

# Teaching the Writing of Historical Narrations as an Instrument in Inclusive Learning Settings

Designing Culture- and Language-Sensitive History Lessons Through a Genre-Based Cycle, Bridging Foreign Language Teaching and Inclusive Education

## Introduction

Public schools in Germany teach a diverse body of students with different individual backgrounds in numerous subject areas and sometimes by contradictory methods. For example, how phenomena are explained in history and biology is very different, even when the same teacher is teaching both subjects. A linguistic operator may be used to elicit definitions, explanations or conditions from the student,<sup>1</sup> but the task of explaining a causal relationship is more complicated than it might appear at first sight.<sup>2</sup>

History education in Germany faces this challenge by being sensitive to language when designing tasks to support students in historical thinking.<sup>3</sup> But there are other aspects to be considered in a language-sensitive history class – for example, which text genre is used in student reading and analysis.

History is taught in schools by teachers whose perspective on teaching is the result of their own personal background and training. Homogeneity is an illusory concept<sup>4</sup> and teaching has to shift from teaching a class as if it were a homogenous entity and instead focus on each student's individual potential and needs. In view of the social, economic and cultural reality in a multi-ethnic and multicultural society, it seems obvious that institutionalized learning in schools, and particularly in history class, needs innovative teaching concepts that are based on empirical research. Given its importance for learning,<sup>5</sup> language awareness has a prominent role<sup>6</sup> in teaching historical thinking in the appropriate language. This focus on output reflects the paradigm shift that followed the first PISA study.

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1 Lehner 2007, 14.

2 Voss et al. 2006, 199.

3 Oleschko 2019, 99.

4 Werning 2012, 304.

5 Siegmund 2019, 51.

6 Bernhardt 2020, 29.

## Question

The call for promoting academic language proficiency is welcome from the perspective of language-sensitive history lessons.<sup>7</sup> The question is which form this support can take for different groups of students, focusing on specific input and training.

The empirical data from the SchriFT project (see below) suggest that support is necessary. However, providing support is complicated by the dilemma of how to categorize students. The theoretical response to heterogenous learning in German middle schools (grades 4-10) takes place in the context of subject orientation. In this chapter the question then arises as to how history lessons can conceptually address the need for language support. The importance of language and its teaching is unquestioned. The crucial problem is that there cannot be a single approach to language teaching, as support measures must be adapted to the individual requirements of each student.

This chapter focuses on the linguistic skills of students and how to best address deficiencies they may have. Based on a narrow understanding of inclusion two groups of students would not receive language support in German middle schools today. The first group of students has a migration background and are acquiring German as their target language after completing their primary language acquisition. The second group are students who also have a migration background and have German as their first language, but have little contact with German in their cultural practice. A third group is made up of students with special educational needs who may show similar problems in working with texts, again for different reasons, but who do receive support. For all of these groups, the German language represents an obstacle to subject-specific learning in history lessons. The question is which concept can be used to support all groups equally in an inclusive classroom in acquiring academic language proficiency in German as target language.<sup>8</sup>

## State of Research

There is a widespread conviction that historical learning is a significant challenge for students due to its high linguistic demands. In particular, historical narration seems to be difficult for many students.<sup>9</sup> This finding is supported by empirical data. The large-scale Historical Thinking Competencies in History (HiTCH) test was criticized as too difficult for many students.<sup>10</sup> The interdisciplinary SchriFT project concluded that students need support in using scientific language to solve writing tasks.<sup>11</sup> Charlotte Husemann's research on describing, explaining and reasoning showed different language-based difficulties for students.<sup>12</sup> Jan Siefert's study

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7 Handro 2023, 2025.

