adequately able to effectively address the complexity of inclusive EFL teaching. It remains to be seen whether this competence will continue to develop over the course of their further SLTE, and at what stage -- and when -- the PSTs will possess the reflective competency that will enable them to meet the diverse needs of most learners in heterogeneous EFL classrooms.

## Conclusion

Despite the fact that inclusive education is firmly established in many countries, there are few models of inclusive SLTE that rely on proven principles of effective SLTE and effective inclusive teacher education. By conducting pre- and post-intervention surveys with the course's participants, it is possible to identify their attitudes, beliefs, and reflective competence regarding inclusive EFL and, furthermore, examine how their knowledge in these areas changes through the seminar. While the small size of the cohort, the lack of a control group, and the use of largely quantitative instruments means that the findings are exploratory in nature, they shed light on aspects of inclusive SLTE that need further theoretical as well as empirical examination.

Further analysis of the existing data may reveal interactions among these constructs that will more clearly illuminate the relationships - if there are any - between the PSTs' attitudes, their beliefs, and their reflective competence. Understanding how language learning beliefs mediate attitudes, for example, might clarify the lack of movement in this latter area. Examination of background variables might also contribute to a better understanding.

The differences among individual PSTs also indicate that there is a need to consider individual activities within the course, and their appropriateness for PSTs with varying backgrounds and language learning biographies. In the given analysis, it is impossible to ascertain which elements of the seminar are most effective in illuminating how such subject-specific elements as visualization, differentiation, and task-based language learning can meet the needs of all learners in inclusive EFL instruction. More detailed, longitudinal data and content analysis thereof would generate an understanding of the elements of the seminar that have the potential to be most powerful in preparing future teachers.

## About the Authors

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## Acknowledgement

Funding for this project has been provided by the “Initiative for Excellence in Teacher Education,” a joint federal and state initiative of the German Ministry of Education and Research.

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[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4751-0\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4751-0_9)

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