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The 'world religions paradigm' as the organising principle of didactic action—a case study

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ABSTRACT

This article shows how discussion of the 'world religions paradigm' in integrated natural and social science teaching affects how religious plurality is handled. A concrete case study is used to illustrate how a teacher designs lessons on world religions.

Based on this single case study, the article argues that the use of specific teaching materials, which are shaped according to the world religions paradigm and contain a highly essentialised and ahistorical depiction of religions, contrasts with the more nuanced additions made by the teacher in the oral monologue parts of the lesson. It is shown that the world religions paradigm is subtly and implicitly questioned as well as reproduced by the teacher. The analysis is based on de Certeau's theory of strategies and tactics, which allows for a discussion of teachers' scope of action.

Introduction

Recently, the increasing religious plurality in Swiss society has been regarded as the main legitimation of educational policy decisions and developments concerning the didactics of non-confessional religious education (Jödicke 2013; Jödicke and Rota 2010). In numerous cantons, one consequence has been that Bible studies have been replaced by lessons in religious studies, which have been integrated into natural and social science studies and made compulsory for all pupils (Bietenhard, Helbling, and Schmid 2015; Deutschschweizer Erziehungsdirektoren-Konferenz 2016; Helbling et al. 2013).

Over the course of similar developments throughout Europe, the world religions paradigm became discourse-defining and continues to strongly influence religious education (Cotter and Robertson 2016; Owen 2011). In the Christian context, this concept historically allowed discussion of non-Christian religions (Owen 2011). European and international organisations, such as UNESCO, OSCE and the Council of Europe, have recommended this paradigm for teaching (Štimac 2019). Thus, this paradigm has structured numerous syllabi and teaching materials, as well as university education plans, in the study of religion (Alberts 2017; Frank 2014; Havlicek 2018; Jackson et al. 2010; Štimac and Spielhaus 2018).

However, numerous critical discussions of the world religions paradigm exist within the academic study of religion. The idea of world religions developed during the 19th century in the context of colonial discourses and metanarratives of modernity, as well as the formation of scholarly disciplines – such as Oriental studies, sociology and religious studies – and developments in Christian theology, and various entangled processes led to its specific conception (Cox 2007;

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Daniel 2016; Masuzawa 2005). First, the world religions paradigm contains the notion that there are distinct 'natural' entities: Judaism (as such), Christianity (as such), Islam (as such), Hinduism (as such) and Buddhism (as such). Sometimes, this list is supplemented with Sikhism, Shinto, etc. Thereby, Protestant theological categories, such as 'faith' and 'holy scriptures', are used to describe religious traditions in an essentialised and ahistorical manner. Second, the world religions are not modelled only on the Protestant example; the teachings of the orthodox elite are also paradigmatic (Fitzgerald 2008; Masuzawa 2005; Owen 2011). Furthermore, the world religions paradigm suggests the significance of the subsumed religious traditions in world affairs, and world religions are given an *agency*: they can develop, explain something and speak to people (cf. Cotter and Robertson 2016).

However, in the world religions paradigm, religions are not simply value-neutral entities; they are hierarchical. Discourse-analytical research shows that Christianity is imagined as a Western religion, open to enlightenment, modernity, gender equality and secularisation. Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, meanwhile, are constructed as non-Western religions that are resistant and backward when it comes to enlightenment and secularising processes (cf. Daniel 2016). Thus, knowledge from colonial ventures, which was utilised to exercise power and control, is still echoed in the world religions paradigm (Cotter and Robertson 2016). The discursive segregation of 'non-world religions' and the religious traditions of indigenous peoples also occurs through the supposed level of advancement: 'non-world religions' are religious traditions 'of the so-called traditional, backward and uneducated peoples' (Cox 2007; Harvey 2000). This demarcation illustrates another aspect of the world religions paradigm: people belong to religions, which means they can be categorised accordingly. Concepts, such as 'multiple membership' or 'bricolage', ultimately refer to the idea of existing, definable religions. From a discourse-analytical perspective, 'religion' thus also serves as a differential marker (Riegel 2011).

