

Affordances of the English Language Subject in Systematizing Cross-Curricular Teaching Practices

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Abstract

For most students in Europe, English is the first formally learned foreign language, allowing them to draw on their existing English knowledge when learning additional languages. Simultaneously, English can exert a dominant influence that overshadows other languages. Cross-curricular teaching practices may offer relief to this tension between English as a facilitative resource and a potentially inhibiting force in language learning: when teachers draw on knowledge about language or teaching content students acquired in other language subjects, they foster the learning of the target language by leveraging students' prior knowledge and not prioritizing one language over another. In this nexus analysis, I analyse ethnographic observations of teaching practices through a thematic analysis. More specifically, I analyse three cross-curricular actions (unique acts in a specific point in time and place) that teachers of different languages took to teach writing in their language classrooms. Understanding how those cross-curricular actions emerged may shed light on how to systematise them, i.e., turn them into social practices (a recognisable way of acting in society). Each action represents a different affordance of the English subject in systematising cross-curricular teaching practices: a German and English teacher showed how the teaching content of the English subject can be coordinated with a German class, a French teacher showed how a lack of cross-curricular coordination may lead to confusion among students, and a German teacher showed how to build on the English subject in a German class by using multilingual teaching materials even if she as the teacher lacks proficiency in other languages, including English. This paper proposes cross-curricular teaching practices as an alternative to multilingual teaching practices.

Keywords: language teacher collaboration; nexus analysis; cross-curricular teaching; multilingual teaching

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1. Introduction

English holds major global importance (Hult 2017) and is therefore a popular school subject: in 2022, 83.9% of primary pupils, over 98% of lower and 87% of upper secondary pupils in the EU studied English (Eurostat 2024). As the first foreign language for most European students, English often supports learning additional languages (Bardel and Falk 2012; Bardel and Sánchez 2017). Yet English can also act as a ‘killer language’, reducing motivation to study other modern languages (Quetz 2010; Granfeldt 2021; Grein et al. 2021). This dual role may place English in a fruitful position to foster multilingual, cross-curricular teaching when used strategically.

This paper engages more deeply with the affordances of the English subject in systematizing cross-curricular teaching practices. Affordances are understood as ‘context-sensitive opportunities for action’ (Nguyen 2025); in other words, this paper aims to explore the ways in which English as a school subject can offer context-sensitive opportunities to promote cross-curricular teaching practices. Those practices are actions in which teachers refer to knowledge about language or teaching content that students acquired in other language subjects, e.g., drawing on knowledge about writing from other language classrooms. Cross-curricular teaching would be in line with previous research that promoted strategy-based, cross-curricular approach to writing pedagogy (Forbes 2020) or metacognitive approaches to language learning and teaching (Haukås et al. 2018). I propose to clearly distinguish cross-curricular practices from multilingual ones. Multilingual teaching practices are actions teachers take in their classrooms that draw on linguistic knowledge from other languages: comparisons of vocabulary between languages or of different languages’ grammar would be considered multilingual teaching practices. They can take place within one language subject.

Consequently, it becomes important to distinguish between the English *language* and the English *subject*. For the purposes of this paper, I am interested in the affordances of the English *subject* and the cross-curricular actions that it affords, rather than any multilingual actions that might involve comparisons of English to other target languages. In other words, this paper explores affordances of the English subject in systematizing cross-curricular (not multilingual) teaching practices.

1.1 The need for cross-curricular teaching practices

Cross-curricular teaching practices in language education are grounded in cognitive, sociocultural, and pragmatic considerations. From a cognitive standpoint, treating each language as a separate school subject may contradict contemporary multilingual theories of mind (Cook 2020; Cummins 2021; Haukås et al. 2018), which show that the languages within an individual's repertoire interact dynamically. Learners activate their languages depending on context (Dewaele 2001; Grosjean 2007, 2008), meaning that non-target languages inevitably influence learning the target language. A key illustration of this influence is the 'L2 status factor' (Bardel and Falk 2012; Bardel and Sánchez 2017). In the European context, the 'L2' in 'L2 status factor' usually refers to English; a country's majority language can be conceptualized as the L1 while French or Spanish often become the L3. Research shows that learners often rely more on their L2 than their L1 when processing or producing an L3. Explanations include cognitive factors such as later age of onset for L2 and L3 (Falk and Bardel 2010, 2011) or perceived typological similarities between these languages (Cenoz 2001; Lindqvist 2015).