8 Handro 2023, 2024; Siegmund 2019, 61.

9 Schlutow 2020, 49.

10 Trautwein et al. 2017, 119.

11 Wickner 2019, 143.

12 Husemann 2020, 203.

on the intercultural understanding also showed the challenges students face when making causal explanations.<sup>13</sup>

With these empirical results in mind, it seems evident that students need support in their historical learning processes. An important target dimension is the acquisition of specialized language proficiency, defined as cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in contrast to basic interpersonal communication (BIG) for everyday language.<sup>14</sup> These categories of basic and specialized language play a very important role in language-sensitive history education in Germany.<sup>15</sup> The SchriFT project has demonstrated that while students with a migration background show sufficient proficiency when writing in basic interpersonal communication, they need support in acquiring academic language proficiency.<sup>16</sup> Communication in an academic language is more than merely transporting information, as it follows certain conventions in cultural practice.<sup>17</sup> Academic language in German is characterized by its precision, high density of information and deagentification.<sup>18</sup> Handro<sup>19</sup> found that academic German shows sentence complexity, the nominalization of verbs and the persistent use of the passive voice.

All students, to a greater or lesser extent, face linguistic challenges in history class and would therefore benefit from language and specialized language support measures. German-language history education has therefore focused primarily on language-sensitive history lessons to address inclusion efforts.

The implementation of inclusion adds another layer of factors that play a role in planning classes, since learning to communicate in an appropriate way is part of cultural practice.<sup>20</sup> In addition to the subject discipline and its didactics, language awareness and special needs education have become relevant as well.<sup>21</sup> While some teachers may have been hesitant to adopt the inclusion perspective,<sup>22</sup> inclusion has been a mandatory topic in teacher training in Germany since 2016,<sup>23</sup> and it is now widely acknowledged as the norm in education. So there are certainly good reasons to take a closer look at inclusion and its categorization of the students being taught.

Even though categorization has its limits in handling diversity issues, as Sebastian Barsch<sup>24</sup> points out, it appears to be necessary, to a certain extent, for the planning and management of lessons. Diversity is the norm in education, and it is known that stereotypes and categorizations may harm students' self-perception and learning outcomes. The negative effects of

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13 Siefert 2020, 364-365.

14 Kniffka 2016, 51.

15 Handro 2023, 204.

16 Wickner 2019, 141.

17 Baker 2022, 10.

18 Siegmund 2019, 53.

19 Handro 2023, 205.

20 Baker 2022, 6, 8.

21 Oleschko 2019, 95.

22 Werning 2012, 311.

23 Bernhardt 2019, 7.

24 Barsch 2023, 235.

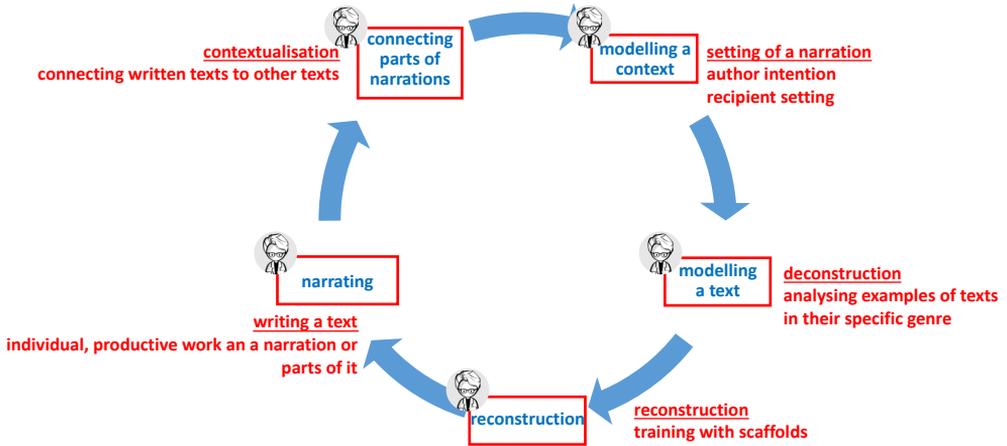


Fig. 1: Adapted genre cycle as depicted by the SchriFT project.

categories such as race<sup>25</sup> or class<sup>26</sup> can be countered by focusing on the individual student.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, a narrow understanding of inclusion overlooks how some categories can influence students' language use – for instance, migration and sociocultural background or proficiency in language use.<sup>28</sup> One promising concept to support these students is the genre cycle.

## Genre Cycle as a Concept for Language-Sensitive History Class

The genre cycle (see above) is a structured methodological training program designed to promote genre and writing skills in any subject.<sup>29</sup> Its structure makes it particularly effective in supporting students with a migration background as they learn academic German.