Despite this criticism, the world religions paradigm has rarely been questioned in pedagogical contexts (Jackson et al. 2010; Owen 2011). Building on Ron Geaves (2005), Suzanne Owen (2011) concluded that continuing to pass down essentialised knowledge on world religions leads to a situation in which 'children of immigrants learn the ideal types of Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, etc., which do not match their family's eclectic or syncretic tradition' (261). Interview studies suggest that the world religions paradigm allows teachers to address religious plurality in the classroom, while limiting the choice of phenomena to be discussed, thereby excluding pupils with non-world-religious affiliations. Furthermore, in accordance with educational policy justifications, teachers see teaching the basic knowledge of the five world religions as contributing to a peaceful coexistence in the classroom (Bleisch and Bietenhard 2018a, 2018b).

In the broader context of these conflicting claims between educational policies, syllabi and teaching materials based on the world religions paradigm and academic critique, the question arises of how teachers design lessons on the five world religions. It is asked whether teachers simply reproduce knowledge shaped by the world religions paradigm.

This article is based on a critical approach and refers to a case study of a teaching unit on five world religions. This analysis focuses on the learning arrangement that the teacher, Marius[1], uses to teach pupils in the sixth grade. Drawing on de Certeau's (1988) model of strategy and tactics, this investigation will first show the implications of the world religions paradigm in Marius's teaching. Second, this study will investigate how Marius moves within this terrain to discuss the teachers' scope of action. Therefore, this article will elucidate a specific speech act, labelled as *thinkspeak*, as a tactic. This study will also describe four functions of thinkspeak to argue that Marius does not just pass on knowledge about world religions, but enriches, deconstructs and criticises it as well.

Methods and data: approaching thinkspeak

Using an ethnographic approach, this research project, which was carried out shortly before the introduction of the Lehrplan 21 curriculum, uses the case study of Marius's teaching unit on the five world religions, which was based on the workbook 'Die Weltreligionen kinderleicht verstehen' [Easily understand the world religions] (Kraus 2010).

In an explorative approach, as much data as possible was collected, analysed and interpreted. According to Herrle, Rauin, and Engartner (2016), teaching is a complex interactive process, which suggests videography as a complexity-registering type of data. Therefore, in accordance with Herrle and Breitenbach (2016), two cameras were installed in the classroom.

Marius teaches his sixth-grade class with 21 pupils in a rural location. Before the teaching unit began, Marius was interviewed to learn about his unit plans and goals. During the interview, Marius explained that he was working on the unit with Eva in a teaching team (interview with Marius dated 4 June 2017). Due to finite temporal resources, the videography took place exclusively during Marius's instruction. The fact that the pupils kept two parallel notebooks with entries for the world-religions teaching unit (the 'Marius notebook' and the 'Eva notebook'), as well as the statement from Marius that Eva had not complied with the arrangements for the division of topics (observation protocol of 31 October 2017), suggests that the lessons were only organisationally agreed upon.

They had planned a six-week unit with an introduction to the concept of religion, a week-long sequence for each religion – Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism – a comparative conclusion on afterlife concepts and an exam (interview with Marius dated 4 June 2017). Of the 16 lessons that were videotaped, 10 took place during participatory observation. Despite our inquiries, however, it was never clear exactly how many lessons the team had planned for the entire unit. Statements given by Marius suggested that he or another substitute teacher took over some of Eva's lessons (video transcript, Video 3a).

The following materials were collected: the workbook 'Die Weltreligionen kinderleicht verstehen' (Kraus 2010), additional teaching materials (copies from other teaching resources) used by Marius, one pupil's 'Marius notebook' and the exam.

The first analyses of the transcribed videos were done using the coding techniques of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss [1965] 1998; Strübing 2014). During the phase of open coding, a conspicuous teaching practice became significant. A high proportion of monologues from Marius permeated the material and, due to their complexity, were difficult to code and interpret; they showed some interesting discrepancies regarding the use of teaching materials. Assuming that the presentation form of knowledge is not neutral but rather shapes knowledge (Vogl 2011), this aspect was given special consideration during further analysis. For the purpose of this article, the articulation between teaching material and oral teaching practices will be focused on to investigate whether the world religions paradigm is simply reproduced.