Sociocultural perspectives further support cross-curricular approaches. The L2 status factor also arises because the conditions under which students learn an L2 and L3—formal education, learning strategies, classroom expectations—resemble each other more closely than those of L1 acquisition (Falk and Bardel 2010, 2011). Consequently, English serves as learners' first experience with formal foreign-language learning, shaping how they approach additional languages. Moreover, English learning in Europe takes place within a multilingual ecology, described as 'multilingualism with English' (Jenkins 2017; Jessner 2006). In line with the emergence of the theoretical concept of translanguaging, language thus can be theorised in a way that goes beyond static views of language as separate entities, emphasizing instead the sociocultural nature of the individual's entire linguistic repertoire as an integrated and dynamic system that continually expands through new linguistic experiences (Günther-van der Meij and Duarte 2020; Makalela 2019).

Finally, there are pragmatic reasons to adopt cross-curricular teaching practices. Language curricula encourage multilingualism, often in the form of language comparisons (Daryai-Hansen et al. 2015; Drachmann et al. 2023; Jäkel et al. 2024). Such multilingual practices could be extended into cross-curricular practices because there is overlap in the curricular

content of different language syllabi (Legutko 2025). Teachers of different subjects could collaborate with each other in order to make use of such overlap in their teaching. Previous studies on collaborations between secondary school language teachers addressed topics like writing strategies (Forbes 2020), the development of academic literacy (Hauptman et al. 2008), language learning strategies (Burley and Pomphrey 2003; Harris 2008; Pomphrey and Moger 1999), or language awareness (Krogager Andersen 2020; Haukås 2025). A pragmatic reason to adopt cross-curricular teaching practices can thus be curricular overlap between different language syllabi; however, if teachers are unaware of such overlap (Haukås 2016), they may not use it in their language lessons.

Overall, cross-curricular language teaching is supported because learners draw on prior linguistic knowledge, learn languages within multilingual contexts, and benefit from curricular synergies across language subjects.

1.2 Research gap and question

Given these cognitive, sociocultural and pragmatic reasons for promoting cross-curricular teaching practices, it is worth pointing out that these practices might occur occasionally in language classrooms but are not necessarily a systematic and planned practice (Legutko 2025). The scarcity of cross-curricular practices may be related to teachers' reservations about their feasibility. Most previous research focusses on the feasibility of *multilingual* teaching, however many of the same concerns may apply to cross-curricular practices: some teachers regard the learning processes of different languages as separate (Haukås 2016) or as a source of potential errors (Bredthauer and Engfer 2016; Haukås 2016); some have reservations because they feel they would need to speak all the students' languages (Heyder and Schädlich 2014; Vikøy and Haukås 2023); others note time concerns (Bredthauer and Engfer 2016; Haukås and Drange 2024; Haukås 2016), a lack of explicit training in multilingualism (Bredthauer and Engfer 2016; Dahl and Krulatz 2016) and lack of appropriate teaching materials (Dahl and Krulatz 2016; Haukås and Drange 2024; Vikøy and Haukås 2023).

In light of these concerns, this paper explores in more detail the conditions in which spontaneous cross-curricular teaching actions emerge. These actions can give insights into the factors that made them possible and what would be needed to systematize them, i.e., turn them into

practices. In all, the research question addressed in this paper is: How does the English language subject afford the systematization of cross-curricular teaching practices in language classrooms?

2. *Theoretical grounding*

Nexus analysis (NA) (Scollon and Scollon 2004) is the theoretical grounding of this paper's exploration of affordances of the English subject in systematizing cross-curricular teaching practices. NA as an ethnographic discourse analysis allows for an in-depth study of social actions through discourse. Here, discourse is understood in line with Gee's Discourse with a capital 'D' definition:

different ways in which we humans integrate language with non-language 'stuff', such as different ways of thinking, acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, believing, and using symbols, tools, and objects in the right places and at the right time (Gee 1999: 13).

As such, the purpose of NA is to identify how 'non-language stuff' like ways of thinking or objects interact with language in social actions and to analyse how language and 'non-language stuff' shape social actions. In this study, those actions are cross-curricular teaching practices with regard to writing in language classrooms.

NA distinguishes between social actions and social practices. Social actions occur in a specific moment and place and are never repeatable because each action results from interactions among three discourse aggregates: the historical body, the interaction order, and the sociocultural space¹. I define the three aggregates of discourse below. When particular actions recur across different contexts and become recognized as typical, they are recognized as practices. For example, a teacher giving a student a handout about how to write a summary in English would be a social action, whereas the common act of teachers distributing handouts to students would be a social practice.

¹ Sociocultural space refers to the original nexus analytical notion of *discourses in place*. I chose to replace it with *sociocultural space* to create three aggregates of discourse on equal footing: Instead of getting caught up in a circular definition of discourses in place as an aggregate of discourses, I am now able to talk about the influence of discourses in the historical body, in the interaction order and in the sociocultural space on social actions. See Legutko (2025) for a more elaborate rationale for the terminology.

