Quiet Learners and their Shells –
Introverted Learners and CLT

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Abstract

Communicative Language Teaching is the prevalent teaching methodology in Austrian foreign language curricula. In CLT, effective communication is more important than accuracy and there is often a focus on speaking and collaboration. In such classrooms, but also in western cultures in general, talkative, extraverted personalities are often preferred to quiet, introverted personalities. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to investigate introverted language learners’ experiences of CLT, as well as language teachers’ perceptions of teaching introverted learners. Following a qualitative approach, semi-guided in-depth interviews were conducted with language teachers and introverted language learners of two different age-groups (12-14 years and over 25 years). Although no interviewed teacher sees differences between introverts’ and extraverts’ overall language proficiency, introverts often get lower grades in the extraverted teachers’ classes because of their reluctance to raise their hands in class. According to data, many introverts feel anxious in situations that require them to speak the target language, especially when they have to speak in front of many people. Introverted language learners’ perceptions also depend on age in some instances. In contrast to the younger age group, the interviewed older learners tend to feel uncomfortable doing collaborative work. Language teachers’ ability to create a warm and supportive atmosphere is what the language learners consider most important for reducing speaking anxiety and for a pleasant language learning experience. This study hopes to raise awareness and create a deeper understanding of introverted language learners’ needs to improve language teaching.
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Declaration

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1 Introduction

Communicative Language Teaching is the prevalent language teaching methodology in most modern language classrooms around the world and many studies have shown that it is the most effective methodology when the goal is communication in the target language (Liem & McInerney, 2008; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Also Austrian foreign language curricula are mostly based on CLT (Lehrplan der allgemeinbildenden höheren Schule, 2018; Lehrpläne - Neue Mittelschulen, 2018; Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation & Entwicklung, 2011). There are many different versions of CLT, but the focus is generally on effective communication rather than accuracy. (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). While for successful communication, the development of all four skill areas—writing, reading, speaking and listening—is necessary, in language classrooms, there is often a focus on speaking and collaborative activities. Collaboration has not only become more and more important in the language classroom, but also in many other subjects, teachers try to improve their teaching by encouraging learners to interact (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012). While there is no denying the effectiveness of including some collaboration into teaching (Laal, Naseri, Laal, & Khattami-Kermanshahi, 2013), there is the question whether such methods are equally beneficial for different types of learners and to what extent teachers are aware of learners’ social needs. In classrooms with a strong emphasis on speaking and collaboration, the outgoing, talkative learner is often seen as the ideal (Cain, 2013); but also in western cultures in general, extravert personality traits are usually preferred to introversion (Kim & Markus, 2002). Susan Cain’s book Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking (2013) has heightened awareness of the strengths of introverted personalities, but there is still lack of academic research on teaching introverts, especially with respect to language teaching and CLT, where the dominant ideal of the extrovert may be especially prevalent.
In my opinion, teachers need to be aware of and address students’ individual needs instead of pursuing a one-size-fits-all approach to communication and collaboration in the language classroom, which is why I am interested in learning more about learners’ individual differences. In addition to the obvious lack of research in the area of introversion and CLT, there are two personal reasons for my interest in this specific area.

First, I have always enjoyed learning languages, but I felt that not all teaching styles and methods were effective for me. At university, for example, I attended some language courses for beginners. The teachers were always very nice and motivated, and their lessons well prepared, with lots of games and collaboration. At first, I enjoyed these lessons and the challenges they presented, but soon I felt rather uncomfortable most of the time. We not only had to interact with each other to practice speaking, but there were also collaborative grammar games as well as writing activities that had to be done in small groups. After the lessons, I felt exhausted and went home to study the content of the lesson ‘properly’, because I did not remember much of it. At that time, I had already known that I am an introvert and that my learning strategies seemed to differ from those of most extraverts.

Second, I sometimes felt misunderstood by my teachers, especially when I was younger. For example, in lower secondary school, when I got a 1 (which equals an A) on the first exam, my English teachers thought I had cheated (which I had not). The teachers were convinced that my English could not be that good as I did not speak much during the lessons. Naturally, this was not a boost for my self-confidence. On a side note, I have to mention that apart from this incident and the disappointing grade I got in my mid-term report after that, one of these teachers was my favorite in secondary school and certainly one of the best teachers I have ever had. This teacher made an effort to make language lessons enjoyable, but failed to recognize the individual needs of some learners—especially the needs of some introverted learners—which has convinced me of the importance of investigating introverted learners’ needs.
Wanting to become a language teacher myself, I wondered how other introverted learners experience language lessons. When talking to introverted friends, I found that some have had similar experiences, while others have very different opinions on language learning. To find out more about introverted learners’ opinions, experiences and needs, it is necessary to ask them directly—to quote Isabel Briggs Myers: “If you don’t know what an extrovert thinks, you haven’t been listening. If you don’t know what an introvert thinks, you haven’t asked them.” As learners’ perceptions of language classes can be expected to change with age, learners of different age groups were interviewed. The aim of this thesis is to find out how introverted language learners experience CLT, hoping to achieve a better understanding of their needs and to make language teaching more efficient for these types of learners too. A further objective was to find out how teachers address the needs of introverted learners in their language classroom and consider what strategies might be useful to ensure all types of learners feel comfortable and engaged in a communicative language classroom.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The second chapter gives an overview of literature on the two main topics CLT and introversion. As no previous study has examined the perceptions of introverted learners in a communicative language classroom, this chapter reviews general literature on the development and the nature of CLT and looks at introversion from an educational, psychological and cultural viewpoint. Chapter three provides detailed information on the methodology of this study, and explains how the interviews were conducted with teachers as well as introverted learners of two different age groups, including issues such as research design, research context, ethics, data analysis, etc. Chapter four presents the results of this study and is divided into two parts. The first part addresses the findings of the interviews with the introverted learners of both age groups and the second part presents the results of the interviews with teachers. The fifth chapter joins and discusses learners’ and teachers’ responses in relation to current literature, focusing on the main findings regarding speaking, work forms, affective factors and grading. Chapter six summarizes the main findings of this study and the
implications for teaching. Due to its exploratory nature, this study also hopes to provide a sound basis for further research, which is why there is an emphasis on suggestions for further research in this last chapter.

2 Literature Review

This chapter will look into existing literature on the main topics underlying this study. First, it is necessary to understand the development and the nature of Communicative Language Teaching as well as its status in the modern language classroom. The main part of this chapter will describe introversion in more detail, explain what effects personality traits in general and introversion in particular can have on language learning and why an awareness of this is important for effective language teaching. This will provide a basis for analyzing and understanding introverted language learners’ experiences of CLT, as well as language teachers’ attitudes towards CLT and teaching introverts, which are the aims of this study.

2.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

According to current foreign language teaching research (Liem & McInerney, 2008; Richards & Rodgers, 2014), communicative language teaching (CLT) is the most common methodology and often also considered most effective when the aim is communication in the foreign language. Communication—in foreign languages but also in the native language—has become an increasingly important skill in the 21st century workplace (Marzano & Heflebower, 2012). Globalization processes have made foreign languages more and more important and especially the status of English in the world has been changing. The growing importance of multilingual employees has created the need for more effective language teaching approaches (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). As a result, language teaching has undergone considerable changes in the last decades.

Another reason for this change is the fact that language teaching is subject to paradigm shifts in general. Research in the field of applied linguistics, education and second language
teaching has come to new conclusions about language learning processes. These new insights into the nature of language learning and teaching in combination with the growing importance of English as a global language have paved the way for a new language teaching approach: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT is typically described as an approach rather than a method (Richards & Rodgers, 2014), because it does not only refer to the planned procedure of language teaching, but is rather to be seen as a philosophy or nature of language teaching (Anthony, 1963).

Until the 1960s, the prevalent British approach to foreign language teaching was Situational Language Teaching (SLT) which used situation-based exercises to practice basic structures. SLT and other approaches, such as Audiolingualism, have since been gradually replaced by CLT (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). Most of the older methods also aimed at enabling students to communicate effectively in the target language, but in the 70s, “educators began to question if they were going about meeting the goal in the right way” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 115). Observations showed that students were able to produce accurate sentences during the language lessons, but had major difficulties with communication outside the classroom. Educators realized that in addition to linguistic structure, social aspects also have to be taken into account in language teaching and learning (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Howatt and Widdowson (2004) argue that the realization of the impossibility to predict the language needed in a certain situation led to the gradual replacement of SLT and Audiolingualism by CLT which emphasizes the production of meaning and the communication of language users’ intentions.