According to Dürscheid (2016), that which requires precision in written language can be compensated for by the shared experiential space of the speakers and listeners in oral language. Thereby, linguistic breaks and elliptical and colloquial expressions are all characteristic of orality. We designated a specific speech style in the data to further analyse as *thinkspeak*. The following example illustrates that kind of speech style:

> Marius: Yes! The belief in the dream world that the Aborigines have has almost completely disappeared because many Aboriginal people were forced to become Christians through so-called missionary work. And that also happened in America, with all the Incas and the like, that was also the case. In Australia, it wasn't the Spaniards, but the English. Yes, Australia was the prison of England, in effect. All those that they didn't want in England were brought to Australia.
>
> Pupil J: And what happened to the Mayans?

Marius: They disappeared. They were suddenly, they were [in?] power and then suddenly they disappeared. They really just kind of disbanded. There was never war, as far as I know. The Incas – they were in the south. The Mayans were in Mexico. The Incas were also, yeah – just like America. They were massacred, if you like, by the Spaniards. And in Brazil it was the Portuguese. That's why they speak Spanish, Portuguese. (Video 1)

The excerpt is part of a lesson sequence in which the distribution of world religions is recorded on a map of the world. Marius ends this thinkspeak by focussing on the diagram again. The given example stands for those speeches in which speaking becomes thinking out loud or, as Kleist puts it, '*l'idée vient en parlant*'. As this is being carried out, an idea that may have lain dormant comes to the surface 'as the speech progresses, in the necessity of finding an end to the beginning' (Kleist [1805] 1999). In the process, an insight is worked out while speaking. Going beyond Kleist, we identify further characteristics of thinkspeaks, and they are designed to be associative and lengthy. They tie in with the lesson structure and come back to it at the end. They go beyond illustrative examples by including topic shifts and leaps and are, as the example shows, sometimes pervaded by pupils' questions and statements. In the ongoing analytical process, the thinkspeaks focused on investigating both their relation to the teaching material and their function in the teaching in connection to the world religions paradigm.

If one understands teaching as a cultural practice, according to Giroux (1994), the question arises as to what conditions characterise teaching. De Certeau's (1988) distinction between strategic and tactical action, which he uses to describe everyday practices in the context of his analysis of the culture industry, can therefore be transferred to the school context. This model shows that there is a scope for ways of operating (tactics) in institutions and power structures (strategies), even though consumers are encouraged to passively take products imposed upon them (Krönert 2009). Building on de Certeau, school is understood as a given strategy that is signified through 'for example, standardized organizational practices in dividing time and space, classifying students and allocating them to classrooms, and splintering knowledge into "subjects"' (Tyack and Tobin 1994). As part of this structure, teaching material (e.g. workbook) organises knowledge into tailored topics.

According to de Certeau, consumers, in their everyday activities, are not simply at the mercy of given structures of meaning but rather are characterised by an obstinate 'use' of the given (Krönert 2009), '[t]hese 'ways of operating' constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organised by techniques of sociocultural production' (de Certeau 1988). They act situationally and handle the terrain using tactics; de Certeau attributes these tactics to a 'dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals' (de Certeau 1988).

Therefore, teachers are the consumers who appropriate school as a given strategy. Consumption, in de Certeau's view, 'is devious, it is dispersed, but it insinuates itself everywhere, silently and almost invisibly, because it does not manifest itself through its own products, but rather through its ways of using the products imposed by a dominant economic order' (de Certeau 1988). The following question becomes pertinent by envisaging the individual scope of action:

[…] what popular procedures […] manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them, and finally, what 'ways of operating' form the counterpart, on the consumer's […] side, of the mute processes that organize the establishment of socioeconomic order. (de Certeau 1988)

Therefore, concerning Marius's lessons, his use of teaching material at the written level and the functions of thinkspeaks at the oral level become the focus of the analysis.

The world religions paradigm as a strategic model of lesson structuring

What Wanda Alberts (2017) described for religious studies in higher education also applies to Marius and Eva: the world religions paradigm structures teaching units. Marius's use of the teaching material exemplifies the consequences of the 'grammar of schooling' (Tyack and Tobin 1994) as an organisational principle that integrates the school into lessons. Relating thereto is a division of knowledge into topics that allows for verifiability by means of an exam.

The workbook is divided into the following main chapters: 'Introduction', 'Judaism', 'Christianity', 'Islam', 'Hinduism', 'Buddhism', 'The Final Test' and 'Solutions'. To 'treat' the five world religions as independent entities reinforces the structuring function of the world religions paradigm. Marius emphasised that the workbook would allow him to 'objectively' study religions with his pupils and to refrain from incorporating his own opinions into his teaching. In the interview, he distanced himself from his evangelical colleagues who, as he said, would be 'slightly biased' in such a lesson (interview with Marius dated 4 June 2017).