In NA, every social action emerges at the intersection of three discourse aggregates (Hult 2015; Scollon and Scollon 2004). The historical body refers to individuals' lived experiences and habits; in this study, these concern teachers' beliefs about language and writing or their own learning and training. The interaction order encompasses the situated norms that shape relationships during an action. For cross-curricular work, it includes norms about how language teachers relate to one another and how aware they are of each other's teaching content, as well as classroom relations between teachers and students. Finally, the sociocultural space involves broader circulating discourses—ideas, values, and expectations—materialised in curricula, syllabi, and teaching materials. In this study, those discourses refer to the teaching of writing (Ivanič 2004, 2017).

In sum, the purpose of NA is to analyse social actions through discourse. Three aggregates of discourse that shape social actions are proposed:

- the historical body, discourses in the form of beliefs and experiences of teachers,
- the interaction order, discourses in the form of norms of interacting with other language teachers and with students,
- the sociocultural space, discourses in the form of wider circulating ideas about teaching and writing.

In this nexus analysis, I analyse three specific cross-curricular actions (unique acts in a specific point in time and place) that teachers took to teach writing in their language classrooms. Understanding how those cross-curricular actions emerged may shed light on how to systematise such actions, i.e., turn them into social practices (a recognisable way of acting in society).

3. Research context

Before presenting the nexus analysis of three cross-curricular actions, I provide a background on language education at secondary school level in Berlin, Germany, and present three participating teachers: Wendy, Amy and Hanna.

3.1 *Berlin schools*

Language education in the educational system in Berlin typically involves three languages: German as the language of schooling, usually English or French as the first foreign language, and a second foreign language, usually French, Spanish, Latin or Greek. German is a compulsory subject throughout the ten years of compulsory schooling. The first foreign language (FL) is also a compulsory subject whose lessons typically start in Year 3 (age 8). When students switch from primary to lower secondary education in Year 7 (age 12), they usually need to decide which second FL to learn. German, the first FL and the second FL are obligatory subjects until the end of Year 10 (age 16). This paper focusses on German, English as the first FL classes and French as the second FL classes only.

Schools follow the *Rahmenlehrpläne* (federal syllabi) published by the *Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Familie* (Senate Department for Education, Youth and Family). There is a syllabus for the subject of German and one for Modern Foreign Languages which includes English and French. Given this study's focus on writing and cross-curricularity, it is worth pointing out cross-curricular overlap between the content of the two syllabi. Both syllabi, using various formulations, stress that students need to learn to control their writing process, structure their texts as well as adapt it and the language to the situation, addressee and text type (see content analysis of syllabi in Legutko 2025). Based on this syllabus, teachers know which text types they have to cover in particular school years.

3.2 *Participants*

The participants presented in this paper were part of a larger research study exploring the nexus of practice of 'teaching to write in a language classroom in secondary schools'. The larger study consisted of ethnographic observations of different language classes as well as a close teacher–researcher collaboration that initiated a cross-curricular teaching approach to writing in select language classes. For the purposes of this paper, I focus on three cross-curricular actions, two of which I observed during my ethnographic observations and one of which I observed during the collaboration.

The three cross-curricular actions were taken by three teachers. Wendy was a German and English teacher with over 20 years of teaching experience; at the time of data collection, she was teaching the same Year

10 cohort of 26 students in both language subjects. Amy was a French and political science teacher with three years of teaching experience; at the time of data collection, she was teaching French to the same group of students as Wendy. Hanna was a German and history teacher with over 10 years of teaching experience; at the time of data collection, she was teaching a Year 11 cohort in German. Whereas I observed Wendy's and Amy's naturally occurring language lessons, I was more actively involved in Hanna's lesson planning because she was part of a closer teacher–researcher collaboration on fostering cross-curricular teaching approaches. The following section provides more detail about the data collected on the three participating teachers.

4. Methods

In order to explore the affordances of the English language subject in systematizing cross-curricular teaching practices, I performed ethnographic observations of 25 lessons with Wendy, 16 lessons with Amy, and 27 lessons with Hanna and conducted one semi-structured interview with each teacher. The data was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2022).

4.1 Data collection methods

Observations formed the starting point of my inquiry (Rose et al. 2020: 94), allowing me to understand teaching practices as they unfolded naturally in the classroom. I recorded each lesson in fieldnotes, including photographs of boardwork, teaching materials, and selected student texts. As a 'partially participating observer' (Bryman 2016: 435), I was regularly present but not fully involved in classroom activities: I supported students during individual or group work but did not influence teachers' decisions. To complement these observations, I held formal interviews with each teacher (O'Reilly 2012). Semi-structured audio-recorded formal interviews explored their teaching experiences, beliefs about writing, pedagogical rationales, and any cross-teacher collaborations.

The project received ethics clearance from the ethics review authority in Sweden, Etikprövningsmyndigheten (as the author's affiliation is with a Swedish university), and the Senate Department for Education, Youth and Family in Berlin, Germany (where the data collection took place). Both applications covered ethical considerations in ethnographic work pertaining to issues of confidentiality, disclosure and consent when

collecting, storing and analysing data (see detailed account in Legutko 2025).