In his work Notional Syllabuses, Wilkins (1976) provides a communicative, functional definition of language for the development of a CLT syllabus. He describes the communicative elements that are important for mastering a language, and focuses on the underlying system that creates meaning, rather than the concepts of vocabulary and grammar (Wilkins, 1976). Wilkins’
notions have had much influence on the further development of CLT and have also been incorporated into a syllabus by the Council of Europe. (Richards & Rodgers, 2014)

In the early years of CLT, several studies tried to prove the superiority of the CLT approach. Savignon (1972), for instance, compared the achievements at the end of two different 18-week beginning courses in order to assess the effectiveness of CLT. In one course, communicative activities were used to enable students to learn a foreign language through learning meaning instead of form, whereas the other group focused mainly on repeating laboratory pattern drills. The tests at the end of the course comprised accuracy and communicative competence and found no difference between the two groups concerning accuracy. However, the group taught with the communicative approach significantly surpassed the other group in communicative competences such as comprehensibility, fluency, effort and successful communication in unknown tasks. This study showed that a focus on meaning instead of form is also effective at a beginner level.

Starting as a mainly British innovation, the communicative, or functional approach to language teaching was soon accepted by textbook writers, teachers and governments across the world. In the 1980s, for instance, Malaysia provided intensive training for language teachers and introduced a communicative syllabus (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). CLT is also the common methodology in Austrian foreign language school curricula and part of the educational standards (‘Bildungsstandards’) (Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation & Entwicklung, 2011). In the handbook for the educational standards of English language teaching in the 8th grade, for example, it says that the curriculum for the second language in secondary school does not define contents in terms of specific grammatical or lexical competences or thematic requirements anymore. Instead, it places a emphasizes the development of communicative competences of the individual learner. The overall goal in all skill areas is always the ability to communicate successfully, what is not to be confused with the ability to communicate accurately. As a result, communicative aspects have priority in the
development of all skill areas. (Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation & Entwicklung, 2011, p. 52). While not mentioned explicitly, this is also true for the Austrian curricula for other modern languages taught at AHS (secondary school focusing on general education), because the curricula are the same for all taught modern foreign languages (Lehrplan der allgemeinbildenden höheren Schule, 2018).

The dominance of CLT in Austrian language teaching is also reflected in the curricula for teacher training. In the new curriculum for English language teacher training at Karl-Franzens Universität Graz, for example, there are four compulsory courses that are explicitly about communicative language teaching (Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, 2018).

2.1.1. Different interpretations and versions of CLT. Unlike the often very explicit descriptions of linguistic theories or language teaching approaches, no universally accepted model of CLT exists (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). While educators agree on the basic notion of CLT, there are many different interpretations and versions of it. Littlewood (1986), for instance, argues that CLT systematically integrates structural and functional aspects, while for others it mainly means using problem-solving activities done in pairs or groups. Howatt and Widdowson (2004) reason that there is a weak and a strong form of CLT. While in the strong form, communication is used as a means of learning a foreign language, in the weak version, CLT is integrated into a system of mixed approaches, and communication rather serves as an opportunity to apply and practice the language in authentic contexts. Other points often mentioned in the context of CLT comprise tolerance of learners’ errors, authenticity of texts, real communication, discovering grammar rules independently, connection of all skill areas, and opportunities for experimentation (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). While some approaches have put fluency above all, often at great expense of accuracy, some approaches try to provide sufficient opportunities for practicing accuracy as well (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).
Many educational researchers (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014) have tried to find some common elements of CLT. Richards and Rodgers (2014) summarize it in the following way:

Common to all versions of CLT is a theory of language teaching that starts from a communicative model of language and language use—that is, a focus on achieving a communicative purpose as opposed to a control of structure—and that seeks to translate this into a design for an instructional system, for materials, for teacher and learner roles and behaviors, and for classroom activities and techniques. (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 87)

According to Johnson and Morrow (1992), communicative activities are characterized by information gap, choice and feedback. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) explain that the most important aspect of CLT is that almost all tasks are “done with a communicative intent” (p. 122). They are in favor of the variety of existing interpretations of CLT and say that “CLT is ‘fuzzy’ in teachers understanding. This fuzziness has given CLT a flexibility which has allowed it to endure for thirty years” (p. 115)

The different notions of CLT mentioned above, all come from researchers of this field. Nevertheless, these notions differ considerably from one another. Consequently, it is only logical that school teachers’ definitions of CLT also diverge drastically. While most teachers are familiar with the basic, universally accepted definition of the functional approach of Communicative Language Teaching, there are—according to my experience—some who simply equate communication with speaking and are not fully aware of the importance of the other skills necessary for successful communication. For this study, it is therefore crucial to be aware of the divergence of definitions of CLT. At this point, the question arises how effective each of the implementations is for different kinds of language learners.

2.1.2. Criticism of CLT. Most researchers consider Communicative Language Teaching the best language teaching approach today and developments in the 21st century have
shown the need for communicative competence. The considerable amount of research done and the many different existing versions make CLT seem adaptable for all teachers, learners and contexts. Nevertheless, there is some criticism on Communicative Language Teaching.

2.1.2.1 Fossilization. Communicative activities are used in order to develop learners communicative competence. However, as Higgs and Clifford (1982) argue, some aspects of linguistic development are often neglected by CLT. Predominantly the overemphasis on fluency and communicative skills, especially in the early stages of language learning, leads to the persistence of errors, despite educators’ claims to integrate accuracy activities. According to Higgs and Clifford (1982), the results are poor grammatical competence and high levels of fossilization.

Brumfit (1984) took speculations about fossilization even further and wondered whether a whole linguistic system can be fossilized, similar to the development of pidgins. He poses the question whether it is possible for a class to develop its own classroom pidgin, however, his answer to this question is that this cannot be possible as learners are provided with additional input through texts, interaction with the teacher as well as other sources. Nevertheless, he argues that it is important to keep fossilization and even “pidginisation of comprehension” (Brumfit, 1984, p. 133) in mind and incorporate accuracy-based exercises into teaching.

2.2 CLT and the Individual Learner

2.2.1. The role of the learner. Learner roles in a communicative language classroom often differ considerably from traditional learner roles (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). As communication is promoted, classes are highly learner-centered. Cooperative approaches largely replace individual activities, which means that in terms of language input, learners have to rely more on their peers than on their teachers who usually provide most input in traditional approaches (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Therefore, it is also the learners themselves who are responsible for successful communication and they must come to understand that failed communication cannot be the sole fault of one person. In pure CLT forms, there are often no
explicit grammar rules and corrections of errors are kept to a minimum (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

There is considerable lack of research on the extent to which these learner roles are effective for different learners, especially research that considers the personality of the language learners with respect to different teaching methods and approaches. As extraverted people draw energy from the outside world through interaction with people (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015), extraverts are likely flourish in such cooperative and learner-centered learning environments. For introverts, in contrast, who draw energy from within and can easily be overstimulated by the outside world (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1992), a cooperative and learner-centered classroom might be perceived in a very different way.

2.2.2. One size fits all? Kumaravadivelu (2012) criticizes the predominance of language teaching methods such as CLT because in his view, communicative syllabuses do not regard learners individual needs and goals. He argues that such methods overemphasize native speaker competence and culture, and neglect individual differences.

As a predominantly top-down exercise, the conception and construction of methods have been largely guided by a one-size-fits-all cookie-cutter approach that assumes a common clientele with common goals. (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, pp. 18–19)

This emphasizes the importance of knowing the individual needs of the language learners and adjusting teaching methods to fit individual students. The one-size-fits-all approach has been used by many teachers, ignoring learners’ individual needs, reacting only to students whose special needs are highly obvious. This raises the question whether the situation has changed already and if language teachers are nowadays also aware of less obvious differences such as introversion and extraversión and adjust lesson plans accordingly, which is one point of interest in the interviews conducted for this study.
Throughout approximately one century, research in language teaching was in what Brown (2013) calls a search. He states that researchers and teachers were looking for the ideal method for language teaching that could be generalized across a variety of contexts. From the mid-80s onwards, researchers have criticized the prescriptive nature of methods and their attempts to overgeneralize contexts. Brown (2013) argues that while in some CLT classrooms, some unique tasks can be observed, “within a matter of weeks, such classrooms can look like any other learner-centered curriculum” (p. 10). Researchers have realized that every classroom and every lesson is different, depending on factors such as teaching, students, context, etc.