The workbook offers the following subchapters for each of the five world religions' chapters: 'History, background, faith', 'Celebrations' and 'Customs, rituals and symbols'. As a central function of the workbook, Marius talks about the possibility of being able to share the topics in a team: he would take the chapters 'History' and 'Celebrations'; Eva would take the rest (interview with Marius dated 4 June 2017). Nevertheless, Marius also sees a disadvantage in it:

> [. . .] precisely, the topics that we can divide, and thus the workbook, have the same structure, so that provides a little support there—personally, I find it rather boring because you go through the same pattern continuously, and it's always the same. (Interview with Marius from 4 June 2017)[2]

This quote shows unease and recalcitrance when it comes to the present organisational structure (Krönert 2009). Marius designed his lessons mainly by means of the copies from the workbook, which the students glued into their 'Marius notebooks' and completed together in classical frontal teaching. The written level records what is considered important information and exam-relevant knowledge. Thereby, the workbook and other teaching materials function as a basis for defining the 'valid knowledge canon' (Heitzmann and Niggli 2010). As an introduction, Marius used a worksheet querying the pupils' preconceptions, a question box and the title page design in the 'Marius notebook'.

The preconceptions worksheet itself, though, is pre-structured by a Protestant understanding. The pupils are supposed to define 'religion' for themselves in the first task; however, their knowledge of faith is questioned in the second task (figure 1):

	Christinnen und Christen?	
	Musliminnen und Muslime?	
An wen glauben	Jüdinnen und Juden?	
	Hindus?	
	Buddhistinnen und Buddhisten?	

Figure 1. Extract from the 'preconceptions' worksheet (source: materials provided by Marius).

The exam further reinforces the essentialised, ahistorical and orthodox knowledge of the religious traditions that were discussed. The introductory task is added as an example (figure 2):

Thus, knowledge concerning religious traditions is arranged into clear, simple schemes and

1. Fülle die Tabelle aus. ＿/ 5

	Christentum	Judentum	Islam	Hinduismus	Buddhismus
Heilige Schrift					
Ort für das gemeinschaftliche Gebet					

Figure 2. Excerpt from the world religions examination (source: materials provided by marius).

made learnable through the worksheets. Two examples illustrate that the workbook provides shortened and essentialised information: 'The sacred Hindu scriptures are called Vedas' (Kraus 2010, 40); 'Another characteristic is the prohibition of pork. […] Muslims still adhere to this prohibition today' (Kraus 2010, 37). Even from a didactic point of view, the workbook is questionable since the tasks are designed simply as textual understanding. This lack of intellectually challenging demands on pupils is identified by Wright (2013) as one of the main failures in religions education in general.

However, knowledge of the world religions is not just organised in terms of content. In the second introductory lesson, the pupils were given the task of colouring a map on which religions are located. This spatial organisation visualises a Christian Europe, while non-Christian religions, except for Judaism, do not belong to Europe (figure 3).
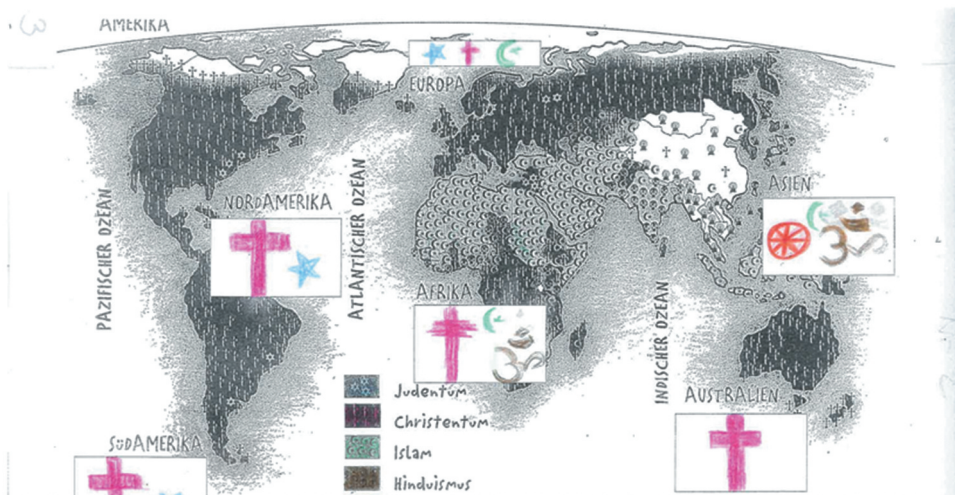

Figure 3. Worksheet 'world religions map' (source: notebook of a pupil).

