

GFL



German as a foreign language

“To boldly go...”:

Taboos in German as a foreign language ... and beyond

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ISSN 1470 – 9570

“To boldly go...”:**Taboos in German as a foreign language ... and beyond**

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This article sets out to introduce and promote a new topic for the German as a foreign language classroom.¹ It will be argued that taboos – generally considered the subject most likely to create an act of collaborative silence in the (foreign language class) room – actually prove to be an enormous incentive to speak (in the foreign language). The authors' intention is not only to present a new type of seminar (its structure, as well as material and teaching methods used) as developed for the German Subject Group at Aston University, Birmingham, but also to open a discussion on whether or not it is about time to bring in more new and somewhat radical approaches. Following Horst Stern who said, "Ich weigere mich, mit drei Pünktchen in der Stimme über Tabus hinwegzugehen," the authors will show how this can be accomplished whilst still maintaining academic standards, thus inviting the reader to boldly go with them where no one has gone before!

1. Introduction

First, there was pattern drill. That soon became a taboo once the direct method, communicative approaches and others surfaced. Nowadays, language teaching presents itself as an open discipline, utilising approaches and methods derived from the research of other academic disciplines such as Applied Linguistics, Psychology or Business Studies, to name but a few. The didactics of teaching foreign languages have come a long way, then, but what about the content of what is being taught? What about the topics used by books, lecturers and teachers to get pupils and students to speak in (and about) the foreign language? They used to be taken from respected disciplines such as Politics, Philosophy or Literature. Then, back in the early 80s, current affairs were discovered: Those who attended English classes in West Germany during the 70s and 80s will surely remember endless discussions about acid rain, the tragic fate of the American natives, the coal miner strikes of 70s Britain, etc. The same applies in Britain's schools, where today the central topics in the German as a foreign language classroom revolve around Germany's environmental policies or latent xenophobia. Literature, of

¹ This article focuses on the British higher education system. Although the authors believe that some of the suggestions that underpin the approach portrayed here are of general relevance,

course, is still highly en vogue, as is translation. When later moving on to institutions of higher education, mainly universities, the picture does not really change much. Students can choose from courses focusing on translation, literature, linguistics, history, politics, media, and more recently also Business studies – all within a German context, culminating in the ‘German Studies’ offered by many departments for the student more interested in a general approach.

As well as new methods and contents, new keywords have emerged on the horizon of up-to-date teaching: interdisciplinary, intercultural, self-learning and transferable skills. To do all these ideas justice seems a very difficult task within one single course, especially if some sort of assessment – in accordance with university regulations – has to be the visible outcome of such an undertaking. This article sets out to prove that it is a goal that can be achieved. However, this means to “boldly go, where no one else has gone before” – to break taboos by bringing the taboos themselves into the seminar room.²

In this article, the authors will talk generally about possible ways to structure such a seminar, portray the contents and outcomes of two seminars already run at a British university, and illustrate these with the help of a case study. The authors wish to put this topic up for discussion by not only presenting the findings on part of the academic/lecturer, but also by incorporating the students’ point of view as well. We will look at the pros and cons of bringing taboos into the seminar room, and complement this with findings taken from the actual seminars that have already been held. The aim is to bridge the gap between theory and practice, academia and real life. This may entail breaking with traditions, leaving the safe haven of academic disciplines as we know

they wish to emphasise that such a seminar has to (and can) be adapted to other cultural circumstances, bearing their specifics and demands in mind.

² Other publications approach the subject from a slightly different angle. Schröder 1997 (see bibliography) focuses on aspects such as how different cultures implement a verbal “code of conduct” with regard to taboos, and how – through coursebook analysis, for example – students can be made aware of such differences. Another difference between such approaches and that of the authors of this article is that Schröder and others set out to prove how teaching material for foreign languages either provides little help for the student to find his/her way around taboo subjects (such as in the form of discourse or terminological strategies) or neglects the area of taboos altogether. Hartmann/Faulkner, however, deliberately exclude textbooks for foreign language teaching, focusing instead on the media forms with which students come into contact on a daily basis, especially outside the classroom.

them, and overstepping the boundaries of what we thought was possible, or for that matter permissible.

2. Taboos in the German as a foreign language classroom

Taboos are more than mere church or moral orders. Taboos are not (only) about rules and regulations dictated by an outside party. Taboos seem to carry an inherent do not touch sign, often hard to explain and even harder to overcome. In his famous book on *Totem und Tabu*, Sigmund Freud (1912) set out to explore primitive cultures in order to explain our own roots. In his line of thinking, primitive cultures still existing in his time could be seen as a mirror image of what the western world had been like millennia ago. Freud stated that, although the notion of totem no longer exists in modern times, the concept of taboo still seems very much alive. Whilst Freud clearly homed in on the psychological aspects of the taboo phenomenon and its relevance to psychiatric matters, the sociological aspects were taken up only 30 years later in a study on taboos by Hutton Webster.

Webster was interested in discovering the role played by taboos in the emergence and development of mankind. Webster, who denotes taboos as “a specific series of thou-shalt-nots” (Webster 1973: vii) emphasises very strongly that taboos are not to be mistaken for social conventions or negative sanctions and regulations. However, as will be explained below (see 2.2.1) this clear distinction is no longer being made, at least not as far as journalism is concerned. Webster (1973: 369) himself gives one explanation for this:

“It is probable, moreover, that various taboos developed into rules of etiquette whose violation involved only vague public disapproval or, at the most, some degree of social ostracism. Every society has its standards of ‘good form’, and these standards, could they be traced back far enough, might often be found to rest on primitive notions of pollution and sanctity. Rules of politeness, the ceremonial observances of courts, the euphemisms of our speech, even our sanitary regulations may have been influenced by such notions.”

Webster, who studied many aspects of cultural structures that had been based on taboos, comes to several important conclusions. To mention but one: taboos had very often not been outlived by a culture, but rather were wiped out by foreign rules (e.g. colonialists).

This indicates that overcoming a taboo might first of all actually entail either breaking or ignoring it.

The other conclusion Webster comes to after having identified and analysed many taboo areas of former cultures - such as family planning³ during certain times, female menstruation and its association with impurity, death, etc. - is that to him it seemed that the main, maybe even sole function of taboos was to protect society from the wrongdoings of the individual. Webster quotes a native of the Congo: “One man becomes the curse of a hundred.” (Webster: 373).

Taboos, although they still exist in every society, have seen a drastic shift in focus and relevance over the past few hundred years. What was once linked to notions such as holy or totem is nowadays more often trivialised than contextualised. Also, the mechanisms evoked by taboos have changed. Not long ago, pornography was tabooed simply by virtue of it offending the viewers’ morals. Today, with morals allegedly being at an all time low, other things matter. In cinema, for example, it seems that disgust and revulsion have taken over from morals as the guardian of taboos (cf. Das verbotene Bild, Gemeinschaftswerk der Evangelischen Publizistik 1986).