It has been realized that there never was and probably never will be a method for all, and the focus in recent years has been on the development of the classroom tasks and activities which are constant with what we know about second language acquisition, and which are also in keeping with the dynamics of the classroom itself. (Nunan, 1991, p. 228)

In contrast to some linguists who see CLT as the method to be used in language teaching, Brown (2013) argues for dynamic approaches with only a few principles as a guideline. One of these principles is communicative competence, which he says is the goal of language learning. To achieve that, he suggests more focus on fluency than accuracy. This is in accordance with Richards and Rodgers’ (2014) and Anthony’s (1963) view that CLT should not be seen as a method, but rather as approach or philosophy of language teaching and learning, where teaching should be adjusted with regard to situation and context. We could say that we are in a post-method era, where flexibility in teaching is valued more than it has been before the 1980s (Brown, 2013). In order reach as many students as possible, teachers should be flexible and expand their repertoire of teaching methods and techniques (Blaz, 2013). All learners have their own individual needs. There can be differences in prior knowledge, learning styles or interest, but also socialization needs and comfort zones. For effective teaching, “[t]eachers must mark or identify the differences both in students and in possible teaching strategies, and make
adjustments according to what will most benefit students and best facilitate learning in the classroom.” (Blaz, 2013, p. 2). This is another reason why it will be interesting to find out what teachers consider important in their CLT lessons and how they react to individual differences in learners’ personalities.

By investigating learners’ perceptions of CLT, this study aims to find chances and limitations of CLT. There is no denying the effectiveness of CLT, which has been proven in numerous studies. Instead, this study takes the variety of different implementations of CLT into account and tries to find aspects of CLT that make language learning effective for introverted learners, as well as aspects that might place them at a disadvantage. Individual differences in learners have to be considered in order to provide every single student with the best opportunities for learning. Thus, teachers and researchers need to listen to students to find out more about their individual needs. I consider it immensely important not only to listen to those who express their opinions openly, but to also ask those who usually rather keep their opinions to themselves.

2.3 Personality Psychology and Language Learning Considerable amounts of academic work exist on the topic of the nature of language learning, including aspects such as motivation or aptitude. However, there is little research on the influence of personality on language learning processes (Dewaele, 2012). Although introversion/extraversion is a thoroughly researched field in psychology, it has hardly been taken into account by applied linguists. This poses the question how and to what extent language learning actually does depend on psychological factors such as extraversion.

In recent years, several scholars have recognized the lack of research in this area. While the older version of Dörnyei’s The Psychology of the Language Learner (2005) only includes a short chapter discussing the influence of personality on language learning, not taking the factor of extraversion into account, in the 2015 version, Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) devote more space to personality to discuss some newer findings (such as (Dewaele, 2012, 2013; Dewaele
that also consider the dimension of extraversion. At this point, it should be noted that the term ‘extraversion’ does not only refer to extraverted individuals, but also to the whole personality dimension of introversion/extraversion in general.

Some studies have been conducted in order to evaluate students’ perceptions of CLT (İnceçay & İnceçay, 2009; Rao, 2002; Savignon & Wang, 2003), but I was not able to find a study that linked students’ perceptions of CLT with personality. Interestingly, most studies investigating students’ perceptions of CLT have been conducted in Asia. This might be because in Europe, CLT was introduced in the 1970s (Dörnyei, 2012) and has been playing an important role in foreign language teaching for many years now. It is considered state of the art in language teaching, and its effectiveness is not questioned much anymore. In most Asian countries, in contrast, CLT faced considerable criticism especially in its early years as learners’ as well as teachers’ expectations and attitudes towards foreign language teaching and learning are markedly different from western ones, which resulted in a much slower and hesitant implementation of CLT into national curricula. (Richards & Rodgers, 2014)

More research into the role of personality in second language learning, especially with respect to the most common approach in national curricula, Communicative Language Teaching, is clearly needed. By focusing on the personality trait of introversion, the present study aims to analyze the influence of language learners’ personality on their perception of CLT. In order to link learner perceptions to personality traits explicitly and to understand how individuals with different degrees of extraversion learn best or why they prefer certain tasks and methods in language lessons, it is important to understand the nature of the personality dimension introversion/extraversion, which is why some psychological and biological basics of introversion will be explained before discussing its influence on learning.

2.4 Introversion

Introversion and extraversion are personality traits that exist on a continuum. People who can be placed somewhere in the middle of this continuum are called ambiverts, but almost
all people have traits from both ends of the continuum. Against common misconceptions, being introverted or extroverted is not a choice, but innate. (Clarke, 2015)

### 2.4.1. Innateness of introversion

While studies have shown that it is possible for extraversion levels to change (Harris, Brett, Johnson, & Deary, 2016), most scholars agree on the basic notion that introversion is mainly caused by innate differences in the brain (DeYoung et al., 2010; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1992; Lucas, Diener, Grob, Suh, & Shao, 2000). However, there is some debate on more detailed explanations of the causes and effects of different extraversion levels. Clarke (2015) explains that introverts and extraverts have innate differences of the dopamine and acetylcholine levels in the brain. Dopamine is a powerful neurotransmitter that is triggered through social activity, risks, etc. and generally causes joy. While extroverts need a lot of stimulation for the production of an adequate amount of dopamine and therefore enjoy engaging in social activities, taking risks, etc., introverts are much more sensitive to this neurotransmitter. Their level of dopamine is high already and an additional dose that is too high causes them to feel exhausted. Acetylcholine, in contrast, is much subtler in creating feelings of reward, but has pleasant effects on introverts. It is released during quiet activities such as reading or deep thinking, which is why introverts prefer solitary activities. Extraverts hardly feel the mild effects of acetylcholine, which is why they prefer the stronger neurotransmitter dopamine and thus social activities. (Clarke, 2015)

Besides this rather simplified explanation of extraversion, numerous studies have been conducted in order to show the different function of introverted and extraverted people’s brains. The personality dimension of extraversion is a thoroughly researched topic in psychology, introduced by Jung and Freud at the beginning of the 20th century. Some of the most important findings about extraversion come from H. J. Eysenck, who conducted a lot of research from the 1950s onwards. Besides some newer findings on the nature of extraversion, most of Eysenck’s findings are still considered valid by modern scholars (Dewaele, 2013).
2.4.1 Eysenck’s theory of arousal. Eysenck (1985) was among the first to explain the biological basis of the extraversion dimension. He states that extraversion is “related to the ascending reticular activating system (ARAS), which is located in the brain-stem reticular formation” (p. 218). Differences in extraversion levels are a result of the arousal levels in this brain region. Introverts are generally more aroused than extroverts, but they also “produce a greater increment in arousal than extraverts in response to stimulation” (p. 219). This sensitivity to arousal through outside stimulation leads to differences in behavior, individual preferences and performance, which will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

After Eysenck’s theory of arousal, further studies have proved differences of brain activity. Johnson et al. (1999) have proved the higher cortical activity of introverts and draw from their findings that “[t]he distinction between an inward focus and an outward focus is very much the difference between introverts and extraverts.” (p. 255)

2.4.2. Sensitivity to reward. Another approach to explaining degrees of extraversion is sensitivity to reward. DeYoung et al. (2010) and Lucas et al. (2000) maintain that extraversion is largely dependent on sensitivity to reward. Extraverts display higher sensitivity to reward and thus enjoy rewarding social situations, as well as rewarding nonsocial situations. While other studies (Ashton, Lee, & Paunonen, 2002) see social behavior as the central characteristic of extraversion, DeYoung et al. (2010) suggest that social behavior is only an effect of reward processing, “probably because many human rewards involve social affiliation or status” (DeYoung et al., 2010, p. 821)

2.4.3. Social attention. Lucas et al. (2000) argue that sociability cannot be the core characteristic of extraversion because sociability cannot be defined clearly. There is the question whether sociability means that individuals with high sociability enjoy all social situations or whether they primarily enjoy engaging warmly with close friends and family, which is often referred to as ‘affiliation’. In their study, Ashton et al. (2002) defined social attention as “a construct that involves the investment of time and energy in activities that attract
social attention” (p. 251) and concluded from their findings that the core characteristic of extraversion is social attention.

This shows that there are many different explanations of the personality dimension of extraversion. Despite some controversy about the central feature of extraversion, scholars agree upon the innateness of extraversion/introversion, the differences in brain function and its effects on behavior.