4.2 Data analysis methods

My nexus analysis consisted of a thematic analysis of fieldnotes and interviews. To conduct the thematic analysis, I followed the six steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022), visualized in Figure 1. The thematic analysis started with a data familiarization phase (step 1) in which I reread the fieldnotes and relistened to the interviews. I identified social actions that teachers engaged in to teach writing. This process led to the first codes (step 2) that highlighted factors influencing the teachers' teaching approaches to writing, e.g., beliefs about language, curricular requirements, assessment standards, assumptions about didactics, or previous teaching experiences. Those codes were systematically grouped into categories and themes (steps 3–5) to summarise the above-mentioned factors. An example of a theme is a teachers' belief that drawing on students' prior knowledge is beneficial to their learning. When writing up the analysis (step 6), I started to call those themes *discourses*, given that nexus analysis aims to explain social actions through discourses that motivate them; as such, the aforementioned belief became a discourse that circulates teachers' actions in their classrooms.

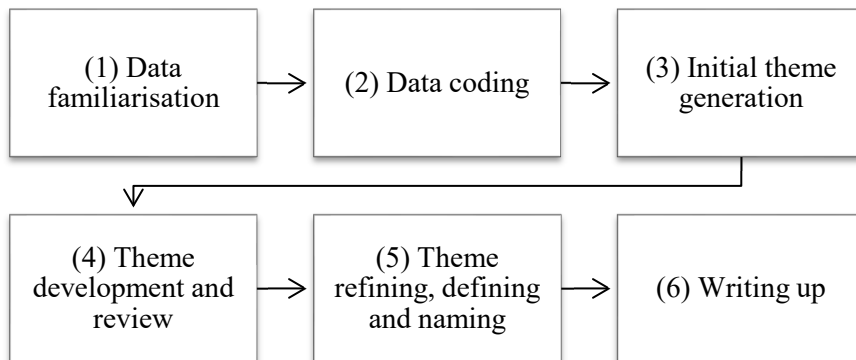


Figure 1. Six steps to conduct a thematic analysis, as proposed by Braun and Clark (2022: 6)

In sum, the coding process resulted in a list of social actions and of discourses influencing those actions. For the purposes of this paper, I

selected three social actions, and I will present their nexus analysis by grouping the discourses motivating those actions according to the three nexus analytical concepts: historical body, interaction order and sociocultural space.

5. Results

In order to examine how the English subject affords a systematization of cross-curricular teaching practices in language classrooms, I analyse the following three actions:

1. Wendy (German and English teacher) giving students exercises about terminology to conduct a film scene analysis in German class first and in English class second (fieldnotes from 11 January 2022),
2. Amy (French and political science teacher) disagreeing with a student about a text type characteristic of *résumés* (summaries) that the student had remembered from Wendy's English class (fieldnotes from 24 February 2022),
3. Hanna (German and history teacher) initiating a whole class discussion about whether or not and how students can use multilingual materials in their other language subjects (fieldnotes from 13 February 2023).

I selected these three actions for analysis because each illustrates a distinct affordance of the English language subject. Wendy's action demonstrates how teaching content can be coordinated between English and German classes; Amy's action illustrates that coordination between French and English classes can help prevent learner confusion; and Hanna's action shows that drawing on the English subject—as opposed to the English language itself—can enable teachers to engage in cross-curricular actions even in the absence of high English proficiency.

5.1 Coordinating teaching content

Wendy, a German and English teacher, engaged in a cross-curricular action when she gave students exercises about terminology that they will need to conduct a film scene analysis and saying: 'We did all of this in German, so I guess you can deal with this exercise quickly. We have to be able to name all the terms in English as well' (fieldnotes from 11 January 2022). This action was facilitated by a shared interaction order between

Wendy and her students in both German and English class. The fact that she taught the same Year 10 cohort of 26 students in both subjects made this cross-curricular action possible. Wendy had deliberately dealt with the topic in German class first, so that students did not need to learn the meaning of disciplinary vocabulary but just needed to learn the corresponding English translation. She confirmed during the interview:

Das war total absichtlich. Also [Filmszeneanalyse] steht in beiden Fächern an, es muss eben unterrichtet werden. Und dann wollte ich das ganz bewusst in der Reihenfolge auch haben. Und habe es dann in Englisch gemacht als es noch frisch war sozusagen.

That was totally intentional. So [film scene analysis] has to be taught in both subjects. And then I deliberately wanted to teach it in that order. I taught it in English when it was still fresh in their minds [from German class].