2.1 Making taboos accessible

It is one thing to list taboo subjects from days gone by or today, but it is quite another to make them accessible for discussion and analysis. This is especially true for the (foreign language) class room at university level. Not only are the students quite anxious to avoid anything that could be embarrassing, but lecturers are as well.⁴

Two extremes, in the opinion of the authors, are to be avoided when setting out to make taboos a topic in class. One is the approach whereby the topic in hand is isolated, taken apart with surgeon-like precision, dismantled of all its explosive aspects, and presented

³ It is interesting to note that Webster chooses to use this term rather than the explicit form of *sexual intercourse*. This mirrors the code of conduct present even amongst scientists in the late thirties when Webster’s study was first published.

⁴ Even a minor spelling mistake can turn faces red. One example could be the translation of a simple sentence such as “The soldiers shoot.” Of course the translation should read “Die Soldaten schießen.” But by simply getting the vowels “ie” in “schießen” mixed up, the outcome is quite different! The register of language thus produced is one that most language teachers are certainly not inclined to teach, quite aside from wishing to mention anything that has to do with human scatology.

to the student in little, digestible chunks of inoffensive, easy-to-handle (in terms of content, though not necessarily language-wise) quotes of acceptable literature. The other extreme is the “let’s talk about it” approach, lacking in in-depth discussion and analysis and merely presenting itself as another tool to get a communicative skills class going.

One possible solution to this is to put taboos into context, for example in that of the media. This approach has several advantages. Firstly, teaching material is much more easily found, and students have equal access to the sources and resources used and can easily do their own research. The media used in the seminars under discussion included, amongst other things, recordings of soap operas and documentaries, advertisements, comics, and music CDs.

Another advantage of dealing with taboos in the context of the media is the fact that well-documented cases of media censorship do exist. Also, when looking at taboos in the context of media coverage, students can deepen their knowledge and understanding of the inherent properties of the different media. What might be appropriate to be shown on TV or in a book, may cause entirely different reactions when presented in the form of a comic.⁵

It is to be expected that students, at least in the beginning, will be more than reluctant to relate their own first-hand experience with taboos. Therefore, the medium of what could be called *processed* taboo can help students and lecturers alike to overcome their inhibitions. The seminar also followed a programme that was handed out to students during their first week and which will be described in greater detail in the following chapter.

⁵ A good example, also used during the course of the seminar, was A. Spiegelmann's comic “Maus”. It is the story of Spiegelmann’s father and how he survived the Holocaust. All characters in the comics take the form of animals according to their nationality or religion - mice (Jews), pigs (Poles), shepherd dogs (Germans), etc. The idea of portraying such a horrific fact of history through animal cartoons caused a public outcry and heated debates. It also, however, won the author a Pulitzer Prize.

related terms often used in conjunction with the word taboo. As a result, students found that the term taboo was by no means used consistently. Some journalists used it in a strictly Freudian or Huttonian sense, others used it simply to avoid lexical repetition of terms like outrageous, offensive, unthinkable and the like. Also, the topics prone to come up in connection with taboos did not play a significant role, one possible reason being – as mentioned – the journalistic use of the term as an effective means of ‘spicing up’ a text. These findings led to phase 2.

Phase 2: Taboos – Working Definition

The group decided that it would come up with its own definition of taboo. Bearing prior findings in mind, students decided that for the purposes of the seminar they would consider such topics or actions taboo that:

- one does not like to discuss;
- evoke deep emotions;
- entail many conflicting opinions;
- touch upon issues of majority vs. minority; and
- manifest themselves in norms.

By explicitly wording their understanding of taboo⁷, the students made sure they all had – at least in theory – the same point of reference. However, during the course of the semester the students realised that a common point of reference still remains an unemotional one. Words on paper are one thing, but interpreting these words in an individual context is quite another. So in essence, the students’ definition should be considered on an individual basis as well, paying tribute to the fact that every person’s level of acceptance, or even endurance, is quite different (cf. chapter 4).

⁷ This understanding of taboo explains why topics such as drug addiction, widely discussed in society and the media these days, still came up as a subject for debate. This might indicate that students see these ongoing discussions as insufficient or inappropriately conducted as regards their own wants and needs.

*Phase 3: Taboos in the “light media”*⁸

The final phase was dominated by the topics chosen for presentations and discussions. A list of possible taboo topics (together with available material) was distributed to students at the beginning of the semester. Each week during phase 3 a team, usually consisting of two students, would present the topic of their choice. In order to bring students up to speed who had not prepared a certain topic (and thus were sometimes unaware of the relevant aspects of the respective media form), a half hour introduction was given by the lecturer prior to the student presentation. The presenting team had 45 minutes (of the standard 100 minutes per seminar session) at their disposal. Presenting teams were free to choose their own approach to the task set but could consult with the lecturer at any time during their preparation if they so desired (for inherent risks see 4.2). Students were given guidelines on what their presentation should entail. These included an introduction to the taboo from an academic point of view, an interpretation of the media adaptation of the respective taboo, and the involvement of the entire class by means of their own choice. This interactive element to their presentations could, for example, take the form of discussions, brainstorming, role plays and the like (for a very different approach, see the case study below). Each presentation was followed by a general discussion, collecting students' impressions and feelings. This 'meta-phase' ensured that over time, students learned about each other's sensitivities, needs and expectations. It also facilitated a more general understanding of what could be considered appropriate in a presentation that deals with taboos. Students and lecturer alike were forced to reconsider time and time again what they really felt constituted a taboo (or the breaking of one, that is), as opposed to it merely being an unusual approach or one with which they had no prior knowledge.

2.2.2 Teaching method and assessment

A leader is best
When people barely know he exists,
Not so good when people obey and acclaim him,
Worst when they despise him.
But of a good leader, who talks little,
When his work is done, his aim fulfilled,
They will all say, “We did this ourselves.” (Laotse, quoted from Rogers [1988?])

⁸ The materials used for the seminar covered a range of media, which due to their general, usually non-scientific nature will in the following section be called “light media”.

Except for a single lecture and several short introductions (see 2.2.1), the seminar was dominated by a dialogic approach. The lecturer's role was that of a facilitator. In accordance with Carl Rogers the lecturer believed that, especially for the seminar in question, the goal should be "the facilitation of change and learning" since "teaching and the imparting of knowledge [only] make sense in an unchanging environment" (Rogers 1988:120).

The lecturer also took the position of a mediator, especially when the discussion became too heated or analysis of a subject too intense for some of the students. However, since the very nature of taboos often entails censorship, the role of the teacher was discussed by the group on several occasions (also see 4.3). An excessively controlling and interfering role on part of the lecturer would have rendered the very purpose of the project futile; therefore, in most cases the lecturer functioned predominantly as a referee or source for further information.