2.5 Introversion or Shyness?

The term ‘introversion’ is often used as a synonym for ‘shyness’. For this study, it is important to be aware of existing misconceptions as well as of psychologists' definition of introversion and shyness. Although there are, of course, people who are introverted and shy, those two terms have entirely different meaning. According to Briggs (1988, p. 290), “[s]ocial shyness involves discomfort and inhibition in the presence of others” (p. 290). Shyness usually occurs intermittently in certain situations, such as unknown situations or situations that involve interaction with strangers or higher-ranking people. For few people, shyness is chronic and they experience shyness not only in certain situations, but are more anxious in a variety of situations, including situations that would be rated unthreatening by most other people. Briggs (1988, pp. 290–294), further divides shy people into two categories, namely shy-sociable and shy-unsociable. Here, unsociable correlates with introversion. While shy-unsociable people prefer being alone and are not much concerned about their unsocial behavior, shy-social people show more signs of “inner conflict and social distress” (p. 295), because they avoid social situations in order to avoid negative feelings, despite their desire to socialize.

This is similar to what Henderson, Zimbardo, and Carducci (2010, p. 1) say about shy individuals. They distinguish between the emotional state of shyness that all people experience to a certain degree in specific situations, and shyness as a personality trait which they define as “excessive self-focus characterized by negative self-evaluation that creates discomfort or inhibition in social situations and interferes with pursuing one’s interpersonal or professional
goals” (p.1). In contrast to Briggs, however, they emphasize that despite being “similar in its overt expression, introversion is not a subcategory of shyness” (p. 1). While the desire for social interaction is dependent on the degree of extraversion, the fear of social situations is clearly not (Henderson et al., 2010).

In this present study, interviews of shy introverted learners will be included, but there will also be interviews with introverts who cannot be considered shy. In teaching, we also have to deal with shy extroverts who might act like introverts in some situations, but as the reasons for their behavior are very different, this study will only focus on introverts, both shy and not shy.

2.6 Affective Learning

The theory of affective learning is one of the most important reasons for this study. Here, the term ‘affect’ is used as an umbrella term and covers all aspects related to emotions in language learning. Finding out about introverted language learners’ perceptions of CLT is of interest due to the importance of emotions in learning (Smith, 2018). As will be explained below, students learn best when they feel comfortable. If learners feel uncomfortable, anxious or overwhelmed by certain language teaching methods, their learning will likely be impaired (Smith, 2018). This, of course, applies to introverts as well as extraverts. The present study focuses explicitly on introverts, as the preferred learning situations as well as situations that might even be feared by introverts can be assumed to be rather different from those of their extraverted peers. However, it must be kept in mind that learners’ perceptions and preferences depend on many more factors than simply on extraversion levels. Introverted learners may share some perceptions, but it is impossible to generalize.

The Affective Filter hypothesis—first suggested by Dulay and Burt (1977) and further developed by Krashen (1987)—shows how learning a foreign language is influenced by affective factors. These affective factors are divided into three main categories, motivation, self-confidence and anxiety.
When learners are anxious or lack self-confidence or motivation, they have a strong affective filter, which means that even if the input received in class is clearly comprehensible, much of the information will be blocked by the filter and thus not much of the information reaches the brain regions responsible for learning a language. In contrast, learners with very positive attitude towards language learning and high confidence have a low filter and thus more information will be transferred to be processed in the brain. Krashen (1987) argues that while the central requirement for the acquisition of a language is comprehensive input, the affective filter is the primary reason why some students are less successful in learning a second language despite adequate input.

Therefore, teachers must create classroom settings that encourage low affective filters, which are those that create a pleasant atmosphere promoting low anxiety and preventing students from acting defensive. Krashen (1987) summarizes his findings by explaining that the “effective language teacher is someone who can provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation“ (p. 31).

Krashen makes this sound rather easy. The question remains, what factors characterize a “low anxiety situation”? All language learners are faced with positive as well as negative learning experiences. According to Williams, Mercer, and Ryan (2015), “emotions are more than just a response to an event at a single moment in time; the emotional tone of an experience can stay with us for some time and can also change” (p. 80). The world of emotions is complicated and it is not possible to predict the emotional reactions to a certain method or activity. In contrast, students will react in very different ways to the same teaching activity. This makes designing lesson plans and conducting activities difficult for teachers. The only way to predict emotions is to know the students, the setting, the task and the situation well and teachers have to be aware that only because a task might be highly interesting and motivating for one student does not mean that other students feel about it in the same way. Even if a task
elicit similar emotions in two students, their experience will still be different. (Williams et al., 2015)

This makes clear that it is not always possible for teachers to create a classroom atmosphere which is pleasant for all students. While it is clearly important to create an atmosphere that would be perceived as pleasant by most learners, I do not argue that it is necessary or even possible to teach in a way that is always pleasant for all learners, as it might even be rewarding for students to stretch beyond their comfort zones in some occasions. However, the question arises how teachers can find out which situation or atmosphere learners find enjoyable. If they rely on the learners to say something when they feel uncomfortable, they will much more often hear the opinions of extraverted learners while introverts’ opinions and feelings will not be considered to the same extent. This again emphasizes the need for a study that regards introverted learners’ perceptions.

2.7 Language Anxiety

One of the main emotions affecting language learning is anxiety. Some people tend to be more anxious than others, which is often described as neuroticism, another personality dimension within the Big Five model of personality (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003; Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999). In addition, anxiety can also be linked to specific situations. There are many reasons and types of anxiety, which are difficult to quantify or classify (Horwitz, 2010). Language learning very often induces considerable anxiety (Horwitz, 2010). A reason for this is the close connection to self-expression in the language classroom, which can be highly face-threatening. Even very basic aspects of language learning can induce anxiety, such as the pronunciation of an unfamiliar word in front of all classmates. (Du, 2009)

Du (2009) divided foreign language classroom anxiety into three types. Test anxiety is mainly caused by lack of preparation, lack of confidence or fear of failure, but can also be developed genetically. Fear of negative evaluation, on the other hand, occurs when learners are “overly concerned with others’ opinions” (p. 163). While these two types of language anxiety
are not related significantly to the degree of learners’ extraversion, communication apprehension (CA) that affects about 20 percent of all college students, is generally caused by personality traits. Du (2009) explains that “personality traits such as quietness, shyness, and reticence frequently precipitate CA“, which means that more introverts are affected. Communication apprehension is a chronic condition that substantially impairs the learners in their learning process. However, it is often not obvious who is affected, because some individuals “may not appear apprehensive unless they are engaging in a particular type of communication” (p. 163)

A study by Hamedi (2015) confirms the relationship between extraversion and speaking anxiety. They divided participants into four groups according to their extraversion level and found that the lower the level of extraversion the higher the level of speaking anxiety.

As anxiety is one of the main factors causing high affective filters, it is crucial especially for introverted learners’ success to “[b]oost up students learning confidence and lower their language anxiety” (Du, 2009, p. 164). A central aspect is a friendly and harmonious classroom atmosphere that lowers students’ anxiety. In a low anxiety classroom, mistakes should be tolerated in order to release pressure and to strengthen learners’ self-confidence. While active participation should be encouraged, patience with quiet students is essential. Du (2009) explains that they should not be pushed to say something they are not ready to say because this can bring considerable mental burden. Allowing shy students to work with people they feel comfortable with can considerably reduce their CA. In order to help students to decrease their anxiety, it is important for teachers to be aware of the fact that there are various different reasons for anxiety. Usually, anxiety is caused by negative experiences in the past which they connect with certain events or situations in the classroom (Smith, 2018). Cain (2013) explains that speaking anxiety often arises when introverted learners are given the feeling that there is something wrong with their preference for keeping quiet (Cain, 2013). Thus, it is important for teachers to recognize the individual needs of the learners and teach accordingly (Du, 2009). Other factors that reduce
communication apprehension in the classroom are getting to know classmates, a warm and welcoming classroom environment, social and oral activities, as well as group projects and discussions. (Du, 2009)

Anxiety does not only play an important role in language learning success, but also in Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE). In general, low anxiety is favorable for foreign language learning as well as foreign language enjoyment. Interestingly, researchers have also found that some anxiety can be beneficial for learning (Williams et al., 2015) and enjoyment (Dewaele, 2012). Dewaele says that successful learners usually have high levels of enjoyment, but also of anxiety. Sometimes, a moderate level of anxiety generates the necessary focus to take action. Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) explain that anxious students also tend to listen more carefully, which makes them more successful in completing tasks. However, these findings must not be misunderstood—it does not mean that teachers should create anxiety in the language classroom to increase performance (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). “Even the most stress-free environments, communicating in a foreign language can put an enormous strain on our mental resources” (Williams et al., 2015, p. 87).