Genre are characterized by specific structures of phrasing information.<sup>30</sup> The genre cycle identifies the characteristics of a target text, creating transparency. In the SchriFT project this was achieved by focusing on key operators<sup>31</sup> such as ›designate‹, ›describe‹ and ›explain‹, which are used across all disciplines.<sup>32</sup>

25 Yildirim/Lücke 2020, 147.

26 Scherr 2020, 119.

27 Kühberger/Schneider-Reisinger 2020, 27.

28 Siegmund 2019, 61.

29 Sauer 2012, 76ff.

30 Bernhardt 2020, 39; Hartung 2019, 69.

31 Bernhardt 2020, 37.

32 Wickner 2022, 23.

The genre cycle offers several benefits for use in inclusive learning settings. First, it emphasizes the role of language learning in history lessons, encouraging students to write their own texts at the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) level. Language learning is placed at the heart of inclusive history teaching, rather being treated as an add-on to subject-based learning. By making the linguistic requirements of historical learning transparent, the genre cycle helps students understand which speech acts they will be expected to use. Second, the genre cycle concept identifies which tools can support different groups of students at which points in the learning process. Third, the consistent implementation of the genre cycle concept addresses the need for a product-oriented approach to writing processes in history lessons. Students not only deconstruct model texts, but are also required to write their own texts in subject-specific language.

However, there are also limits to the concept, as lessons would need to be reorganized, shifting focus away from an exclusive concentration on subject content and toward an intensive training in writing skills. This approach would allow less time for content-related learning processes. Given the limited resources for a history lesson (only two hours per week in German secondary schools up to the 10th grade), it would most likely meet with considerable resistance. On the other hand, as the interdisciplinary nature of the genre cycle concept lends itself to teaching in different subjects, it would lessen the workload for individual teachers.

Further research is needed to determine the extent to which the genre cycle concept supports historical learning. While the genre cycle combines subject and language learning in an explicit intervention to equip students with genre skills for writing historical narrations, it primarily focuses on individual speech acts, such as describing and explaining, rather than whole texts. However, the genre cycle offers the possibility to initiate a writing process for entire historical narrations. This requires prior content-based learning, as students need specialized knowledge to write their own texts. This highlights the close interdependence of content and method. The genre cycle enables the linguistic component of historical learning to be explicitly combined with subject-specific learning in working with text genre.<sup>33</sup>

This approach builds on phases of subject-specific learning in order to promote speaking and writing activities in history lessons. The concept provides teachers with instruments to

1. teach historical content,
2. teach genre analysis,
3. teach students how to write a text in a specific genre, using individual scaffolds,
4. have students write a text,
5. evaluate the text and provide feedback for revision.

In a subject-oriented lesson, it is possible to start at different points in the genre cycle. As a rule, however, it is a five-step process. In the first step, the genre cycle begins with work on model texts to understand the historical context. This step is optional if students have

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33 Mainzer-Murrenhoff 2019, 45.

sufficient specialized knowledge and genre knowledge. The second step is the deconstruction of a model text. For history lessons, historical narrations are a typical target dimension. In the third step, students focus on writing in the chosen genre, using scaffolds, for example, to model the academic language needed.<sup>34</sup> Only in the fourth step do students begin writing their text in the chosen genre, for example, parts of a historical narration. In the fifth and last step, students receive feedback and revise their texts, before putting their results into the historical context.

The genre cycle in this schematic version can be adapted for different types of texts, which are deconstructed before students begin writing in the chosen genre themselves. In history education at lower secondary level, complete narrations are practically never written, as the focus is on more or less comprehensive answers to certain types of tasks, each of which requires certain speech acts. First in the 11th grade and above are students required to write an analysis containing a narration of the historical context.

Linguistic operators in the learning tasks often require that students understand parts of an entire narration, but they do not explicitly link the learning task to the historical narration. Furthermore, linguistic operators are often understood differently by students and teachers, depending on the subject being taught and their own personal practice. For example, the common operators ›describe‹ and ›explain‹ are by no means as clear-cut as one might assume. A methodical introduction to the speech acts in a particular task therefore supports students in solving tasks. This could take place in step two, deconstructing model texts, where it is possible to clarify what is expected of students.