The lecturer did play a major role insofar as she provided the students with material for presentations and further research. However, most of the suggestions with regard to materials (as described below) were not binding unless students decided otherwise. It was up to the students themselves whether they would take the incentive provided by the lecturer or look for their own and/or additional material.

A sensitive area was, of course, the assessment of student work. Apart from the language (grammar, appropriateness of style etc.), the course agreed that special attention had to be paid to the means and methods employed by the students in presenting their topic (see 4.3.). All oral presentations had to be videotaped, since they formed part of the final assessment and therefore needed to be accessible to the external examiner should this be deemed necessary. One would expect students to be inhibited by this fact, yet it turned out that, although they did not especially like it (see also 4.3.), they clearly soon forgot about the camera and focussed on the topic.

Students also had to produce a 3,000-word essay on a chosen topic, which could vary from the one they had chosen for presentation in class. In their essays, students were to reflect on the portrayal of a certain taboo in the media, or in one medium in particular, taking into account relevant publications on theoretical aspects of the subject matter and the medium/media chosen. The essays were then marked according to university

regulations that apply for any academic written work (e.g. 50% language, 50% content) within the School of Languages & European Studies.

2.2.3 Materials

Television was one main source. Every day when switching on the TV, one is bombarded with topics presented in every possible shape and form, ranging from documentaries, news broadcasts and talk shows to films and soap operas. The latter category represents a very useful source since even established soap operas in Germany and Britain try to take up many of the taboos which still exist in our society. For the seminar two German soaps were chosen, both broadcast by a public station, namely ARD – *Lindenstrasse*, a weekly series and the first German ‘imitation’ of Britain’s long running success *Coronation Street*, to illustrate the portrayal of abortion in relation to Down’s syndrome, and *Marienhof*, a daily soap, which had a storyline involving child abuse in 2000.

Another source was the printed media, in particular comics and comic books. Walter Moers’ *Adolf*, and by contrast A. Spiegelmann’s *Maus*, initiated a discussion about Nazism, Neo-Nazism and the question of what is permissible when referring to the Holocaust.

To cover the subject of censorship – an inevitable issue and one which is intertwined with almost any taboo – the seminar referred to R. Seim and J. Spiegel’s *Ab 18* (1998, 1999). These two books themselves could form the basis of another course along the lines of the one presented in this article, since both volumes are packed with visual material, historical facts and legal arguments.

The press in general (yellow press included) was also looked at over the course of the seminar, sometimes as a means of introduction, other times as a media form in its own right, posing the question of how far journalism should go in its quest for ‘truth’ and whether the so-called truth (or rather, its portrayal in the media) could represent the breaking of a taboo in itself.

Popular music was another pool for material to be looked at in greater detail. Not only have infamous bands such as Boehse Onkelz or Rammstein tackled taboo topics more than once in their songs, but chart toppers such as Pur or Tic Tac Toe have also produced material suitable for analysis and discussion (see Chapter 3 below).

Documentaries and broadcasts nowadays labelled as ‘infotainment’ complemented the aforementioned material. SternTV (shown once a week on the private channel RTL) and Auslandsjournal (ARD) are some of the examples used. The latter was especially useful since it is not by its nature prone to sensationalism. Stern TV had a section on child pornography and Internet security, while Auslandsjournal featured a report on self-justice in South Africa.

These materials were chosen according to their content and availability; in the case of the soap operas, relevant sequences were edited to enable students to follow a storyline that spanned several weeks. Many further sources are possible. For example, one could add literature such as R.W. Fassbinder’s *Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod* as an example of how a drama caused uproar when it was first performed on stage in the 70s. Movies could also be the focus of attention, one example being *Die Sünderin* with Hildegard Knef (the actress, and the film for that matter, caused a public outcry in Germany during the fifties for showing the first nude in German cinematic history).⁹

Any medium can be the source of taboo topics. In the following chapter, one student’s approach to presenting popular music and its taboo contents will be presented. The content of the songs in question will be discussed as well as the method of communicating these to fellow students.

3. Case Study Taboos in Popular Music: A Student’s Perspective

When aiming to examine taboo subjects as portrayed in the ‘light media’ in a form which lends itself to a seminar room presentation, one consideration is whether the constant factor should be the subject or the medium chosen. In many respects this depends on the materials available and the personal interests, opinions and passions of the students concerned. This case study (a student presentation, held in December 2000 at Aston University, Birmingham) focuses on the area of popular music, a medium whose diverse and constantly evolving nature enables it to be taken as a basis upon which to build a broad examination of the taboos dealt with in this field.

⁹ Material in English may be used as means of comparison and sources for essays, thus allowing students to transfer knowledge they have acquired during the seminar to a subject ‘closer to home’.

3.1 Topics and songs

Ever since the birth of rock ‘n’ roll, popular music has given rise to controversy, and indeed this could be described as one of the greatest selling points of the ‘product’ called music. But while in the past, the power of the media censors would be wielded to protect the public from everything from Elvis’ gyrating hips to the Rolling Stones glorifying the one-night stand in *Let’s Spend The Night Together*, these days the goalposts have moved, and a pop-reggae pastiche proclaiming *I wanna have sex on the beach* is not only able to become the chart-topping anthem of a summer, but is bought, danced to and sung along with by adults and children alike without anyone so much as batting an eyelid.

Nonetheless, music still has the power to shock, and there are subjects which are generally regarded as too controversial, too ‘taboo’, to be handled within the boundaries of popular music. What applies to the Americanised world of MTV and multi-billion-dollar record companies, however, is not necessarily reflected in the German music scene. The German music industry is the third largest in the world, and is characterised by an unusually high proportion of artists who write and perform in their own language, at least in comparison with other non-English speaking countries with a comparable ‘export rate’ for their popular music, such as the Netherlands or the Nordic countries; the increasing international reach of a domestic music market is often accompanied by a dilution of its own-language product. The situation in Germany often appears to give the artists in question free rein to sing about what they want, as if distancing themselves from the commercial conventions of English-language music gives them this right, and often it is the most famous singers and bands, the big sellers who appear on the front of magazines and on the walls of teenagers around the country, who are the most daring when it comes to approaching so-called taboo subjects in their work.

This background provides an ideal basis for the examination of such music in a German learning framework. The nine songs featured in the presentation at the centre of this case study were all recorded and released within the last ten years and for the most part appeared on highly successful albums; some were big hits in their own right.¹⁰ They can be divided into six ‘categories’ of taboo. Taken in turn, these were as follows:

¹⁰ For excerpts of the lyrics see Appendix B.