2.8 The Introverted Language Learner

2.8.1. The ‘extravert ideal’. Whether extravert or introvert personality traits are considered preferable, depends on cultural values (Cain, 2013; Kim & Markus, 2002). In most Asian cultures, introspection is considered necessary for critical thinking and learning processes, while excessive talking is considered rude (Kim & Markus, 2002). Western societies, in contrast, speaking is believed to facilitate thinking and talkative people are often perceived as more intelligent than quiet individuals (Kim & Markus, 2002). Cain (2013) calls this phenomenon the “Extrovert Ideal” (p. 17) of western society. Collaboration has become more and more important in workplaces nowadays, which is reflected by teaching methods used in schools. Vries and Rentfrow (2016) have found that extraverts are more likely to be in higher-earning positions, which has led to Dickens (2016) urging teachers to teach “extrovert traits”.
While teachers should definitely do their best to support students in overcoming their weaknesses, this clearly shows the perceived superiority of extraversion in western cultures. As has been explained in section 2.4, introverts are often overwhelmed by too much social interaction, which is important to consider especially in CLT classrooms which often focus on speaking and collaboration.

According to Brown (1973), teachers generally tend to believe “that introversion is an undesirable behavior” (p. 236) and that the ideal student is amiable, talkative and outgoing. These personality traits are often seen as evidence for good mental health (Brown, 1973). More reserved and quiet students are often seen as ‘problems’ and are encouraged to be more extravert (Cain, Mone, & Moroz, 2017; Vries & Rentfrow, 2016). Brown (1973) says that this issue is further complicated by the focus on speaking in the modern language classroom, while aural comprehension is widely neglected. Further, he argues that the degree of extraversion in children may be a misleading factor in determining social abilities and adjustment. Similarly, introverted children’s proficiency and abilities in the language classroom might also be misjudged. Naiman (1996) tried to describe the personality of the successful language learner. In his study, he conducted several personality tests and compared its results to language test results. When he was not able to find any relationship between performance in language tests and extraversion scores or other personality variables, he questioned the reliability of his research tools.

Dewaele and Furnham (1999) point out that a number of linguists expected extraverts to be better language learners. Extroverts produce more language outside the classroom, which means that they receive more input and produce more output, which in turn means more practice and more testing of hypothesis. Linguists therefore assumed that extroverts are better language learners than introverts. When they were not able to find correlations between extraversion and success in language learning, most were discouraged from doing further research. Dewaele and Furnham (1999) therefore call extraversion “the unloved variable in applied linguistic research”
However, most of the earlier studies used written tests of language proficiency. When oral speech was tested, in contrast, correlations with extraversion measures were found.

In contrast to the expected superiority of extraverts in language learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2013), the findings of a study conducted by Ehrman (2009) are rather surprising. In this study, she investigated the characteristics of high achieving language learners, with a language proficiency that is rarely reached by learners, and found that these learners tend to be rather introverted.

2.8.2. Oral language performance. While there is some controversy about the relationship between introversion and general language proficiency, many studies (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999; Hamedi, 2015; Verhoeven & Vermeer, 2002) have been able to show correlations between introversion and oral language performance. As explained above, introversion correlates with higher speaking anxiety or communication apprehension, which most often leads to avoidance of speaking situations and thus less practice of oral language production.

2.8.3.1 Fluency. Hamedi (2015) conducted a study to find out the relationship between speech fluency and extraversion level. Participants’ speech was recorded, transcribed, analyzed and then scored by their prolongations, pauses, fillers and repetitions. Hamedi (2015) was able to find a strong, positive correlation between extraversion levels and speech fluency; the higher the extraversion scores, the higher the levels of speech fluency.

The reason for extraverts’ superior fluency could be their better short-term memory. While introverts have better long-term memory, extraverts have superior short-term memory and they are faster in retrieving information from their long-term memory (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999). A probable explanation for this is the introverts’ frequent overarousal that affects parallel processing necessary for effective communication (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1992). In addition, stress and time pressure has considerable negative effects on introvert’s fluency, while it tends to enhance extraverts’ fluency. The better stress resistance and short-term
memory in combination with lower anxiety, thus places extraverts at an advantage in conversations. (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999)

2.8.3.2 Communicative Competence. In a study by Verhoeven and Vermeer (2002), conducted with children acquiring Dutch as first or second language, investigated the relationship between communicative competence and personality. They divided the notion of communicative competence into three subcategories, namely organizational, pragmatic and strategic competence. For the personality dimension of extraversion, they found a positive relation to strategic competence including monitoring and planning of communicative strategies, but a negative relation to organizational competence comprising functional, lexical, syntactic and discourse abilities (Verhoeven & Vermeer, 2002). This suggests that extraverted learners find strategies compensating insufficient language skills more easily.

In a study conducted with students studying French as L2, their speech was analyzed in an informal situation and a formal situation, a chat and an oral exam, respectively (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999). Extraverts had higher speech rates, used less fillers and more colloquial speech in the formal situation than introverts, but the extraverts’ score in lexical richness was considerably lower in the formal situation. Their utterances were shorter and they made more semantic errors. Their speech styles were found to be more implicit, producing fewer nouns and determiners, but more adverbs than introverts. Considering the extraverts’ significantly higher fluency, it was concluded that extraverts had an advantage in the oral exam. For oral exam grades, however, no correlation to extraversion levels could be found, as accuracy was also taken into account (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999). This suggests that disadvantages in one area are likely to be compensated by advantages in other areas. While extraverts might surpass extraverts in some skill areas such as speaking, “the quiet determination of the hard-working introverts” (Dewaele, 2012, p. 45) is often underestimated.

2.8.3. Learning strategies. Besides the differences in acquiring foreign language speaking skills, extraversion levels also have an influence learning strategies. It has been found
that introverts learn vocabulary best in familiar surroundings, while extraverts prefer slightly novel surroundings (Dewaele, 2012). Furthermore, introverts try to solve problems without help, while extraverts rely more on social strategies and prefer to ask questions (Dewaele, 2012). Extraverts’ learning strategies are also characterized by their greater willingness to take risks which is shown in the readiness to engage in emotionally risky communicative situations as well as the more frequent use of slang words. (Dewaele, 2012)

2.8.4. **Age and educational success.** Introverts have been found to be more successful academically because of their “greater ability to consolidate learning, lower distractibility, and better study habits” (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015, pp. 25–26). However, generalizations of relationships between personality traits and academic success are not always easy. Some variables are highly dependent on social context. Interestingly, the relationship between the degree of extraversion and academic success has been found to depend on the age of the learners. While before puberty, extraverted students were more successful than introverts, after puberty introverts were at an advantage. This suggests that academic success is highly dependent on the learning environments—obviously some learning situations favor social, outgoing learner types while others are more beneficial for quiet individuals. (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

As teachers generally believe that extraverts are better language learners than introverts (Brown, 1973; Dewaele, 2012; Lightbown & Spada, 2013), the question arises how teachers perceive these differences and in what ways they react in their lesson planning. If what Dewaele and his colleagues say about teachers is true, the preference of extraverted students could affect introverted students’ perceptions of language learning considerably, which is why in this study, teacher interviews are conducted in addition to student interviews. It is obvious that it is necessary to eliminate misconceptions of extraversion introversion and to increase awareness of introverted learners’ needs, in order to provide students of all extraversion levels with fair opportunities for learning.
2.9 Summary

For this study, it is at first necessary to understand the concept of Communicative Language Teaching. We have seen that it is not easy to provide an accurate description of CLT and how it is used in the language classroom. Despite its different implementations, it is obvious that CLT plays a highly important role in modern language instruction around the world (Richards & Rodgers, 2014), and is also part of Austrian foreign language curricula (Lehrplan der allgemeinbildenden höheren Schule, 2018; Lehrpläne - Neue Mittelschulen, 2018). CLT is often considered the best approach to language teaching and its effectiveness is not questioned much anymore (Brown, 2013; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The various different versions and teachers’ understandings of CLT pose the question, however, what aspects of CLT are especially efficient for a wide range of learner personalities. As most teachers focus on speaking and collaborative activities in a CLT classroom, there is the question whether such an approach places introverted learners at a disadvantage in language learning (Dewaele, 2012). In fact, many teachers see outgoing, extraverted learners as ideal students. This extravert ideal does not only exist in language classrooms, but also outside schools in professional and private social life in western societies (Brown, 1973; Cain et al., 2017).