Historical narrations are the main target dimension of history teaching as they demonstrate historical awareness. However, writing narrations in the sense of a written orientation in history is already difficult for students with German as their first language. It must be an even greater hurdle for students who are unable to draw on the schematic structures of relevant genres.<sup>35</sup> Language-sensitive teaching is therefore particularly suitable for learners who have the necessary subject knowledge but are unable to perform the necessary or expected speech acts.

In a broader sense, the genre cycle can also be viewed as training in historical-cultural practice. Every operator used in a specific writing task<sup>36</sup> is linked to a text genre, and proficiency in genre is recognized as an important aspect of history education.<sup>37</sup> Learning how to write in specific genres is cultural learning, because these genres also appear in the public sphere.

Whether or not the genre cycle is used, the theoretical separation of students into different categories has implications for the assessment of their competency in historical learning. These implications must be taken into account when considering the learning potential of the genre cycle for inclusive history lessons.

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34 Siegmund 2019, 58.

35 Hartung 2019, 73.

36 Bernhard 2020, 37.

37 Hartung 2019, 74.

## Implications for Assessment

The influence of prior knowledge and well-known stories on historical learning is not only important for designing lessons and measures to support students. The impact of content available in the public sphere on historical concepts is acknowledged in theory, but few empirical studies have been conducted. This is particularly relevant for performance assessment. To develop targeted tools to support students, teachers need to identify in classroom practice which teaching arrangements are most likely to help the specific needs of different groups of students. This applies to both historical and linguistic learning.

As discussed, students have a significant advantage, at least in theory, if they are exposed to multiple historical narrations outside of class.<sup>38</sup> This practice allows them to perform while being assessed without expending cognitive resources on formulating speech acts. In contrast, students learning German as a second language (in primary school) or as a foreign language (in secondary schools) need greater access to language learning in history lessons than the first group of students does not need, or at least not to the same extent.

When students already have the necessary proficiency in the target language, the historical narratives they are familiar with outside of class provide them with a foundation for participation in class.<sup>39</sup> Without this prior knowledge, students are at a disadvantage that cannot be easily compensated for, let alone made up for. One concept to support these students is to teach them in their first language.<sup>40</sup>

This issue also poses a problem for empirical research into interventions in historical learning. The perspective of language-sensitive history education overlooks the fact that students may not actually be able to perform speech acts themselves, but instead rely on patterns acquired elsewhere. In fact, knowledge conveyed through historical culture can be seen as having a distortion effect on speech act performance, which can have a significant impact on empirical research.

## Implications for Empirical Research

Greater consideration of the socio-cultural context in which students are taught historical narrations is crucial for empirical research, both in terms of extending the concept of inclusion and for measuring actual student achievements in historical learning. Available narrations should not be understood solely as having a distortion effect on empirical research, but rather as a reflection of a student's membership in one or more narrative communities, which fundamentally influence their chances of participating in history lessons.

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38 Barricelli 2019, 27.

39 Bernhardt 2020, 43.

40 Engin 2019, 489–493.

Given this extended understanding of inclusion,<sup>41</sup> empirical research must determine the content that interventions should contain, as they are also part of intercultural competence.<sup>42</sup> When specialized declarative knowledge is examined, there is no empirical access to identity-forming, orientation-giving narrations.<sup>43</sup> These narrations often deviate from theoretical ideals, and instead exhibit novelistic or belletristic characteristics.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, when faced with the challenge of writing historical narrations, students may rely on other genre conventions and narrative styles they have learned.

For empirical research, an understanding of a student's knowledge as a bias effect in the exploration of linguistic competences is insufficient, as it fails to account for the influence of culture. What is needed is the investigation of knowledge in different narrative communities, as a separate subject of history education. A deeper understanding of existing historical narrations in the public sphere would be as exciting as it would be momentous for research, theory development and teaching practice.

Empirical classroom research should strive for maximum reliability, despite the limitations imposed by pragmatic research questions. When empirically studying student performance in history education, researchers must take greater account of the bias effects that exist outside the classroom. The availability of historical narrations in novels, films and digital games in German can distort the linguistic performance shown by different groups of students. As their content can only be fully understood with a certain proficiency in the German language, access to these media is correlated with specific socio-cultural backgrounds. When these historical narrations influence historical education discourses, they may create a distorted perception of the student's actual and potential performance.