3.1.1 Neo-Nazism:

Die Ärzte: Schrei nach Liebe

Die Ärzte's comeback single in 1993 was a humorous but genuine reaction to the recent right-wing violence in Germany. Their tongue-in-cheek portrayal of a Neo-Nazi as an immature and almost pathetic figure with as many self-hate issues as pieces of Nazi paraphernalia and deep down inside a simple human desire to be loved was unusual among the more serious and directly critical commentaries of the time. But it clearly struck a chord and became a top 10 single. This was somewhat ironic given that *Die Ärzte* originated from the same punk scene which certain Neo-Nazis attempted to hijack for their own means, a fact which adds another level of context to the singer's mocking taunts of "Unterm Lorbeerkranz mit Eicheln, weiß ich, schlägt dein Herz" or "Deine Springerstiefel sehnen sich nach Zärtlichkeit", culminating in the recurring chant of "Arschloch".

3.1.2. Incest:

Rammstein: Spiel mit mir

Not only one of the most successful bands in Germany but also unlikely flag-carriers for German language music in the USA and beyond, Rammstein have never shied away from controversy: Be it their provocative and explicit stage shows, the transparent symbolism used in their videos and their visual image as a whole, or even the band's name, a conscious play on the Ramstein air show disaster of 1988. Their tendency towards simplistic and ambiguous texts has also earned its fair share of criticism, and is illustrated perfectly by *Spiel mit mir* from the 1997 album *Sehnsucht*. The song's narrator tells of seducing a younger sibling after lights-out, enticing – or forcing – him with the words "Brüderlein, komm fass mich an / Rutsch ganz dicht an mich heran" and making the intent clear with the imploring "Brüderlein, komm halt dich fest / Und schüttel mir das Laub vom Baum". That the siblings "teilen Zimmer und das Bett" is certainly meant to place some doubts in the listener's mind over exactly what age the protagonists are, as is the knowingly childish register used – the whole thing packaged as a game of "Vater, Mutter, Kind", in clear and undoubtedly deliberate contrast to singer Till Lindemann's menacing tones, over a haunting backdrop of distorted guitar riffs and atmospheric keyboards.

3.1.3. Child abuse:

Pur: Kinder sind tabu

Like Rammstein, Pur can be considered one of the biggest German bands of the last decade. Their brand of soft rock has a wide appeal precisely because of its universally recognised, typical lyrical themes, making *Kinder sind tabu* (from the 1998 *Mächtig viel Theater* album) a real exception, dealing as it does with a father’s reaction to the Marc Dutroux child murders in Belgium. Written from a first-person perspective and extending its reach to the Internet and the looming danger of “der nette Herr dort in der Nachbarschaft” and “der gute Onkel, der den Kitzel vermißt”, this critical narrative sits slightly uncomfortably with the commercial pop-rock accompaniment. But it is interesting to note the uncommon occurrence of the word “tabu”; not only does the word itself crop up very rarely in the lyrics of popular music, but the statement “Kinder sind tabu” also puts an interesting slant on the term – taboo here being used to describe the children themselves, a concrete message of “Finger weg”, rather than to refer to the act of child abuse. The lyricist also depends to a great extent on emotive adjectives. One example sees “zerbrechlich”, “hilflos”, “ausgeliefert”, “gefügig”, “bedroht” and “eingeschüchtert” used within the space of six lines – nicely underlining the slightly sensationalist, almost tabloidesque sentiment which permeates the entire lyric.

3.1.4. Homosexuality:

Rainer Bielfeldt: Willi

Without doubt the most obscure song in this presentation, *Willi* is a simple ballad performed by Hamburg-based singer Rainer Bielfeldt, remembering his experiences with a lover from years gone by. That Bielfeldt is gay is no secret – the album from which *Willi* is taken, *Nachtzug*, features two men embracing on its cover and many of its songs contain references to, or at least influences from, his love life and sexual orientation. This song is one of the most direct examples of this, Bielfeldt not shying away from reminiscing about *Willi*’s body, “naß und schön und stark und nackt”, and using rain and water as metaphors for everything from the dynamics of their love-making to the emptiness at the end of the relationship. Undoubtedly an unusual and striking song, but it says a lot about the general public’s failure to recognise homosexuality as anything more than just something which exists (and certainly not as something which can boast its own

share of classic love stories) that no more high-profile gay singers, whether in Germany, the UK or elsewhere, have as yet dared to write and release anything as potentially groundbreaking as this.

3.1.5. Drugs, violence, youth:

Tic Tac Toe: Warum?

Spektacoolär: Meine kleine Schwester

German rap music tends to be far less obsessed with violence, drugs and sex than its American counterpart – and blessed with a more intelligent musical and lyrical content as a result. Nonetheless, the bands Tic Tac Toe and Spektacoolär found reason to touch upon these subjects, both telling the story of a girl caught up in serious problems. In Tic Tac Toe's case, a friend drawn to prostitution to fuel her drug habit. In Spektacoolär's far broader attack on the failures of the school system, a little sister who feels it necessary to carry a knife with her, since "auf dem Klo wird gedealt" and the teachers are out of their depth in "ein Spiel, das sie längst schon nicht mehr kontrollieren". Tic Tac Toe's song in particular was a great success in 1997, topping the German charts for a number of weeks, but despite the thematic similarity to rap from the other side of the Atlantic, the German response to any accusations of Americanisation is clearly spelled out by Spektacoolär: "Amerika kackt uns zu."

3.1.6. Disgust equals taboo?

By way of light relief after the heavy subjects of the previous songs, but also to ask whether songs which are simply deliberately disgusting might also belong to the category of taboo, three songs by the Berlin band Knorkator (*Ich will nur ficken; Ich bin ein ganz besond'rer Mann; Ich lass mich klonen*) were played. First coming to widespread attention through their attempt to represent Germany at the 2000 Eurovision Song Contest, Knorkator are as renowned for pelting their audience with mincemeat and offal as for their musical pot-pourri of industrial heavy metal and operatic singing. Their inclusion in the presentation mainly served to raise the question of personal interpretations of 'taboo' – if songs about developing techniques to eat with one's rectum and cloning oneself for the sake of sexual gratification can reach the German top 30 and amuse some people while disgusting others, where does one draw the line? In music, as in cinema (as described earlier), it seems that some artists have decided that

disgust and revulsion are emotions which can be leveraged to a far greater extent than traditional morals.

3.2 Structure and planning of presentation

Music has the advantage of being a universal art form. Although most students involved in a seminar during their final year at university are naturally familiar with German and German culture in general, not everyone can claim to be an expert or a specialist in a particular field. However, music and the instinctive human reaction to an evocative text in combination with a melody can always be called upon, even regardless of knowledge of any cultural context.

Nonetheless, addressing the subjects of taboos in German language music in the form of a presentation to other students does require an element of research and preparation. This includes not only the compilation of materials and background information on the songs and artists to be presented, but also the devising of a structure for the presentation that will both inform and involve the audience. The aim is to protect them from a potential information overflow while providing them with the necessary means to enter into a discussion on the subjects presented to them, thereby fulfilling the stipulated “participatory” element of every presentation given and of the course as a whole. Other parameters, such as the breadth of subjects and musical styles and the modernity of the material being presented, must also be considered.