The ahistoricism and essentialism that carry the world religions paradigm is also evident in the teaching material. Although the workbook contains the subchapter 'Historical background' for each religion, these subchapters are rather short. For Judaism, the religious history is briefly narrated (Abraham, Jacob, Moses, building the temple in Jerusalem); concerning Islam, the pupils only learn that in 610 AD Muhammad received a message from the angel Gabriel that he was 'the Messenger and Prophet of God' (Kraus 2010, 29); for Hinduism and Buddhism there is no historical information at all. Only Christianity has a diagram indicating historical development and differentiation from the 'early Christian community' to today's 'groups' (Kraus 2010, 40).

In the world religions paradigm, the idea of belonging to a religion is immanent, and thus the representation of prototypically devout Muslim, Hindu, etc. is differentiated from a Christian 'us' and designated as a collective. This can also be found in the structure of the workbook. For example, the pupils learn that in Judaism there are 'Orthodox Jews, Conservative Jews and Reform Jews who live out their faith to different degrees' (Kraus 2010, 7). However, 'strict Orthodox' or 'religious' Jews who touch the mezuzah when entering a house are described. This description is introduced as follows: 'In a Jewish house, things are done differently than what we are familiar with' (Kraus 2010, 13). Nowhere is it mentioned that people change their religious attitudes and religious affiliations or live practices that could be associated with different traditions.

Each order also produces exclusions, which are exemplified below. After the first lesson, there were questions in the question box from a pupil who wanted to know, among other things, whether Greek and Norse gods would also be included. He illustrated his question with a drawing of Yggdrasil, inscribed with 'Asgard', 'Helheim', 'Midgard' and 'Nidavellir'. In the preconceptions work-sheet, he answered the question 'What do you believe in?' as follows: 'in Greek/Nordic gods (partially)'. In this lesson structure, though, his question and his own confession were excluded. This example shows how the world religions paradigm structures lessons in such a way that the scope for the non-world religious can neither be seen nor sought.

In summary, the teaching material exemplifies the problems and limitations of the world religions paradigm. Hence, the teaching naturalises the classification of the existence of five world religions as clearly distinguishable, essentialised and, except for Christianity, ahistorical entities. Christianity, as a religion, is also assigned the 'here' location. World-religion followers are portrayed as a homogeneous, exemplarily practicing group of religious believers. 'Non-world religions' and thus their followers are excluded. Thus, the teaching materials, as well as the grammar of schooling, are part of the strategy and have an important impact on the organisation of teaching.

Marius's agency within the structure: thinkspeak as a tactic

The following section investigates how Marius handles the terrain, focusing on his oral teaching activity and interactions with his pupils. Therefore, the multiple functions of thinkspeak will be analysed. Below, the functions will be separately highlighted according to their specific function and exemplified using the data material. Four functions can be described: 1) reification, 2) breaching the sequential treatment, 3) enriching and expanding the terrain and 4) connection to topicality, life-world and own values.

Reification

In some of his thinkspeaks, Marius makes real-life and everyday references in the form of episodic reports. In them, he provides descriptions of the world religions that allow for categorisation according to certain criteria (external appearance, actions) and that make belonging to a specific group visible. He explains that a Jewish child is characterised by his head covering and braids, placing the child in the subgroups of 'traditionalists' and 'fundamentalists'; other manifestations and

groupings are not mentioned (Video 2 c). Here, the 'Jew' has only one face: that of a devout believer respecting specific norms. Thereby, 'the Jew' with certain characteristics is depicted as a prototype of a group rather than an individuum, and the world religions paradigm is reified.