It is important for people—especially educators—to become more aware of the strengths of introverts and the nature of introversion in general.

Although shyness and introversion might appear very similar in their expression, these two traits must not be confused (Henderson et al., 2010). Shyness is mostly connected with certain situations, and, like anxiety, usually caused by experiences in the past (Smith, 2018), while extraversion levels—although they may change throughout a person’s life (Harris et al., 2016)—are mostly innate. The most common explanation for the differences in behavior is that introverts naturally have higher arousal levels which is why they do not require additional outside stimulation in the form of social interaction, for instance (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1992).
They appear more quiet, as too much outside stimulation leads to overstimulation and makes them feel uncomfortable and exhausted (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1992).

Many studies have tried to prove that extraverts are better language learners (Naiman, 1996), but none of those was able to find correlations to general language proficiency (Dewaele, 2012; Dewaele & Furnham, 1999). Some studies, however, were able to find correlations between extraversion levels and certain aspects of language learning, indeed (Dewaele, 2012). Extraverts have been found to be better in speaking, especially concerning fluency (Hamedi, 2015; Verhoeven & Vermeer, 2002). Reasons for this are lower arousal levels, a better short-term memory and lower speaking anxiety (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999). While it cannot be said that introverts are more anxious in general, they suffer significantly more often from communication apprehension, which can affect speaking performance considerably (Du, 2009).

Besides speaking, there is no other area in language learning in which extraverts are superior. In fact, some researchers even claim introverted superiority in some aspects, such as Ehrman (2009) who argues that high achieving language learners tend to be introverted, or Dewaele (2012), who found that introverts are at an advantage in learning vocabulary.

So far, there have only been studies examining extraversion levels in relation to language proficiency, but there is none that studies introverted language learners’ perceptions of language learning, which I consider very important for improving teaching methods so that they do not only promote the extravert ideal, but also take into account the needs of introverts and to provide both introverts and extraverts with fair opportunities for learning. This is especially important in CLT settings that often focus very much on speaking and collaboration, using task types that may be uncomfortable for introverted learners. While oral communication skills are certainly important the 21st century, there are also other communicative and non-communicative skills that should not be neglected (Marzano & Heflebower, 2012). Knowing the nature of introverted and extraverted personality and its effects on language learning,
however, will help to understand introverted learners’ perceptions of their language learning experience, which are investigated in this study.

3 The Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will explain in detail how this study was conducted. At first, I will refer to the research questions to outline why the present study is important and how the findings can improve foreign language teaching. Next, I will describe the qualitative approach and why I consider it the most useful approach for answering the research questions. The next sections will describe the procedure of finding participants and conducting interviews and give information on the participants. Further central points of this chapter are the ethics and limitations of the study. The last overall section is about the process of data analysis and management and illustrates how I transcribed the interviews, how I coded and analyzed the transcripts and what measures have been taken to ensure the credibility of this study.

3.2 Purpose of the study

Not much research has been done on the topic of introversion and language teaching. Most existing studies (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999; Ehrman, 2009; Hamedi, 2015; Verhoeven & Vermeer, 2002) taking introversion/extraversion into account are only concerned with different skills and performance, but there is considerable lack of studies that take introverted language learners perceptions, experiences or feelings into account. Several studies have proved that emotions play an important role in language learning (Krashen, 1987; Williams et al., 2015), most of all anxiety (Du, 2009). Introverts have been found to suffer significantly more often from language anxiety than their extraverted peers, which causes high affective filters that make learning difficult (Du, 2009). This clearly shows the importance of understanding introverted learners’ perceptions of their language learning experiences. Scholars have argued that extraversion is a difficult factor to measure in research (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999), which
perhaps explains the lack of research in this domain. In the present study, it is therefore crucial to be aware of the challenges and limitations. I am convinced, however, that further insight into this topic can improve language teaching significantly. Most teachers would agree that for high quality teaching, it is necessary to limit one-size-fits-all approaches to a minimum and to differentiate as much as possible in order to provide every single student with good opportunities for learning, including introverted learners.

Western society favors extraversion (Brown, 1973; Cain, 2013; Kim & Markus, 2002), which is also reflected in teaching styles, as lessons are becoming more and more communicative and collaborative (Cain et al., 2017). The reason for specifically focusing on CLT in this study is its growing importance in Austrian language classrooms. At university, CLT is promoted as the most effective method in language teaching and student teachers of English learn to use CLT in their lessons. While I do not deny its effectiveness, CLT which often focuses on speaking and collaboration, seems to reflect what Cain (2013) calls “the Extravert Ideal” (p. 4) where a talkative and outgoing nature is preferred over a quiet and introspective personality. She argues that “[i]ntroverts living under the Extrovert Ideal are like women in a man’s world, discounted because of a trait that goes to the core of who they are” (Cain, 2013, p. 4). Although this sounds rather extreme, it illustrates the importance of becoming more aware of introversion also in teaching.

The primary aim of this study is to find out how introverted language learners perceive Communicative Language Teaching. As learners of different age groups were interviewed, a secondary aim is to find out if and how introverted learners’ perceptions of CLT may change with age. For a deeper understanding of this topic, the study also investigates language teachers’ attitudes and experiences in teaching introverted learners. These findings should help to create a fuller picture of how language teachers could implement CLT to make the language lessons equally effective for introverts and extraverts.
To investigate the topic of introversion and CLT, I have chosen two main research questions that read as follows:

- How do introverted learners experience CLT?
- How do teachers’ attitudes and teaching methods address these types of learners?

3.3 Research Design

3.3.1. The Qualitative Approach. For a very long time, qualitative research was not considered scientific and instead, the positivist mindset dominated scientific research. In the 18th century, David Hume introduced the “principle of verification” (Thomas, 2009, p. 74) which stated that anything that cannot be measured, quantified and proved experimentally cannot be considered scientific work. This view was developed further by Auguste Comte, who stated that “the most advanced form of thinking was the scientific form” and consequently “the science of natural scientists should as far as possible be emulated” (Thomas, 2009, p. 74). Central to positivist approaches is the notion of objectivity, with quantitative research seen as the only true scientific method.

It would have been possible to investigate introverted learners’ perceptions of CLT through a quantitative study, through conducting large-scale questionnaires with fixed questions and possible answers. This would certainly also allow some insights into how learners’ levels of extraversion are connected to their experiences of communicative approaches in the language classroom. Such an approach, however, would have to predict and categorize possible perceptions and experiences, which I do not consider sensible or even possible, since perceptions and experiences are very subjective and diverse. A quantitative study would also make it necessary to assume that students’ tendency towards introversion is the reason why they perceive language lessons in a specific way. This is also partly done in this study, but the individual conversations make it possible to find out reasons why the participants feel the way they do in certain situations. Despite their tendency towards introversion, the learners each have different preferences, mindsets and understandings of what is important, which will all
influence their perceptions of language learning. For instance, if an introverted learner prefers writing to speaking tasks, we cannot automatically conclude that s/he does not like speaking because s/he is an introvert, but it could also be that the learners’ goal is simply being able to communicate in written form. Perceptions are as diverse as personalities and cannot be quantified. Thus, the purpose of this study is to hear individual learners’ voices in their depth and diversity, which a qualitative study makes possible.

As Albert Einstein said, “Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.” (O’Leary, 2010, p. 257). This shows that not only social scientists, but also natural scientists have seen the need for a different view of research, agreeing that quantification is not always possible. Different people construct different social realities, which is why an entirely different view of scientific study is required. From these new viewpoints, interpretivism emerged. In interpretivism, researchers are interested in individual people’s opinions, how they construct ideas about their worlds and in which ways all those different viewpoints are related. (Thomas, 2009)

I consider the qualitative approach, which is based on interpretivism, the ideal approach for this research. For investigating students’ perceptions, obtaining in-depth information is much more important than a large sample size. Punch (2009) explains that “[a] small-scale (or small sample size) interview-based project can go into considerable depth with a small sample” (p. 42). The importance of small-scale empirical studies is rising, because “knowledge in any field, but especially in a professional field such as education, usually progresses through the accumulation of evidence across many studies” (p. 43). As mentioned above, there are a lot more variables that have an effect on the perception of language learning and teaching, which is why this study does not aim to provide an exhaustive explanation of students’ perception of CLT. Instead, the aim is to give those people a voice who usually avoid to speak up, to find out more about the experiences of learners who share the personality trait of introversion and to help build a foundation for further research.
As discussed in the previous chapter, there have been some controversial results about the effect of personality variables on second language acquisition, which might also be why personality variables—especially extraversion (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999)—have been neglected by most linguists. Lightbown and Spada (2013) explain that one reason for some of these controversial results is that personality in general seems “to be more consistently related to conversational skills than to the acquisition of grammatical accuracy or academic language” (p. 86). Furthermore, they argue that most of the research on personality variables has been carried out within a quantitative research paradigm, that is, an approach that relies heavily on relating learners’ scores on personality questionnaires to their language test performance. Some researchers have argued that a more qualitative approach to understanding and investigating personality variables is needed to adequately capture their depth and complexity. (p. 86)