In the presentation detailed here, such considerations resulted in the following methodology. As detailed above, a total of six so-called taboo subjects were selected, corresponding to nine songs. The class was introduced to these subjects and the corresponding songs one by one,¹¹ then played a one-minute excerpt from a key passage of the song and shown an acetate with the corresponding text and a picture of the artist.

A ‘user-friendly’ system was devised to allow the group to evaluate and discuss the sometimes uncomfortable topics raised by these German musicians. A makeshift scoreboard was created and, in the tradition set by musical competitions like the

¹¹ In each case a brief history of the artist in question and the background to the song (any particular inspiration behind its conception, how representative it was for the artist in question, its level of commercial success, etc.) was given.

Eurovision Song Contest, each member of the group was asked to nominate the song which they felt handled its respective subject best and worst in this ‘Grand Prix der Tabuthemen’.

The intention behind this idea was not to trivialise the subject matter or even to make it appear less controversial, even less ‘taboo’ and therefore more suitable for discussion; rather, it allowed people to at least express their broad opinion on specific songs and subjects in the form of points given based on their own criteria for best and worst, without necessarily having to go into detail – and, by the same token, ensured that the discussion that ensued was as much about the spectrum of opinions and reactions shown by the various group members as about the concrete subject matter of the songs themselves. The person studying taboos in a light media context must, after all, recognise that the purpose of the media is to reach a certain audience, and the reaction of this audience to what it sees and hears is perhaps even more important than the content transmitted.

3.3 Voting and discussion

Following the presentation of the songs, as described above, a brief reprise of each song was played, then the voting procedure began. The class was asked to vote on two questions, and ideally to also give reasons for their choices. The questions were phrased as follows: Which song do you feel dealt *best* with its topic, and which song do you feel dealt *worst* with its topic? The deliberately vague wording opened up a range of issues in itself – what is *good* or *bad* anyway in terms of dealing with taboo subjects? – and stimulated a discussion not only of the concrete issues raised by the respective song but also with regard to why people react differently to the same content, where people set their own personal or moral ‘limits’, and by association, what can really be considered to constitute a taboo in modern popular music. Likewise, as the voters were liable to perceive *best* and *worst* differently, the points given were not intended to necessarily give a quantitative or qualitative appraisal of the ‘popular opinion’ of the class.

The race for the *best* song resulted in a narrow victory for Rainer Bielfeldt’s *Willi* over *Warum?* by Tic Tac Toe. These two songs took most of the ‘positive’ votes throughout, with comments from the class generally focusing on the sensitive nature of the lyrics and

the more personalised tone in comparison with the abstraction of some of the other songs.¹²

At the other end of the scale, there was also a two-horse race for song which presented its taboo in the *worst* manner, in this case between the two extremes of the musical spectrum featured in the presentation. In the end, Pur’s *Kinder sind tabu* gained the most votes, ahead of Rammstein’s *Spiel mit mir*. The Pur song had also been voted for in the best category, but many members of the class considered its musical style to be a major contributing factor, the radio-friendly tones automatically restricting one’s ability to take the subject matter seriously enough. In other words, most of the negative comments about *Kinder sind tabu* were not criticisms of the lyrical content or the singer’s desire to make a statement about his feelings on child abuse (though both of these were commented upon), but focused instead on the inappropriateness of combining such subjects and sentiments with that particular musical style and form. This more subtle aspect would not necessarily have occurred to some members of the class without the in-depth discussion which arose during the voting, and indeed one student changed her mind as a result of the arguments raised, voting for Pur instead of Rammstein. As well as highlighting the difficulty of discussing topics which one is not used to discussing, this is a perfect illustration of how one person’s taboo can be accepted by another, or to put it another way, how taboos are determined personally as much as by society.

Although Pur received the largest number of votes for the *worst* song, it was *Spiel mit mir* which provoked the most discussion, and those who voted for Rammstein were, as a rule, more passionate about their dislike and distaste for that song than those who voted otherwise. The lecturer subsequently initiated a more detailed discussion of the Rammstein song, resulting in the observation that some members of the class had previously been unaware that the lyrics were about love, or more, between siblings. And even those who had understood the basic message of the song were at odds over the age, gender, etc. of the protagonists, thus further highlighting the cryptic nature of the lyrics.

¹² However, some of the amused expressions seen in the seminar room both as *Willi* was played and during the resulting discussion might suggest that this victory was less universally accepted than the votes imply – or at least that a number of the students found the concept of a gay love song if not difficult to accept, then at least uncomfortable, but did not want (or dare) to say so explicitly in front of the other students.

One key issue was whether Rammstein were responsible for glamorising incest. To this end, a comparison was made with the song *Geschwisterliebe* by Die Ärzte, in which the narrator gloats of having sex with his sister at various times, stressing the sister's willingness and enjoyment, and the purpose of the act as being purely the satisfaction of the narrator's urges, i.e. no emotional content or feelings of guilt whatsoever. Die Ärzte, as described earlier, have a tradition of taking serious subjects and attacking them with tongue firmly in cheek, and the combination of such a text with a simple, unthreatening melody in *Geschwisterliebe* could, as was discussed in the class, be considered more dangerous or controversial than *Spiel mit mir*. The Rammstein song couples a simplistic text (into which the listener can read what he wishes) with a menacing musical component to underline the nature of the content, whereas Die Ärzte approach the subject from the opposite perspective and let the lyrics do the talking, so to speak.

One question arose from this discussion: Can one, and should one be, allowed to write a song about incest or any other so-called taboo subject? The answer is, of course, that one can write about everything, but the motivation behind the writing of the song and its desired effect are more relevant factors. Both Rammstein and Die Ärzte appear to be aiming to shock rather than to inform, and this shock, or at least discomfort, was reflected by a number of the members of the class. By contrasting these two approaches to the same subject in the context of a class discussion based on the presentation given, one can overcome the potentially superficial nature of merely 'presenting' a handful of songs and their content, and get to the heart of what the group considers acceptable and unacceptable, both in music and beyond.

4. Outcomes

Some, if not most, of the subjects raised in the case study above (and thus the entire seminar) may not otherwise be talked about in class during a student's entire school and university career. Most British school pupils learn very little about Nazism or Neo-Nazism. Topics such as drug abuse are often dealt with merely by stating that "drugs are bad" and little more, and pupils certainly get little information about the various forms of abuse that they might be confronted with at some point. As for homosexuality, the

infamous Section 28 is very difficult to get round¹³, and in most cases just provides a convenient excuse for teachers in the U.K. to skirt the issue altogether when in all honesty they would not dare to raise it in front of a class of giggling, cynical or even abusive 14-year-olds (even when, statistically seen, 3 or 4 of them will already have a fair idea that what is being said refers to them). Indeed, sex education in any form is almost exclusively about the physical (e.g. biological) aspects and precious little about the emotional side.

