

# Car Cultures in the EFL Classroom: Conceptual Reflections on Practical Experience

## Keywords

cultural learning –conceptual research –experiences on a methodological level

## Biographical Note

Biographical Note: Dr. Jürgen Wehrmann teaches English and philosophy at Graf Anton Günther School Oldenburg. He has worked as an adjunct lecturer at the universities of Tübingen, Mainz and Oldenburg and has published on Irish literature, science fiction and ELT. His current research areas are reading, cultural and literary learning as well as Global (Citizenship) Education in the EFL classroom.

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## Abstract (500 words)

## Abstract (300 words)

- Background: Automobility is an issue particularly suited for an integration of linguistic, ecological, cultural and political learning. Undoubtedly, mass automobility contributes to the ecological crisis in many ways. At the same time, it is a major factor in contemporary cultural assemblages: “More than any other artifact of modern technology, the automobile has shaped our physical environment, social relations, economy, and culture”(Volti 2006: ix).
- Methodology: The paper reflects on various teaching units for 16- to 19-year-old students at a German grammar school conducted by the author over the course of ten years. It is based on conceptual didactic research as well as on a cultural and textual analysis of various documents of car cultures (e.g. songs, social media, newspaper articles, films, videos and literary texts).
- Main results or findings: Exploring connections between cars and various cultural ideas, practices, identities (e.g. national, gender, class) and material structures can enable students to question the role of cars in their own lives, create an awareness of the complexities of socio-ecological transformation as well as imagine and discuss alternatives.
- Conclusions and relevance: Teaching units on car cultures demonstrate that established methods of linguistic, cultural and literary learning (e.g. close and wide reading, action-oriented tasks, perspective change, (auto-)ethnography) can be used, adapted and developed further in language education for sustainable development.

At the same time, car cultures pose challenges to purely semiotic concepts of culture.

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