(interview excerpt)

The shared interaction order alone did not guarantee the emergence of such a cross-curricular coordination of teaching content. A discourse on the benefits of drawing on prior knowledge circulated this action and its interaction order. Had Wendy not believed that students may benefit from familiarizing themselves with the teaching content in their stronger language first, she might not have coordinated the teaching content the way she did. The interaction order overlapped with beliefs internalised in her historical body here.

As such, Wendy's historical body was crucial in the emergence of this cross-curricular action. Besides the multilingual belief that drawing on prior knowledge is beneficial, it was also relevant that Wendy could only coordinate teaching between the two subjects because she held the experience of teaching both in her historical body. As a dual language teacher, she could draw on students' prior knowledge when she had the opportunity.

Next to the interaction order and historical bodies, the sociocultural space also contributed to the emergence of this cross-curricular action. The syllabus for German as well as Modern Foreign Languages prescribed that students write a film scene analysis. In other words, the Genre Discourse of Writing (Ivanič 2004), a discourse that writing is about learning text types, circulated both language syllabi (Legutko 2025) and facilitated the

cross-curricular coordination of content when there was overlap. Wendy admitted that such a coordination was not always possible because different text types were required in different years of schooling.

In sum, cross-curricular actions emerged through the interaction of Wendy's historical body, the interaction order, and the sociocultural space. Because Wendy taught the same students in German and English, the shared interaction order enabled her to align content across subjects. Her historical body—shaped by experience as a dual language teacher and by beliefs about leveraging students' prior knowledge—supported such coordination. Familiarity with both syllabi further helped her identify overlapping content, such as genre-based writing. This overlap created opportunities for integration that would have been unlikely had another teacher been involved. Coordinating lessons with another teacher was not a practice that the participating teachers engaged in. Potential consequences of this lack are explored in the following example from Amy's French class.

5.2 Preventing confusion among learners

The cross-curricular action under analysis here is Amy disagreeing with a student about a text type characteristic of *résumés* that the student had remembered from Wendy's English class. During a whole class discussion, Amy asked her students to brainstorm characteristics of *résumés*:

*Was sind die wichtigsten Regeln, wenn man ein résumé schreibt?
Das kennt ihr schon vom Englischen und Deutschen.*

What are the most important rules when writing a summary? You already know this from English and German class.

(fieldnotes from 24 February 2022)

A student proposed that a *résumé* should summarise events in the original text in chronological order. Amy disagreed and said that *résumés* should summarise the main ideas in any logical order, not necessarily chronologically. The students looked confused because they had remembered the opposite from English class, a fact that Amy did not know about.

Like Wendy, Amy also held a belief in drawing on students' prior knowledge in her historical body. By drawing on prior content knowledge

from German and English class, she wanted to facilitate the writing of a *résumé* in French. She used the shared knowledge of German and English in this interaction. This action was also in line with the discourse in her historical body that wanted to help students as much as possible. Often, Amy asked me about advice on teaching, e.g., whether to engage in language comparisons, recommend watching with or without French subtitles or whether to let students pre-write texts in German and then translate them into French. Her reason for asking was to be able to help students to the best of her abilities; the word ‘help’ is recurring in my fieldnotes about Amy and in her interviews.

Equally, there was overlap between the sociocultural space of Amy’s French class and German or English class. Amy knew that summaries were texts that students needed to write in German and English. Therefore, she was able to draw on her students’ prior knowledge about that text type in French class. In other words, the Genre Discourse of Writing (Ivanič 2004) allowed for this action to emerge because it is a discourse prescribed in both language syllabi: the one for German and the one for Modern Foreign Languages. A common sociocultural space creates opportunities for cross-curricular actions.

However, the interaction order between Amy as a French teacher and Wendy, the German and English teacher of the same students, turned out to be a hindering factor in drawing the full benefits from a cross-curricular comparison of text types. The interaction order between these two teachers did not involve any collaboration and they did not know what teaching content is covered in the other language class. In other words, neither Wendy nor Amy knew that they were teaching how to write summaries at the same time. Given that Wendy taught her students about slightly different characteristics of summaries in English class, the same students in French class were surprised that French *résumés* had different characteristics according to Amy. Moreover, it was a coincidence that Wendy and Amy taught about summary writing at the same time in their respective language classrooms. Had the norms of the interaction order between teachers of different languages included cross-curricular coordination, Wendy and Amy potentially could have agreed upon the characteristics of summaries and teach summary writing in a unified way.

In sum, Amys’ cross-curricular action underlines the importance of a shared interaction order between teachers of different languages. While common discourses in the sociocultural space made this action possible,

the lack of a shared interaction order sent mixed messages about summary writing to students. Overlap in the sociocultural space opens up space for creating a common interaction order between teachers. The participating teachers need to hold beliefs in their historical bodies that can facilitate the creation of those interaction orders that, in turn, may contribute to the emergence of cross-curricular actions. The importance of the historical body is exemplified by Hanna's cross-curricular action in her German class.