So for most students choosing a seminar such as the one portrayed in this article, it would probably be the first time that they would ever discuss any of these subjects in an academic environment. They may not even have discussed such topics with the people in the seminar room with them, even those who are their friends.

4.1. Benefits and Opportunities

Experience at Aston University has shown that, quite contrary to common expectations, the taboos tackled in the seminar got students and lecturer alike not only to think, but also to talk. The potential for in-depth discussion and analysis was unleashed by a combination of the following factors:

The ‘novelty’ factor: As illustrated above, most students encountered the topics (and some of the teaching approaches) presented in this article for the first time in their educational life, often spanning up to 15 years.

The ‘distance’ factor: Expressing your opinion – especially on a controversial or potentially embarrassing subject – is easier in a foreign language, simply because of the distance created by not speaking in your mother tongue. For example, everyone knows that swearing is much easier in a foreign language than it would be in one’s own

¹³In 1988, the UK Parliament passed an amendment – Section 28 – to the Local Government Act, stipulating: “A local authority shall not... promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.” Although the Act does not actually grant local authorities the power to determine the content of the sex education curriculum taught in its schools, Section 28 is widely regarded as a guiding principle for teaching in schools, and has become something of a rallying call for gay rights campaigners, who accuse it of creating an environment in which anti-gay bullying is more likely and restricting teachers from targeting Personal, Social and Health Education lessons at the requirements of those they are intended to benefit – the pupils.

vernacular, perhaps because of a lack of awareness of the conventions and consequences of the words being used.

The 'skirting' factor: Students speaking a foreign language may not necessarily have the vocabulary or sense of 'style' that would allow them to cleverly skirt around difficult issues in their mother tongue.

The 'context' factor: Having a medium and its portrayal of a taboo topic as a starting point for analysis helps the process to get on its way. By first analysing the properties indigenous to a particular media form, one is able to approach the respective subject step by step, dealing with one layer at a time.

The authors agree that if a university, or a language course for that matter, is supposed to give the student a basis by which to use their chosen language in a real-life context, learning history, politics and literature is important. However, it is hard to go beyond facts (let alone blurred opinions) and actually have feelings about such subjects, whereas in reality one gets into genuinely passionate arguments and discussions about all kinds of things, and the type of seminar proposed in this article can certainly provide many lessons in this. The fact that not everything is black and white might also be taught in many seminars, but what makes one person laugh and another cry may not be brought to light in many of those. The realisation that even the students themselves often do not know what their own opinions are on a lot of subjects until they are (effectively) provoked into expressing a viewpoint came as a bit of a surprise to many participants in the seminar.

The seminar also helped to give people command over a more *diplomatic* type of German, thus fine-tuning their communicative skills in the foreign language.

4.2. Risks and Constraints

Although the type of seminar and teaching approach portrayed in this article proved to be a huge success (see 4.3.), there are also risks involved. Before embarking on such a project one should consider the following aspects:

Due to the nature of some of the material used, it is imperative that all students have reached the age of consent, or the relevant age limit for viewing censored material.¹⁴ Also, the content of the course has to be made absolutely transparent to potential students taking the seminar, as well as to colleagues. For example some of the literature used (esp. publications by R. Seim / J. Spiegel) contains explicit – and in many cases offensive – material. For legal reasons, access to it should be restricted (such as no public display in the library or a special loan system).

The seminar was first run in Year 2 during the academic year 1999/2000. Despite having been very popular with and appreciated by the students, it was decided that next time it would be offered as a Final Year option, the reason being that the proficiency needed to effectively cope with the subject matter had not yet been reached by the younger students. But in Final Year students have just returned from their year abroad, thus bringing most of the needed language skills with them (for exception see the *skirting factor* in 4.1.).

A vital factor is the form taken by the seminar with regard to university regulations. It should only be offered as an elective. People taking the seminar should do so of their own free will. The topics discussed can bring up emotions students may find extremely difficult to handle, especially when faced with things they have personally encountered in their own lives.

It goes without saying that the format chosen for this seminar is challenging, not only for the students but also for the lecturer. None of the participants could really “hide” behind the safe distance academic texts often provide. It was made a rule that students could leave the seminar room should the atmosphere become too strenuous for them, although this rule was heavily disputed amongst the students themselves on more than one occasion. Equally, the lecturer agreed with the students that a break in the seminar could be taken should the need arise (either on the students’ or the lecturer’s part). The occasions when the lecturer voiced her own opinion and spoke about her own inhibitions proved very constructive. Since this is, however, a very personal and individual matter, it

¹⁴ The age of consent for heterosexual and, since November 2000, homosexual sex in the United Kingdom is 16, with the exception of Northern Ireland (17). Access to censored material is fairly self-explanatory and depends on the local legislation governing the relevant medium; for example, in the case of watching a film classified ‘18’ in the UK, any students taking part in the seminar in the UK would have to be 18 or over.

seems only logical that such things should be discussed right from the start, or at the latest when the need for it is perceived as having arisen. As could be seen in the course of this seminar, personal boundaries can change, disappear or surface when least expected.

4.3. Students' feedback

Part of the annual monitoring at the School of LES includes a questionnaire at the end of each module, giving students the opportunity to assess the module on issues such as course content, teaching method, etc. For the seminar presented here, however, a three-step system was adopted.

A first questionnaire was administered half way through the semester to ensure that critical points could be taken up and the seminar improved to the benefit of all whilst it was still in progress. In the last session of the seminar, the uniform modular questionnaire was issued as well. In addition to this, though, and keeping with the spirit of the course, a third questionnaire was put together by the students themselves. This *ad hoc* questionnaire reflected the specifics of the seminar and ensured that students could focus on points they themselves considered relevant for the seminar in question. In the following section, a summary of all three questionnaires will be given.

Mid-Term and End of Term (official) Questionnaire

Asked about what surprised them most about the seminar, students' responses focused on three major aspects. The first aspect mentioned was the multitude of taboos covered in class. Some of the students had not even been aware that so many taboos still do exist at the dawn of the 21st century. The second surprise to them was how much they got to talk – and that they really had something to say. Finally the students pointed out that even only six weeks into the seminar they could already distinguish between those eager to engage in controversial debate and the few whom they thought were ill-equipped to take up such an endeavour.

With regards to what they enjoyed most about the seminar, two main areas could be identified. First and foremost, students appreciated the chance to express themselves freely – to quote one of the students, “I enjoyed most about this course that we could really speak our minds for once, and did not risk castigation for our opinions and

expressions.” The other main opinion expressed in the students’ answers was that they appreciated the variety of topics and the openness with which they had to be dealt. This also meant that they were forced to participate, not by the lecturer but by their classmates and the topics themselves.