Breaching the sequential treatment

In many of his thinkspeaks, Marius uses comparisons to breach the sequential treatment of world religions, as specified by the teaching material. Some of these thinkspeaks result in non-Christian world religions being constructed as one entity that is genuinely *different*, one *them*. The following question posed by the teacher shows how the *us* is constructed as a counterpart:

> Marius: So, what would be a cultural phenomenon related to Christianity? Something that we do. A cultural phenomenon in terms of human behaviour, action, thinking and feeling.
>
> Pupil J: Maybe someone who goes to church every Sunday. (Video 1)

Culture is listed as a 'new' reference value, which makes it possible to use Christianity without it meaning a group of 'Christians'. Rather, the world religion 'Christianity' works as a formative instance for the society in which the pupils are located. The answer is characterised by the distancing use of the indefinite pronoun *someone*. Remarkably, the pupil does not include groups that have recently been constructed in this situation. In another spot (Video 2b), the meaning of Muhammad is negotiated in comparison to Jesus. Again, Marius refers to a common *us*; one knows the subdivision of people, Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit. However, Christianity is not only a reference point for the *us*; it is also depicted as more peaceful, as it has overcome its violent past:

> Marius: A very important area is this Arab part. It was always very warlike there, actually. And right now it's very warlike again. But if I turn the story around, then Europe was exactly the same. There, where now everything is coloured red from Christianity, it was just as warlike. And terroristic, yeah. (Video 2b)

In this thinkspeak, the 'warlike' attribute unfolds thematically, along a historical line, upon which Arab countries can now be placed where Christianity once was. At another point, looking for a definition of the term 'culture', Marius brings in the West as an entity in which the 'higher culture' manifests itself in being able to choose what one wants to learn, where one wants to work and being able to earn as much money as one wants (Video 1). At this introductory point in the teaching of the five world religions, the image of a Western-Christian Protestant *us* is shaped. Furthermore, Marius states that this *us* is not actually practised all that much; in other countries, religion is 'more lived out' (Video 1). What Lingen-Ali and Mecheril use for older sociology of religion models also applies to the world religions paradigm:

> In this respect, it can be said that the sociology of religion models tend to be binary: in their 'general statements', they refer to a (constructed) *us* of the Christian-dominated European majority society, thereby excluding the *thems* from this collective, who, in particular with reference to their supposed religious collective, become an issue. (Lingen-Ali and Mecheril 2016, 17)

The lessons are based on the perspective of the *others*, who are perceived as a homogeneous religious community. The *us*, however, are perceived differently. In the comparisons made, various entities (for example, Judaism followers – Islam followers, us – them, 'cultures') are set in reference to each other. Through these new attempts to order and classify, groups of people are formed that differ from one another due to certain characteristics. Thus, sometimes, the thinkspeaks also fulfil the function of breaking down borders (Islam, Buddhism, etc.) to create new ones (us, them). Interpreted through the lens of discursive analysis on religious othering, one can understand Marius's statements as overlapping the world religions paradigm with the current discourse of religion of the other as a migrant, also classified as hegemonic by Mecheril and Thomas-Olalde (2011).

Enriching and expanding the terrain

In addition to breaking the sequential treatment of world religions, another tactic emerges: enriching and relating areas of knowledge to each other. For example, in a worksheet on the meaning of Christian symbols, the term 'baptismal water' is suggested. Marius expands and discusses the nuances of this term:

Marius Just water – you could also write that down here. [. . .] If you go to a Catholic church, it's right there at the entrance. There's always a certain container that the water's in. Normally, people go in, dip their fingers in and cross themselves with it. Even in cemeteries, you can see it there. In buildings or important events, sometimes priests do that or bishops, and they do it with a kind of broom. They take water and then it is – sprayed. Not with champagne bottles, that's something else, of course. It's not what you do when you give something a name. Has nothing to do with Christianity. But, like, in the Inselspital [university hospital] they built a new operating room, and to dedicate it, they invited [. . .] Islam, Judaism and Christianity [. . .] and that brings a little more luck. Because it is also important for certain believers to be healed in a holy place, as the case may be. [. . .] And at baptisms, they often do something with water. There are always [more children?] so that they are dunked, so you stand in a stream, for example, and then you immerse yourself in the stream. This is also one of these rituals. That's also exactly what John the Baptist did. That means one dives under and comes up again as – like a new person. Or as a clean person, as a purified person. That's why water is a symbol, right? And we need it to cleanse ourselves. It is not only very important in Christianity, but also very important in Islam, for example. Each time before you pray, you have to wash yourself. Not only your hands, but also your feet, for example. And even your ears. So there, purity is something that's very, very important. Actually, more important than in Christianity. And for the Jews, too, but there I don't know exactly whether they also use it in the synagogue. I don't really know for sure. But, yeah, that's why water is very important and very controversial. That's why it's also very important for religious reasons. Especially in such religions, where water is also very scarce. So, on to [letter] D! (Video 2a)