5.3 Drawing on subject content rather than language

Finally, Hanna also engaged in a cross-curricular action: she initiated a whole class discussion with her students about whether or not and how they can use multilingual materials in their other language subjects. The material displayed lists of conjunctions, speech act verbs and formulaic phrases for argumentative texts in the four languages students learn at school (German, English, French, and Spanish) and provided a column for any other languages that students might know. An example of the multilingual list of conjunctions can be found in Figure 2.

KONJUNKTIONEN											
STRUKTUR	Weitere Sprache(n)	Deutsch	Englisch	Spanisch	Französisch	Weitere Sprache(n)	Deutsch	Englisch	Spanisch	Französisch	GRUND
		Zuerst					...weil ...	...because...	...porque...	parce que	
		Zunächst					Da...	As	Ya que...	Vu que	
		Bevor	To start with...	Para empezar,	D'abord		Denn...	Since	Ya que...	Puisque	
		Anfangs		Al principio			...wegen...	because of	a causa de	A cause de	
		Vorerst					Deswegen...	That is why...		A cause de ce...	
			First of all	En primer lugar...	Premièrement		Aus dem Grund...	Therefore...	Por eso...	Pour cette raison...	
		Erstens	Firstly	En primer lugar...	Deuxièmement						
		Zweitens	Secondly	En segundo lugar...							
		Abschließend									
KONSEQUENZ		Letztendlich									KONTRAST
		Schließlich	Finally	Por ultimo, Al final...	Enfin		nichtsdesto-trotz	nonetheless	sin embargo	néanmoins	
		Einerseits... andererseits	On the one hand... on the other hand	Por una parte... Por otra parte	D'une part... d'autre part		trotzdem	nevertheless		pourtant	
		Also	Then	Entonces	Donc		dennoch, jedoch	however	en cambio	cependant	
		Anschließend	Subsequently				obwohl	Even though	aunque...	alors que	
		Außerdem					aber	Although		mais	
		Zusätzlich	Furthermore	Además	Alors		allerdings	but	pero	toutefois	
		Hinzu kommt	Moreover				im Gegensatz dazu	though	no obstante		
		Darüber hinaus	In addition					in contrast...	por lo contrario...	au contraire de	
		Folglich	Therefore	Por lo tanto	Par conséquent						
			Consequently								

Figure 2. Multilingual list of conjunctions

Hanna encouraged students to think about the subject of English and asked them if they would be able to use conjunctions, speech act verbs and formulaic phrases for argumentative texts when writing in English.

Dann Tipps zur Sprache. Auch wieder ganz wichtig. (...) Gut, man kann sie immer wieder in Texten verwenden. Sind euch diese Redewendungen auch im Englischen begegnet? Erörtern macht ihr vielleicht auch da, das könnt ihr gerne verwenden.

Then tips on language. Again, very important. Good, you can always use them again in texts. (...) Have you come across these phrases in English? Perhaps you also use them there, you are welcome to use them.

(fieldnotes from 13 February 2023)

A discussion of the potential use of those materials ensued and students agreed that they could use those materials in English class. They reflected that they are unlikely to use them in French or Spanish as they lack proficiency in those languages to produce texts with conjunctions.

A crucial force in the emergence of Hanna's cross-curricular action was her own historical body. In contrast to Wendy's and Amy's social actions, Hanna's cross-curricular action emerged during a teacher–researcher collaboration on teaching approaches to writing. She volunteered to be part of this teacher–researcher collaboration on cross-curricular teaching approaches because she held a belief in the benefits of drawing on knowledge from other classrooms in her own language class. Even though she was not a proficient user of either English, French or Spanish, she encouraged the students to think of other language subjects in her German classroom. In other words, instead of engaging in multilingual actions, she engaged in a cross-curricular action.

Importantly, Hanna had the appropriate teaching materials that made this cross-curricular action possible. The multilingual teaching materials were co-developed by Hanna and me as part of our teacher–researcher collaboration. They became part of the sociocultural space of Hanna's German class. A multilingual discourse thus began circulating that sociocultural space even though Hanna did not consider herself to be *multilingual*. Given her historical body, she drew on a *cross-curricular* discourse instead.

The sociocultural space that foregrounded a discourse on cross-curricularity was possible through the interaction order of the teacher–researcher collaboration. Hanna’s teaching that I observed prior to the collaboration did not involve cross-curricular actions in which she drew on knowledge from other language subjects. The teacher–researcher collaboration and the cross-curricular discourse introduced as part of the collaboration encouraged such actions. A new participant in the interaction order thus changed the sociocultural space of Hanna’s language class, along with discourses in her historical body.

In sum, Hanna’s cross-curricular action stemmed from her historical body and her belief in drawing on knowledge from other classrooms. This belief enabled her to enter a new interaction order with the researcher. Through this collaboration, her German class’s sociocultural space expanded with multilingual materials, which she used to prompt reflection beyond German.