When asked what the students disliked most or would change about the seminar, their replies again focused on two key areas. Since one aim of the seminar was to let students themselves decide what would be an appropriate approach to the topic they had chosen for presentation, on a few occasions the ‘audience’ felt that some techniques had been inappropriate. Therefore some suggested that, in future, presentations should be double-checked by the lecturer first.¹⁵ This issue was resolved by introducing additional time for the discussion of methods immediately after presentations had taken place. The final point of criticism was the fact that each presentation was recorded on video, but this was – as mentioned earlier - due to university regulations requiring all assessed work during final year to be accessible for external examiners.

Although it seems that the vital points of seminar assessment from the students’ point of view were covered by these official questionnaires, the *ad hoc* questionnaire produced even more useful results for future seminars along the lines of the one presented.

“Ad hoc” *Student Questionnaire*¹⁶

When looking at the students’ questionnaire the first striking aspect is the type of questions they asked. The purpose was not so much to grade certain aspects, but to give an individual account of one’s own opinion. The students concentrated on two key areas, the first being the students themselves in relation to the lecturer / other students / the course (Q 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18). This may indicate that students do not perceive standard questionnaires to be sufficient when it comes to their own person (e.g. the general tone of most university questionnaires seems to restrict the voicing of one’s own thoughts, thus cutting short the potential for more student input). The second area of interest was the course itself, its content and teaching method (Q 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17).

¹⁵ This point led to yet another heated debate in the seminar since, in a way, what was being requested here was the reinstatement of a censoring, controlling body. However, in the end the class agreed that the best way for all to learn was for mistakes to be allowed to happen, not to be prevented, thus challenging the taboo of ‘failing’.

Most revealing was what people thought the ideal student for such a seminar should be. The student would need to be open minded, have a good command of German, be able to speak their mind and back up their opinions, and “should not be faint-hearted since sooner or later, something will almost certainly shock you”. These comments underline what has already been stated in 4.2., namely that a seminar as presented in this article should only be offered to students in their final year.

Some colleagues might argue that a seminar concept like the one introduced here is going too far. Student feedback said otherwise. All the students agreed that for them, the course went far enough without ever overstepping the boundaries. One student's answer in particular illustrated the close relationship between student and course content:

“I believe the course went too far for some members of the group, but I also think that perhaps they should not have taken the course without expecting to be confronted with things they might not like. How can something be taboo if everyone feels comfortable, uninterested and unemotional about it? Therefore, excluding those students who were upset, I think the course went far enough.”

5. Summary

For decades traditional academic disciplines fed into the teaching and learning of a foreign language. And although new disciplines such as Media Studies appeared on the academic horizon, many topics still await their discovery for the foreign language classroom. Student feedback and the lecturer's impressions suggest that especially in the context of the British educational system, universities should - and indeed can - offer new approaches to foreign language learning. In a time when applications for some types of university language courses are decreasing, new concepts need to evolve and adapt to the requirements of students. Learners today want more than ‘just’ language, or even ‘just’ culture, politics or history for that matter. The authors would like to encourage those responsible for curriculum design to (re-)evaluate existing topics or disciplines. As the seminar described in this article has shown, the new lies within the old. One cannot discuss for example the appropriateness of Spiegelmann's comic “Maus” if one has no knowledge of the historical facts. One cannot grasp the impact and implications of taboos if one is unaware of their origins, or their mere existence for that matter.

¹⁶ For complete questionnaire see Appendix C.

If universities want to prepare their students for what is *out there* a logical step is to build bridges between academia's safe haven and the students' everyday life. The 'real world' as it presents itself today is anything but trivial. Students want to be able to interact effectively with their environment – and this need for effective communication often goes way beyond what traditional teaching scenarios, books and topics can offer, especially once really sensitive subjects – such as taboos – are touched upon. Therefore the authors of this article hope that many colleagues will follow them on their journey to boldly go where no one has gone before. The student is the limit.

Ignorieren ist der Königsweg des Tabuierens (Ludwig Marcuse)

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Biodata

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Appendix A:

Overview: "Aspects of Contemporary Germany in the so-called Light Media"

Note: Italics denote student presentations

Week	Topic / Content	Material provided
1	Introduction	Boehse Onkelz: "Scheißegal" [music]
2	Theory I (terminology; introduction to relevant theories)	Freud (1912); Hutton (1973) [books]
3	Theory II ("working definition")	BT-Cellnet Advert [print]
4	<i>Research</i>	<i>Seibel (1990) [book]</i>
5	<i>Child abuse</i>	<i>"Marienhof" [video]; "Stern-TV" [video]</i>
6	<i>Birth defects / abortion</i>	<i>"Lindenstraße" [video]</i>
7	<i>Freedom of speech (the press)</i>	<i>"Kulturzeit" [video]; "auslandsjournal" [video]</i>
8	READING WEEK	
9	<i>Holocaust, Third Reich</i>	<i>W. Moer: Adolf [comic book]; A. Spiegelmann: Maus [comic]</i>
10	<i>Censorship</i>	<i>Seim / Spiegel (1999) [book]; Seim (1999) [book]; "Nachtgespräch" [Video]</i>
11	<i>Popular Music</i>	<i>Collection of songs [music]</i>
12	Final discussion	

Appendix B:**Song Excerpts****DIE ÄRZTE: Schrei nach Liebe**

(Die Bestie in Menschengestalt. Metronome/Universal 1993)

*Warum hast du Angst vorm Streicheln? Was soll all der Terz?
 Unterm Lorbeerkranz mit Eicheln, weiß ich, schlägt dein Herz
 Und Romantik ist für dich nicht bloß graue Theorie
 Zwischen Störkraft und den Onkelz steht 'ne Kuschelrock-LP*

*Deine Gewalt ist nur ein stummer Schrei nach Liebe
 Deine Springerstiefel sehnen sich nach Zärtlichkeit
 Du hast nie gelernt, dich zu artikulieren
 Und deine Eltern hatten niemals für dich Zeit*

Arschloch!