3.3.2. Interviews. For all the reasons mentioned above, I am convinced that the qualitative approach is certainly the best approach for this study. To obtain the required information, I deemed in-depth interviews the best choice. Specifically, I decided on semi-structured interviews. The primary reason for this is that it combines the advantages of structured and unstructured interviews. There is a set of prepared questions to enable comparability, but in contrast to structured interviews, it only serves as a point of reference. In addition, guidance can help to avoid long pauses which were a risk because of my lack of experience with interviewing. Similar to unstructured interviews, however, there is no fixed order and other questions and follow-up questions can be inserted spontaneously (Dörnyei, 2007). This was necessary because it would not have been possible to predict the exact direction of each interview and as respondents’ perceptions are diverse, they also have diverse approaches to telling their stories. While some were able to talk for several minutes on one single question and draw connections themselves, other respondents needed considerable
amounts of structure as well as invitations to elaborate on their thoughts and explain in more
detail. An advantage of interviews in general is that it is possible to probe responses (Dörnyei,
2007). Interviewees can be encouraged to elaborate on certain topics, when they, for example,
mention something merely as a side note because they are not aware of the importance of the
information to this study. Also, respondents may not have thought about a certain topic in much
detail before, in which case the interviewer can ask them to explain their thoughts in more detail
or compare and contrast similar situations (Dörnyei, 2007). In contrast to written
questionnaires, in interviews it is also easier to limit misunderstandings by asking follow-up
questions for clarification, as well as by giving the respondents the opportunity to ask when
they do not understand a question (O'Leary, 2017).

**3.3.2.1 Interviews with children.** As interviews were conducted with learners of
different age groups, including students of an NMS aged between 12 and 14, it is important to
be aware of the difference between interviewing adults and interviewing children. According
to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2009), interviewers have to be especially aware of children’s
linguistic and cognitive development, their attention span and their ability to recall. Even more
than in interviews with adults, it is important to build rapport and establish trust with them. It
is necessary to help them feel confident and to make it an enjoyable experience for them.
Additionally, language used in the interview must be chosen appropriate to the age of the
respondents and questions should be straightforward. This was done in the interviews with all
participants, but even more so with the younger learners. All learners of both age groups were
asked whether they wanted to do the interview in English or German. As explained by Cohen
et al. (2009), there were obvious differences in their linguistic development. While some needed
me to clarify my questions frequently, despite using German throughout the interview, one
pupil asked to do the interview in English and was perfectly capable of understanding questions
and expressing herself. Also, more time was spent on the ice-breaking phase, asking them about
their hobbies, favorite subjects, etc. This was clearly necessary for all young respondents and
despite the efforts in creating a comfortable atmosphere and establishing rapport, some remained reluctant and seemed uncomfortable answering personal questions.

Cohen et al. (2009) state that usually it is good to choose group interviews for interviewing children, as these are generally less intimidating. However, they also argue that for interviews about sensitive matters, individual interviews might bring very different results. In the case of the present study, individual interviews were considered more appropriate. Some of the questions can be considered highly personal, which some pupils might feel uncomfortable answering in the presence of classmates. As explained in the previous chapter, introverts generally tend to be reluctant to share their thoughts and feelings with others. Another reason for choosing individual interviews is confidentiality. Some respondents might not be aware of the importance of confidentiality and tell classmates or teachers what other interviewees said.

3.3.3. Personality questionnaire. At this point, it should be noted that a short Likert-scale personality questionnaire was conducted with learners in order to determine introversion. As such questionnaires are usually considered tools of a quantitative approach, it could be argued that this study follows a mixed-methods approach. How the questionnaire helped with selecting suitable participants will be explained in more detail in the respective section below, but results of the questionnaire did not influence the overall results of the study any further, which is why I consider this study an entirely qualitative study.

3.4 Research Procedure and Sample

3.4.1. Teachers. After research into existing literature on the topics of this study and on research methodology, I prepared interview questions for the semi-guided interviews. In order to find participants, I contacted schools via e-mail. By searching several school homepages, I was able to find English teachers as potential respondents. Then I contacted the teachers as well as the principals of the respective schools to ask for their permission to conduct interviews with teachers and some of their students. The response rate was very low, which is why I decided to approach the teachers personally, as Seidman (2013) advises that researchers
should approach potential respondents personally. I visited several schools’ principals, asking for permission to do interviews, but did not get any positive responses by approaching them in person either, which is why I continued writing e-mails to English teachers and principals.

After having found volunteers, I offered them to choose time and place of the interview. As according to O'Leary (2017), researchers should try to make respondents as comfortable as possible, I also offered the option of doing the interview via Skype and one respondent accepted this offer. Seidman (2013) explains that many people nowadays avoid face-to-face conversations and prefer digital communication instead, which is why some might feel more comfortable participating in an interview over Skype. However, Seidman (2013) also warns of the disadvantages of digital communication and explains that “a relationship based on […] a computer screen will take constant, thoughtful alertness on the part of the long-distance interviewer to transfer […] an image on a screen to a sense of presence that honors the process of interviewing” (p. 114). Before the interview, I reminded them of some important points concerning confidentiality and the purpose of the study and they signed a consent form.

Interviews with language teachers were conducted in order to gain deeper insight into the topic by looking at it from a different perspective. The aim of the interviews with teachers was to find out how they experience teaching introverted learners, whether they think that introverts have different needs in language teaching than extraverts and to what extent they consider this in their teaching. With the intention of interviewing their students as well, only teachers claiming to use Communicative Language Teaching were chosen at first. After the first three interviews with teachers who see themselves as extraverts, the fourth teacher was chosen primarily because she is an introvert herself, aiming to obtain a different viewpoint on the topic of teaching introverted language learners. While she also includes CLT in her lessons, she does not claim that it dominates her language teaching, which I do not consider necessary as I did not intend to interview her students. As teachers’ extraversion levels are not an essential aspect of this study, teachers were not asked to fill in personality questionnaires, but they were asked
where on the extraversion continuum they would place themselves, which will be taken into account in some instances in the discussion of results.

In order to preserve the anonymity of the interviewed teachers, as much personal information will be omitted (see section 3.4.3 Ethics). For personal information considered relevant to this study, see the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Years of Teaching</th>
<th>Considers herself</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>extravert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>&gt;25</td>
<td>ambivert/extravert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>&gt;25</td>
<td>extravert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>introvert</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.2. Learners. Trying to ensure the diversity of the language learners’ and their experiences, I contacted different schools in both urban and rural areas. Finding students willing to participate in the study was more difficult than expected, even after having found teachers willing to help. One teacher was especially interested in this topic and tried hard to find students, but no student volunteered. In an NMS, pupils and parents were more cooperative, which is why all of the interviews with younger students were done at this school. Unlike urban areas, where higher achieving students aged 10-14 usually attend an AHS while lower achieving students attend NMS, in many rural areas, almost all students attend NMS. As the aim was to obtain a broad understanding of learners’ experiences in language learning, I considered it appropriate to do all interviews with younger learners in a rural NMS. As all of the students were aged under 18, parents had to sign consent forms informing them about the interview procedure, the students’ rights, etc. On the form, I also explained why the interview would be audio taped and offered the option of doing the interview without audio recording, because I
wanted to avoid students refusing only because they are afraid of being recorded. Fortunately, all participating students and their parents agreed to audio recording.