5.4 Summary

The three cross-curricular actions illustrate distinct affordances of the English subject in enabling cross-curricular teaching. Wendy demonstrated coordination of English and German content, Amy highlighted how a lack of coordination can confuse students, and Hanna showed how multilingual materials can inspire discussions about English learning in German class, even without the teacher being proficient in other languages. Figure 3 summarises the motivating discourses and experiences using nexus analytical concepts. Cross-curricular actions are facilitated by a shared interaction order, discourses on teacher collaboration, overlap in content or teaching materials (e.g., the Genre Discourse of Writing), and teachers’ beliefs in leveraging students’ prior knowledge. Experience teaching multiple languages further supports such actions.

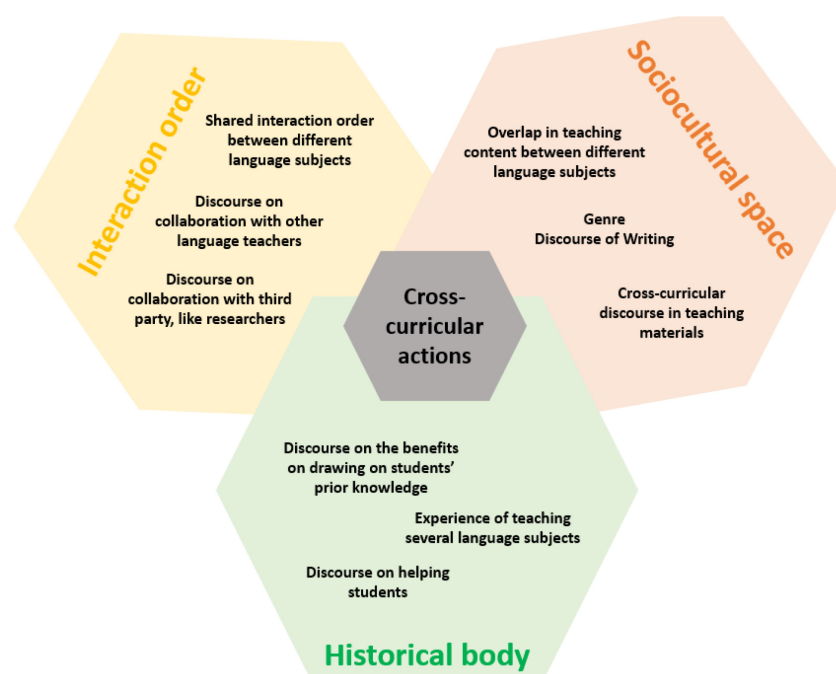


Figure 3. Nexus analysis of cross-curricular actions

6. Discussion

In this nexus analysis, I have presented three cross-curricular actions that three different language teachers engaged in. Each of them illustrates a different affordance of the English subject in systematizing cross-curricular teaching actions, i.e., turning them into teaching *practices*. Keeping the goal of systematizing cross-curricular teaching practices in mind, the results underline the importance of a shared interaction order between teachers of different languages as well as of shared discourses in the sociocultural spaces of their language classrooms and in their historical bodies. In this section, I discuss what factors are needed to systematize cross-curricular teaching practices in light of these three nexus analytical concepts.

6.1 Shared interaction order

A shared interaction order between teachers and students across language classes supports systematising cross-curricular teaching practices. Wendy

exemplified this interaction order by giving exercises on terminology first in German and then in English, coordinating content in students' best interest. Research shows that consistent teaching approaches across language classrooms benefit students (Forbes 2020). However, students rarely have the same teacher in multiple languages, making cross-curricular collaboration between different teachers necessary to coordinate content.

Cross-curricular collaboration means that a shared interaction order between language teachers would need to be created. The drawbacks of a lack of such a coordination are exemplified with Amy's cross-curricular action of disagreeing with a student about a text type characteristic of *résumés* (summaries) that the student had remembered from Wendy's English class. Students were confused about the characteristics of *résumés* because they received contradictory messages from their two language teachers. Cross-curricular collaboration could eliminate such confusion.

Previous research identified challenges to such cross-curricular collaboration, time concerns being the most recurring issue for teachers (Bredthauer and Engfer 2016; Harris 2016; Haukås and Drange 2024; Haukås 2016). Coupled with a lack of appropriate multilingual teaching materials (Dahl and Krulatz 2016; Vikøy and Haukås 2023), the importance of a new interaction order between teachers and a third party, such as researchers, becomes clear. The affordances of such a new interaction order were exemplified with Hanna's cross-curricular action of encouraging students to think about the use of multilingual teaching materials beyond her German class. This action was possible because the researcher had the 'time and skills' (Scollon and Scollon 2004: 178) to develop teaching materials that the teacher could then use in their classrooms. This example underscores how collaboration between teachers and researchers as a new interaction order at school can help overcome time constraints and resource gaps, enabling cross-curricular teaching practices.