In this thinkspeak, Marius expands the knowledge of baptismal water with the more comparative concept of 'holy water' and shows who uses it in which situations and how. By referring to the champagne bottle and the dedication of an operating room, he illustrates secularised or interreligious versions of a Christian ritual. He supplements knowledge of baptismal water with reference to its historical origin. He also makes connections to other religions when he discusses purity symbolism. He explains his statement that water is important 'in such' religions with reference to water scarcity, which presupposes the knowledge that 'such' religions are in desert areas, according to the world-religions map.

In another thinkspeak, Marius goes beyond mere illustration and contrasts the practice of orthodox norms with how religion is actually lived out (McGuire 2008):

Marius: [They?] noticed that certain foods or certain animals – are impure. And then they just simply banned it. So, for example, that too – with the pork you see there – is something very important. And a lot of Muslims do really observe it; those who don't really – who don't pray five times a day and never do hajj and so on, but who, for example, stick to the pork ban. That's one common tradition or attitude that you do that. (Video 3a)

The starting point of this thinkspeak is Marius's reference to the fact that purity laws are historically rooted in religions. In his thinkspeak, Marius cites the pork ban to prevent spreading the plague, deconstructing the 'Muslim' to a religious practitioner who integrates Islamic norms more pragmatically into his or her everyday life.

These two examples illustrate how the concepts provided by the world religions paradigm, with its sharp separations and clear attribute ascriptions, are questioned with this tactic and expanded upon through additional knowledge. In these concepts, a specific image of the world-religion followers, which approximates a cultural-scientific understanding, is shown at certain points.

Connection to topicality, lifeworld (Lebenswelt) and own values

As he stated in the interview, Marius considers it important to include current topics. He says that these topics capture the children's attention and are 'handy' reference points to be able to address a topic (Interview Marius). Making connections to the pupils' lifeworld and addressing current events in society and politics often appear in thinkspeaks that are not at all created in the teaching material. *Lifeworld* is understood here in both the Schützian sense and German-speaking didactic tradition as everyday life, the world of everybody, in which every human lives, thinks, acts and communicates with others (Schütz 1962-1966).

The following example illustrates how definitions of terms are co-constructed through a connection to the lifeworld. In the first lesson, the term 'holy' is defined by having the pupils describe what is sacred to them. They almost unanimously say their families. Marius completes the sequence with: 'So, family is something very, very important in religions. How we do it, etcetera, how we practice it. And we are – just born into it' (Video 1). And with that, the term seems to have been clarified.

At another time, the pupils are asked about their own observations and experiences. In the world religions paradigm as a strategic field, stylised and abstract entities are constructed as 'collective singulars' (Eberhardt 2018, 95), which are established by the workbook and are far removed from the children's everyday lives. To approach these constructions, Marius creates connections to the lifeworld, which allows the pupils to share their experiences.

Marius creates another connection to real life using the pupils' media consumption. He explains that in video games and movies, 'certain villains' belong to a 'certain group' (Video 2b). In this context, he criticises the fact that Islam is often portrayed negatively in the media, while Christianity is reported on primarily in relation to the holidays. Such representations of Islam are used, he explained, by 'certain politicians'.

In the same period, Marius focuses on the use of *Allah* in greetings. He states that 'this Allah' also floats around in the media: 'Allahu Akbar – that's supposed to mean God is great, right? And then it's bang bang tat-tat-tat-tat-tat' (Video 2b). Marius continues to warn the pupils of the enormous impact media have.

In the tactic of connection, the thinkspeaks often reveal Marius's values. He establishes a critical distance from religion. Thereby, he often makes use of irony and trivialisation and refers to the dangers that can result from the instrumentalisation of religion.