Using world history as subject content for assessing students' language performance therefore seems reasonable, as declarative knowledge and familiar narratives would not distort performance. This approach would also allow for a clearer and unambiguous understanding of the tasks and material basis of historical learning. However, it is essential to consider not only the time factor when planning lessons, but also the significant cognitive load placed upon students involved in interventions. Requiring them to write historical narratives without their being able to draw on existing knowledge can be demanding and requires extensive preparation.

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41 Barsch 2023, 234.

42 Fischer 2011, 338.

43 Wacker 2022, 29.

44 Sieberkrob/Lücke 2017, 218.

## Application in Inclusive Learning Settings

This chapter has so far been rather theoretical and the practical relevance of a language-sensitive approach to history education needs elaboration. In average learning groups at comprehensive schools in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, there are officially no more than three students with special educational needs in a classroom. Learning disabilities are the most common disability, affecting 37.1% of the students, with 13.9% diagnosed with special needs in the area of language.<sup>45</sup> In addition to students with special needs, there are other students facing language-related challenges in the classroom. This includes students with a migration background but also those who do not officially have a migration background<sup>46</sup> and are considered native speakers despite not using the German language outside of school. The exact number of students who fall into these two – not identical – categories is difficult to determine, as it varies considerably depending on the region and type of school.<sup>47</sup> However, it is clear that teachers face language-related challenges in their history lessons in most classrooms.

Given the challenges of teaching students with diverse language backgrounds, one approach is to use the same material for all three groups, supplemented with linguistic and possibly methodological scaffolds. This could involve reworking existing textual material to use simplified language,<sup>48</sup> which adapts the aspects of a text that are characteristic of academic writing. Standard textbook materials often include instruments to support historical learning, such as word explanations, cross-references and a glossary, which appear to increase student engagement with the learning materials. However, it is important to note that findings about the success of the differentiation measures cannot always be directly inferred from observing student engagement with the learning materials. Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that the three groups need different materials that meet their respective needs.

For students with special educational needs, word explanations can be an insurmountable obstacle, while immigrant students absorb them as new vocabulary. Indeed, research suggests that learning in two languages may enhance vocabulary and proficiency in different discourses.<sup>49</sup> However, students who lack access to the narratives of the surrounding German-speaking community may understand the words but struggle to contextualize them, as they may miss underlying subtexts and metaphors.<sup>50</sup> Ultimately, socio-cultural background remains the decisive factor influencing academic success, particularly for these latter two groups, and this applies not only to the core subjects of German, Mathematics and English, but also to history lessons.

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45 Saalfrank/Zierer 2017, 107.

46 IT NRW 2022a.

47 IT NRW 2022b.

48 Barsch 2019, 80f.

49 Link 2023, 65.

50 Siefert 2020, 414.

In fact, teachers have to consider many different levels of differentiation when planning history lessons.<sup>51</sup> In a language-sensitive classroom, this requires them to concentrate on three main levels:

1. History lessons are inherently language-sensitive, focusing on the word, sentence and text levels with direct reference to historical narrations. Language teaching is an intrinsic part of the didactic approach to history teaching, as it concerns the production and reception of texts in the genres that are important for subject-specific learning. The perspective is reflected in the first step of the genre cycle.
2. History lessons employ an extended concept of inclusion that considers not only cultural aspects of historical learning but also the availability of narratives in the target language. Other narratives remain underrepresented in German school curricula.<sup>52</sup> The functioning of historical narrations is a direct object of historical learning, encompassing both reception and production. When planning lessons, it must be assumed that students lack prior declarative knowledge and are unfamiliar with the narratives of the German-language storytelling community. The genre cycle takes into account the intermediality and referentiality of texts, making these aspects transparent in the first and last step.
3. History lessons have moved beyond a solely subject-specific logic to incorporate historical-cultural narratives that are not organized chronologically. Developing an approach to historical-cultural narratives in history education is a challenging and controversial undertaking.