6.2 Shared discourses in sociocultural space

In order to systematize cross-curricular teaching practices, shared discourses are needed in the sociocultural space of different language classrooms. In the cases of Wendy and Amy, overlap in the teaching content of the syllabi allowed for cross-curricular actions to occur: Wendy coordinated how to teach film scene analysis between her German and

English classes, and Amy asked students in her French class about their prior knowledge about summary writing from German and English class. The Genre Discourse of Writing (Ivanič 2004) made these actions possible as it circulated through the syllabi for all language subjects.

Besides overlap in the syllabi, appropriate teaching materials are also necessary to systematise cross-curricular teaching practices. Hanna's cross-curricular action was inspired by multilingual teaching materials available to her; they are crucial mediators of such actions (Forbes 2020; Hauptman et al. 2008; Källkvist et al. 2022; Leonet and Saragueta 2024). A multilingual discourse should materialize in teaching materials that aim at facilitating cross-curricular teaching practices.

The English subject can be pivotal in systematising cross-curricular teaching because it often serves as a shared language between teachers and students (Beiler and Dewilde 2020; Källkvist et al. 2022; Schissel et al. 2018; Todeva and Cenoz 2009). The fact that English is a shared language facilitates collaboration with German teachers and supports majoritised translanguaging (Beiler 2021). Even when teachers do not share English proficiency with students, a discourse on English can promote cross-curricular actions, as in Hanna's German class, where multilingual materials connected learning across German and English, leveraging students' stronger English proficiency.

Finally, collaboration between teachers of English and teachers of other (foreign) languages can offer relief to the tension that the status of English introduces: as the most taught foreign language in Europe (Eurostat 2024; Quetz 2010), English can act both as a springboard for and a barrier to learning other languages (Bardel and Falk 2012; Bardel and Sánchez 2017; Granfeldt 2021; Grein et al. 2021; Jakisch 2014; Quetz 2010). It could be helpful to promote a discourse on the benefits of drawing on students' prior language knowledge, without necessarily prioritising English but not hiding its benefits either. By promoting such a discourse in the sociocultural space of language classrooms, teachers might internalise it in their historical bodies.

6.3 Shared discourses in historical body

The historical body's importance in cross-curricular teaching is shown by the teachers' shared belief in using students' prior knowledge from other language classes. Without this belief, it would have been unlikely that Wendy coordinated German and English, that Amy referenced content

from other languages in French, and that Hanna engaged in a teacher–researcher collaboration. Teaching the same students or overlapping curricula alone does not ensure cross-curricular actions; teachers must also value and believe in the benefits of such practices.

Beliefs can indeed be obstacles to cross-curricular activities. For example, language teachers commonly hold the belief that they need to speak all the relevant languages to implement multilingual teaching practices (Heyder and Schädlich 2014; Vikøy and Haukås 2023). Some regard the learning processes of different languages as separate (Haukås 2016) or as a source of potential errors (Bredthauer and Engfer 2016; Haukås 2016). Such beliefs may hinder cross-curricular collaboration even if the conditions for it (like shared interaction orders and shared discourses in the sociocultural space) were provided.

A solution is awareness raising of existing overlap in teaching content that teachers of different languages share, as teachers are often not aware that such overlap exists (Haukås 2016). Amy’s confused students because of contradictory messages from different language classrooms may serve as a useful case that illustrates the added value of cross-curricular coordination. Cross-curricular teaching may benefit students because it provides them with a more coherent picture of language education.

7. Conclusion

This paper addressed the following research question: How does the English language subject afford the systematization of cross-curricular teaching practices in language classrooms? Nexus analysis provided concepts that help theorize the affordances of English in systematizing cross-curricular practices. The results underline how overlap in discourses in the sociocultural space (like overlap in teaching content of different language classes) may facilitate cross-curricular teaching practices. Such practices require teachers who are aware of and willing to engage in them, i.e., who hold beneficial beliefs in their historical bodies. Furthermore, teachers need to be given the opportunity to engage in such practices by promoting a shared interaction order between them. Cross-curricular actions can thus be systematised, i.e., turned into cross-curricular practices, if there is overlap in discourses in the interaction orders between teachers, their historical bodies and the sociocultural spaces they work in. In line with previously documented teaching approaches like strategy-based approaches to writing pedagogy (Forbes 2020) or metacognitive

approaches to language learning and teaching (Haukås et al. 2018), this paper proposes cross-curricular teaching practices as an alternative to multilingual teaching practices. In other words, teachers can draw on the English *subject*, rather than the English *language* in order to make connections between English and other language subjects. Future research could engage in long-term collaborations with different language teachers to lay the groundwork for systematic cross-curricular teaching practices in language classes.

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