Discussion

By means of de Certeau, this study explored school as a given strategy and asked how the teacher operates within that strategy. In analysing products at the written level, this study showed how the world religions paradigm permeates the workbook and structures the teaching unit. This paradigm appears particularly suitable to fit the grammar of schooling, particularly in 'splintering knowledge into subjects' (Tyack and Tobin 1994, 454). This might explain, why the world religions paradigm is difficult to change in education, despite the numerous profound criticisms of the academic study of religions. Moreover, as Bergunder (2012) notes, the world religions paradigm still has great plausibility in the everyday understanding of religion. This study has shown how such terrain has an impact on everyday teaching. Thereby, the teaching material plays a pivotal role. From a didactics point of

view, more adequate teaching material should be used in religions education. For teacher training, this means that prospective teachers must learn to critically assess teaching materials for selection and use in a targeted manner.

As a teacher, Marius is subject to the school as a terrain; however, he is not a passive consumer. As a professional, he chooses teaching materials (the workbook and additional copies) that support him in his task, even if he describes the workbook as boring. His field of action is the oral level, in which the thinkspeaks can be described as a tactic in the sense of de Certeau. This study detected four functions of those thinkspeaks: (a) reification, (b) breach of the sequential treatment, (c) enrichment and expansion of the terrain and (d) connection to topicality and lifeworld. Furthermore, Marius's thinkspeaks can be described as skills used both to entertain himself and the pupils without any preparation or effort and to give meaning to the lesson's subject. This tactic makes it possible to create separate side paths and connections within the given strategic field. At the same time, Marius makes quite stubborn use of his resources – he seems to be interested in religion – and is characterised by a certain rebelliousness (de Certeau 1988) towards the teaching material, which exemplifies the world religions paradigm.

The analysis of thinkspeaks as a tactic demonstrates that Marius sometimes questions the terrain without leaving it. Investigating the tactic proves to be useful, particularly at the lesson's oral level. However, as this argument is built on a case study, further investigation is necessary to expand its base. From a broader perspective, Marius's thinkspeaks illustrate Kalthoff's (2014) considerations of orality as a dimension of teaching. In his reflections on a sociological theory of education, Kalthoff questioned the cognitivist bias of linguistic-sociological classroom research which assumes a direct relationship between the pupil's response and the teacher's comment. That is, the teachers are constantly attentive and do not stray with their thoughts. Kalthoff suggested that oral events during teaching should be understood as a modulation of uncertainty, inattention, ad hoc moods and unfortunate interventions on the part of the teacher. He drew attention to the phenomenon that occurs when teachers do not always (correctly) hear what students say, and in their teacher commentary, only follow a trace of their own perception that is not found in the student's utterance by an empirical theory of teaching. Accordingly, one can argue that orality should be considered in classroom research. Specifically, this study contends that the orality skills of teachers should be reflected and developed in teacher education and considered in concepts of language-sensitive, subject-specific teaching.

As this study has shown, Marius not only passes on and reproduces knowledge about world religions, but he also uses thinkspeaks to enrich, deconstruct and criticise those conceptualisations. In doing so, he introduces and entangles public discourse, as well as his own experiences and values Marius's tactics illuminate that the world religions paradigm has its limits in everyday teaching. Drawing on observations in the classroom (e.g. one pupil's question concerning Greek and Norse religions) does not necessarily correspond to children's interests and, in this context, their lifeworld. For the further development of subject didactics, it would be interesting to include the pupils' lifeworlds (in the Schützian sense) as alternatives in approaching religious phenomena.

In recent years, voices calling for a new paradigm for religions education to counter the world religions paradigm have been growing. Even though new approaches are not discussed here, they should be briefly mentioned. Among these, one proposal would replace 'religion' with 'worldview' and would include secular worldviews and lived experiences (Cooling, Bowie, and Panjwani 2020; van der Kooij, Ruyter & Miedema 2017). Another approach suggests drawing on cultural studies to examine, together with pupils, boundary drawing processes themselves (Bleisch 2019).

Even if the data collected in this study cannot make any statements about what the pupils have learned in Marius's lessons, it can plausibly be assumed that such a lesson not only teaches knowledge about the prototypical world religions but also strengthens and shapes the idea of differences between the various followers of world religions. The question remains whether tactics such as the one used by the teacher in the current case study are effective in counteracting the strategic model.

Notes

1. All names have been anonymised.
2. All teaching transcripts have been slightly linguistically revised for the reader's convenience.

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