When narratives are the focus of a lesson, there is always a connection to the narrative paradigm of history teaching. However, a reference to task-oriented didactics is also possible, as learning tasks can be seen as parts of narratives. In fact, the answers to certain tasks can be understood as a genre. The genre cycle offers a suitable tool for both approaches, although subject-specific learning is not explicitly considered a prerequisite for the genre approach.

The genre cycle, as conceived in the SchriFT project, offers the possibility of designing appropriate scaffolds with adaptations to the respective target groups of language teaching. These adaptations would reflect the issues considered earlier. The genre cycle also has the advantage that it provides a basis for lesson planning when promoting writing. However, further research is needed to bridge the gap between the specialized didactics of history, German as a foreign language and special needs education. The consideration of language-sensitive genre didactics is particularly challenging for teaching students with limited language proficiency,<sup>53</sup> and simple solutions for their inclusion have not been very successful.<sup>54</sup>

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51 Kühberger/Schneider-Reisinger 2020, 27.

52 Siefert 2024, 241.

53 Sieberkrob 2022, 293.

54 Saalfrank/Zierer 2017, 138.

For the assessment of narrative proficiency in the text genre of historical narration, it has been conclusively shown that students cannot simply draw on already known narrations. Instead, they must demonstrate genre competence and narrative competence, both in completing tasks and in writing narratives.<sup>55</sup> In fact, as Sebastian Barsch has proposed, the limitations of the narrativity paradigm in history education need to be addressed.<sup>56</sup>

A reasonable doubt about the origin of specialized knowledge naturally remains, but the distortion effect is significantly reduced. Consider that students in 13th grade have already dealt with the French Revolution twice, which means they require less narrative competence to complete tasks on the Revolution as they can rely on already known speech acts. However, empirical research has yet to determine whether these students have genuinely learned to write a historical narration, demonstrating a level of cognitive academic language proficiency, or if they are just repeating narratives they are already familiar with.

To maintain data integrity, no scaffolds or differentiation measures are used as part of the intervention. Instead, in the best case scenario, the actual narrations and genre skills of the students are recorded. A study could be extended by using scaffolds to test the effectiveness of language support. These scaffolds could then be adapted to support specific target groups.

In order for students to write a historical narration independently and without prior knowledge of the historical event (which would entail a distortion effect) as part of an intervention study, the students first need prior knowledge. Learning materials are combined with operator-based tasks on descriptions and explanations in order to build up prior knowledge. This corresponds to stage three of the genre cycle.

## Conclusion

Inclusion efforts in the German school system focus on special education support concepts as well as considerations about cultural and narrative practice. In an extended concept of inclusion, it is essential to consider the learning needs of students who are also learning the language and, most importantly, cannot fall back on knowledge of historical narrations in the public sphere. These students require support in developing the narrative practice of specific genres. While this deficit primarily affects students with a migration background, other learners may also struggle with gaps in the narratives of the German-speaking community. However, their deficits in the target language may conceal this issue.

Concepts of language-sensitive history education and special education are undoubtedly crucial and can be a solution for certain groups of students. Students with learning difficulties or with insufficient reading and writing skills should benefit from the use of targeted scaffolds. However, students who cannot draw on well-known narrations due to a lack of knowledge tend to remain at a disadvantage. This highlights the necessity of teaching cultural

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<sup>55</sup> Hartung 2019, 73.

<sup>56</sup> Barsch 2019, 89.

literacy, which encompasses not only knowledge but also reading and writing proficiency to understand cultural narratives and metaphors.

Students with linguistic problems can benefit from language support scaffolds. However, those with a migration background will continue to face challenges, as they lack access to the narrations that are passed down in the German-language storytelling community as part of socialization.<sup>57</sup> The genre cycle may be a suitable instrument to structure support for these students in inclusive learning settings.

As part of school learning, these students need access to the very historical narratives that are often taken for granted within the classroom, as they are essential for student participation in the lessons. This highlights the need for a greater conceptual sharpening of historical-cultural education, which should prioritize making these narratives accessible to all students.

These challenges for students may intersect,<sup>58</sup> which makes it difficult to find the right instrument for support. Students can be simultaneously affected by the ›speechlessness‹ resulting from their socio-cultural context, the learning hurdles in acquiring a foreign or a specialized language, or a lack of prior knowledge in history content and subject-specific text genres. A careful diagnosis is therefore necessary in order to support learning processes in historical thinking.