RAMMSTEIN: Spiel mit mir

(Sehnsucht. Motor/Universal 1997)

*Wir teilen Zimmer und das Bett
 Brüderlein komm sei so nett
 Brüderlein komm fass mich an
 Rutsch ganz dicht an mich heran*

*Unterm Nabel im Geäst
 Wartet schon ein weißer Traum
 Brüderlein komm halt dich fest
 Und schüttel mir das Laub vom Baum*

*Spiel ein Spiel mit mir
 Gib mir deine Hand
 Und spiel mit mir,
 weil wir alleine sind*

*Spiel mit mir ein Spiel
 Vater
 Mutter
 Kind*

PUR: Kinder sind tabu

(Mächtig viel Theater. Intercord/EMI 1998)

*Die jungen Opfer sind zerbrechliche Wesen,
sind hilflos, sie haben nichts getan
Opfer, die man leicht beeinflussen kann*

*Sie sind völlig schutzlos, ausgeliefert
Angst, die sie gefügig macht
Bedroht und eingeschüchtert
Nein, Verbrechen ist kein Spaß
Und Liebe ist kein Haß*

*Kinder sind tabu
Kinder sind tabu
Laßt die kleinen Menschen in Ruhe
ihr Leben versteh'n
Ohne Angst und Gewalt sich wachsen seh'n
Kinder sind tabu*

RAINER BIELFELDT: Willi
(Nachtzug. Bielfeldt Records 1991)

*Denk' ich an Liebe, denk' ich meistens an den Regen
und auch an Willis kleine Bude unterm Dach
Wir haben oft dort oben auf der Couch gelegen
Der Tropfentrommelwirbel hielt uns Nächte wach
Denk' ich an Liebe, muß ich niemals überlegen
Ich denk an Willi - meinen Willi - und den Regen*

*Denk' ich an Liebe, dann besonders an die Nächte
und Willis Körper, naß und schön und stark und nackt
Der Regen schenkte uns, was nie die Sonne brächte
denn tausend Wassertropfen schlugen uns den Takt
Und seh' ich aus, als ob ich was Frivoles dächte,
muß ich an Willi denken und die nassen Nächte*

TIC TAC TOE: Warum?
(Klappe die 2te. RCA Local/BMG 1997)

*Ab und zu mal einen rauchen, mal in and're Welten tauchen
Das war ja noch OK, was ich gut versteh'
Doch dann fing es an mit den Sachen, die waren weniger zum Lachen
Doch du mußttest sie ja machen
Ich stand nur daneben, konnte nicht mehr mit dir reden
Alles, was du sagtest, war: "Das ist mein Leben! Mein Leben,
Das gehört mir ganz allein, und da mischt sich keiner ein!
Laß es sein, laß es sein, das schränkt mich ein!"*

*Ich sah dir in die Augen, sie waren tot, sie waren leer
 Sie konnten nicht mehr lachen, sie waren müde, sie waren schwer
 Du hattest nicht mehr viel zu geben, denn in deinem neuen Leben
 Hattest du dich voll und ganz an eine fremde Macht ergeben
 Geld, Geld, Geld, nur für Geld hast du dich gequält
 Um es zu bekommen, wie gewonnen, so zerronnen
 Dafür gingst du auf'n Strich, aber nicht für dich
 Sondern nur für deinen Dealer mit dem lächelnden Gesicht*

*Und warum? Nur für den Kick, für den Augenblick?
 Und warum? Nur für ein Stück von dem falschen Glück?
 Und warum? Nur für den Kick, für den Augenblick?
 Und warum? Du kommst nie mehr zurück.
 Komm zurück!*

SPEKTACOLÄR: Meine kleine Schwester

(365 Tage. Hansa/BMG 1998)

*Auf dem Klo wird gedealt, mit Drogen wird gespielt
 Um die hohen Beträge, wer's nicht bezahlt kriegt die Schläge
 Denn die Macht hat die Gang, strenggenommen sind die Lehrer nur Statisten
 hoffnungslose Optimisten in einem Spiel, das sie längst schon nicht mehr kontrollieren
 bewegen sich auf allen Viern, haben's Lernziel nicht kapiert
 Was steht auf dem Plan an der Wand, Sozi der Straße zum Anfachen*

*Denn nach der letzten Stunde dreh'n die Mädchen noch 'ne Runde
 In den fetten Wagen von den geilten Säcken, die vor der Schule steh'n
 und lecken sich die Finger nach jungen Dingen
 Um an ihnen rumzufingern - und noch mehr
 Das ist der Anfang vom Ende, Karriere ohne Ende
 Blinde Wut macht sich breit und schreit und schreit
 Nach der Lösung des Problems
 Zu groß der Schuh - Amerika kackt uns zu!*

*Sie ist meine Schwester und trägt ein Messer
 Sie sagt, in der Schule sei so was besser
 Sie hat Angst vor dem Tag, hat Angst vor der Nacht
 Meine kleine Schwester wurde fertig gemacht*

KNORKATOR: Ich will nur ficken

(The Schlechtst Of Knorkator. Rodrec/Indigo 1998)

*Ich will nicht mit dir nach Italien fahren
 und nicht den Sonnenuntergang zugucken
 Ich will nicht deine Eltern kennenlernen
 und auch nicht auf deine Katze aufpassen
 Mich interessiert nicht, wann du geboren bist*

*oder was deine Tante von Beruf ist
Ich will nur ficken, ficken, ficken, ficken...*

KNORKATOR: Ich bin ein ganz besond'rer Mann
(Hasenchartbreaker. Mercury/Universal 1999)

*Meine Suppe nicht essen wollend
bekam ich von meiner Mutter
gesagt, daß ich nicht zum Spielen
raus dürfe, bevor der ganze Teller
ausgelöffelt sei. Nun hatte ich
aber keinen Hunger und so
wandte ich einen Trick an, indem
ich alles stopfte in meinen Po*

*und ich empfand es irgendwie als angenehm
und konnte daraus schließen,
daß sich in meinen Anus
einige Geschmacksknospen befinden müssen*

*Ich bin ein ganz besond'rer Mann,
der mit dem Arschloch essen kann
Ich esse Fisch, ich esse Huhn,
Ich brauch' es bloß hinein zu tun*

KNORKATOR: Ich lass mich klonen
(Tribute to uns selbst. Mercury/Universal 2000)

*Der Schwanz, wenn die Erregung steigt,
grundsätzlich nur nach vorne zeigt,
was mir in dem Moment nichts nützt,
dieweil mein Arschloch hinten sitzt
Hingegen, wenn er schlaff und dünn,
dann reicht er nicht bis ganz dahin
Auch blasen kann ich ihn mir nicht,
weil sonst die Wirbelsäule bricht*

*Wie ich es wende oder dreh'
Es geht nicht oder es tut weh
Ich lass mich klonen*

Appendix C:

Students' "Ad hoc" Questionnaire

Note: Questions marked by () overlap with standard questionnaire.*

1. Did the course meet your expectations? (*)
2. What was the atmosphere like between the students and the lecturer?
3. What did you get out of this course?
4. Did the course go far enough - or too far?
5. Do you think that students should have the opportunity to decide if they miss out on certain topics?
6. Was the teaching style / structure appropriate?
7. Should students have the opportunity to leave the room (without explanation)?
8. What do you like most about this course? (*)
9. Should students decide on the marking scheme?
10. Should students be able to suggest topics for the course?
11. Opinions - were they allowed / encouraged / valued?
12. Would you do this course again?
13. What did you not like about the course? (*)
14. Evaluate the availability of resources / materials from the lecturer and / or the library.
15. What would you change about this course? (*)
16. Do you think you learned something from the course? (*)
17. Do you feel you have learned transferable skills?
18. Describe the quality / abilities necessary in a student to take part in this course.