Given the limited resources in the school system and a lack of canonical narrations, teachers may seek to provide this historical content to students. However, this content is not readily available as conventional learning materials. Instead, historical films and novels, comics and manga as well as digital games convey historical narrations that can be beneficial in the classroom. Moreover, it is a quite complex matter how students learn historical contents in another language.<sup>59</sup> Extracurricular cooperation partners, such as libraries, can be valuable contacts for accessing materials and resources.

This tension between different aspects of historical learning can be addressed directly in class by using teaching concepts such as the genre cycle, in which language and content learning are combined and used productively in language-sensitive history teaching. The genre cycle makes it possible to organize content and language learning in such a targeted way that all groups of students can be supported. However, the genre cycle as a concept for planning a complete series of lessons breaks with the discipline-exclusive logic of historical learning. Research into developing the concept and implementing it would benefit greatly from classroom studies. The didactic perspectives of disciplines like German literature and language studies could also prove beneficial in developing differentiated tools for historical learning.<sup>60</sup>

The lack of consideration for the linguistic and (sub)cultural conditions<sup>61</sup> of historical learning is surprising given that the discourse on intercultural competence has a wide reach

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57 Oleschko 2019, 96.

58 Oleschko 2019, 95.

59 Link 2023, 265.

60 Bernhardt 2020, 30.

61 Baker 2022, 18.

and permeates a range of disciplines.<sup>62</sup> Originally developed in the context of international workplace settings, intercultural competence can be applied to schools if they are viewed as organizations.

This chapter has introduced a new perspective for historical learning and contextualized it with the genre cycle from the SchriFT project, providing a practical framework for implementation in differentiated learning settings. The genre cycle offers a number of perspectives for language teaching, including the empirical recording of narrative and genre skills as well as internal differentiation for teaching based on an extended concept of inclusion. Although the empirical results of the SchriFT project suggest some positive effects, this methodological approach to promoting historical learning among learners with different needs nevertheless offers opportunities for further empirical research, particularly into concepts for internal school support. Case studies of the implementation of the genre cycle as a language-teaching component of historical learning in school history lessons could provide valuable insights into its effectiveness.

## Outlook and Open Questions

History education must develop tools that provide targeted and precise support for all students. This applies to students with special educational needs and to those learning German as a foreign or a second language as well as students with problems using German as an academic language. Given the wide variety of reasons for language learning, the support tools such as scaffolds must be as precise as possible to cater to the needs of individual students.

In the context of the SchriFT project, limited research has been conducted into the genre cycle instrument, indicating a need for further empirical studies on individual support instruments are needed. The effectiveness of the genre cycle must be demonstrated by empirical research, showing that its steps actually improve specialized language skills, including the use of scaffolds.

Short-term interventions will not be sufficient, as language learning is a time-consuming process, particularly for writing skills in subject-specific text genres. Furthermore, the linguistic specifics of those genre that are exclusive to history<sup>63</sup> must be taken into consideration.

A longitudinal empirical study of language skills in text genres relevant to history education would be beneficial to assessing the effectiveness of scaffolds and the genre cycle. There is still a need for research into the empirical foundation of history teaching, particularly language-sensitive history teaching. The results could serve to professionalize the training of history teachers during their studies.<sup>64</sup> Ultimately, it remains a challenge to make lessons

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<sup>62</sup> Schröder 2011, 310.

<sup>63</sup> Siegmund 2019, 58.

<sup>64</sup> Lochon-Wagner 2019, 17; Schlutow 2020, 52.

comprehensible for all students and still promote specialized language proficiency<sup>65</sup> and the ability to switch between codes in German as the target language.<sup>66</sup> The SchriFT project proposes the genre cycle as a concept that supports each individual student in writing historical narrations in the appropriate genre and in an adequate academic register.

Further discussion is needed on how schools can respond to criticism that German curricula remain quite Eurocentric, including the content taught in history education.<sup>67</sup> Specifically, German history education has yet to consider whether and how the curriculum might be adapted to support a more diverse student body.

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