In order to find introverted respondents for the student interviews, teachers asked their more quiet students to participate in the interview. I considered this an appropriate first selection process, because I assumed that most introverts could be recognized as such in communicative English lessons. As Cain (2013) explains, however, it is sometimes difficult to define whether a person is an introvert or a shy extravert because they will behave similarly. Therefore, it was necessary to ensure the participants’ tendency towards introversion using a personality questionnaire. As the exact level of introversion was no main point of the interview, the time needed to complete conventional personality tests typically used for determining levels of extraversion, such as the personality test by Eysenck or the NEO-FFI, was considered disproportionate. Therefore, I used the shortest scientific test I had access to, which was a 10-item test based on the extraversion scale of the Big Five model (Goldberg et al., 2006; IPIP, 2018). The given Cronbach Alpha for the English version is 0.87 (IPIP, 2018), which is good internal consistency. To ensure that all respondents understand the questions, I translated the English questions into German (see Appendix for the questionnaire and the calculation of Cronbach Alpha). The calculated Cronbach Alpha of the German questionnaire is 0.83, which is also good internal consistency and can thus be considered to be a useful tool for selecting participants. As the questionnaire was only used for selecting appropriate respondents and has no further influence on the results of the study, the participants’ scores on the questionnaire are included in the methodology chapter instead of the results chapter. A score between -1 and -10 indicates introversion, with -1 indicating a slight tendency towards introversion and -10 indicating strong introversion. All interviewed learners included in this study have a score between -3 and -7 (see table 2), which means that all interviewed learners included in this study are introverts, according to the questionnaire. One interviewed pupil had a score of +7, indicating extraversion, but this learner was excluded from the study. Some of this student’s
answers were contradictory some of the answers given in the questionnaire do not coincide with
the answers given in the interview. Furthermore, the student seemed rather unwilling to
participate, despite the signed consent form and the fact that the student was informed several
times that participation is voluntary and that the interview can be stopped at any time. The
reasons for this are unknown, but it could be that the student felt pressured by the teacher, which
I did not have any influence upon.

As Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) explain, the academic success of introverts depends on the
age of the learner—extraverts are more successful before and introverts after puberty—which
is why I considered it sensible to interview introverted language learners from different age
groups. Introverts are considered less successful before puberty because education for younger
children focuses more on collaboration (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Therefore, in addition to the
interviews with NMS students, I also conducted interviews with adult learners who attended a
language course at the time of the interview or had attended a language course not long before
the interview. As all of the older students were adults, they signed a consent form themselves,
reminding them of the content of the study, their rights, confidentiality, etc. Before beginning
the interview, I informed them again about the most important points. The interview questions
were largely the same as in the interviews with the younger students, but there was considerably
less guidance necessary, as these respondents were eager to share their experiences. In contrast
to the interviews with younger learners, the older learners were informed about the fact that this
study is about introverts. While the younger students were selected by their teachers, I found
the older introverted students through posting in a social media students’ group. I did not contact
possible respondents personally, but asked them to write me a message instead. When the
learners contacted me, I explained more details about the content and the procedure of the study
and asked them to fill in the short personality questionnaire.

While all of the NMS students were interviewed on their experiences in their English
classes, the three adult language learners participating in the study also had experience with
learning other languages, such as French or even German, as one of the participants was not a German native speaker (see table 2). All older learners have taken several language classes at University and have experienced many different teaching styles. They were above 25 years old, but I will not mention the exact age of the adult language learners as this might make it easier to identify them. In consideration of research ethics (for more details see Section 3.4.3 Ethics), it is important to omit personal information that would make the participants easily identifiable. In order to interpret the results of the interviews with learners adequately, much more personal information on learners is needed as compared to the interviews with teachers. For personal information essential for the interpretation of results of the interviews with learners, see the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Questionnaire*</th>
<th>First Language</th>
<th>Foreign Languages**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 1</td>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 2</td>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 3</td>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 4</td>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>English, Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 5</td>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>&gt;25</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>German, French, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>&gt;25</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>English, French</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*10-item personality questionnaire. Possible scores from +10 to -10. Scores from -1 to -10 indicate introversion.

**Languages mentioned in the interviews by learners.

3.4.3. Ethics. “Empirical research in education inevitably carries ethical issues, because it involves collecting data from people, and about people” (Punch, 2009, p. 49). In all
research, researchers have to be aware of ethical issues, “but they are sometimes more acute in some qualitative approaches” (p. 50). Therefore, ethics is a highly important issue in this study.

All participants were informed about the research procedure and what the interview is about. The older learners were given detailed information on the content of the study, whereas the younger learners were only told that the study is about students’ language learning experiences and their personality, leaving out the fact that it is specifically about introverted learners, as singling them out in front of their classmates might pose a threat to them. Before they agreed to participate, they were also informed about all necessary details such as confidentiality of research data, how the interviews will be conducted and what rights they have. According to O'Leary (2017), avoiding any possible harm to respondents is crucial. While physical harm is easily identifiable and poses no threat in this study, psychological harm “is hard to identify and difficult to predict” (p. 70) and comprises many aspects such as “resentment, anxiety, embarrassment or reliving unpleasant memories” (p. 70), which is clearly an issue in this study. Various measures had to be taken in order to minimize all possible harm to respondents. As the study was conducted in form of semi-structured interviews, I prepared a set of questions which I chose very carefully, trying to eliminate possible harm to respondents, especially concerning the interviews with younger students. Before starting the interview, I emphasized again that they do not have to answer questions they do not want to answer and that they can stop the interview at any time without giving a reason.

As personality can be a delicate topic, especially for adolescent students, teachers were asked not to tell the whole class exactly what the study will be about, as labelling participants as introverted poses a threat to them. All respondents were informed about the study several times, in addition to the consent form all had to sign. Pupils who were known to have difficulties, such as difficulties with classmates or mental health problems, were not asked to participate in the study in order to protect them from possible harmful effects. The threat to the
older learners in this respect is minimal, as they were not asked personally to participate, but had to approach me instead.

Concerning confidentiality of personal data and anonymity, respondents naturally signed the consent forms with their names, which means that the interviews cannot be considered anonymous. However, concerning the students of the NMS, the teachers handed in the consent forms and gave them to me. I did not write down any names, but instead assigned only numbers to the interviews and questionnaires, to ensure as much anonymity as possible. Personal information that would make interviewees easily identifiable was omitted and names mentioned during the interview were anonymized in the transcriptions. I recorded the interviews with my phone, but immediately after the interview, I transferred the audio files to my computer as well as to a flash drive for backup, and deleted the files from my phone.

As mentioned in the section above, there was only one male participant, which poses another question regarding ethics. As the male teacher’s colleagues as well as some students know of his participation in the study, he would be easily identifiable. In order to preserve his anonymity all teachers will be referred to as female.

3.4.4. Limitations. There are several limitations to this study, some of which were known before the study, some of which occurred in the process of conducting the study.

3.4.3.1 Teachers’ understanding of Communicative Language Teaching.

During the process of finding suitable participants for the interviews, teachers were informed that the study is about Communicative Language Teaching and that it is necessary particularly for student interviews that students have experienced CLT in their language lessons. Before as well as during the interviews, teachers insisted that they use CLT in the classroom and that using the language actively is most important in their classroom. Interestingly, their understanding of CLT differs from common theories taught at university and explained in most books. Therefore, this study deals with several different versions of the communicative approach. As can be seen in Chapter 2, there are numerous different
interpretations of CLT. It is obvious that all of the interviewed teachers use a ‘weak’ version of CLT (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). Some teachers find communication in the classroom more important than others. Most see communication restricted to speaking exercises; not all do recognize the communicative potential of authentic readings or writing. This will be analyzed in further detail in the following chapters, but it should be noted at this point that different realizations of CLT will likely affect learners’ perceptions of CLT as well.

3.4.3.2 Personality variables in applied linguistic research. Personality variables have not received much attention in applied linguistics research. One reason for this is that correlations with linguistic variables are not straightforward. Lightbown and Spada (2013) explain that it is not possible to measure or observe variables such as extraversion directly, in a similar way as we would measure age or height. Individual variables such as extraversion, motivation or intelligence “are just labels for an entire range of behaviors and characteristics” (p. 78). This must be taken into account in this present study. All learners interviewed for this study have a tendency towards introversion and share some general characteristics, but there are many more factors that influence their perception of language learning. Lightbown and Spada (2013) warn that “[p]erhaps the most serious error in interpreting correlations is the conclusion that one of the variables causes the other” (p. 78). Two aspects that increase and decrease together might seem to cause each other, but instead, it might be something entirely different that is responsible for increase and decrease of both variables. In order to avoid this mistake, a qualitative approach was chosen for this study. In a qualitative approach, specific variables are not important and despite—or even because of the subjectivity inherent in qualitative approaches—misinterpretations of correlations between certain variables can be avoided to a great extent. When learners are asked for their perception of certain aspects of their language lessons, we do not automatically assume that it is only their introversion that causes this perception. There can also be other aspects that cause a certain perception, such as previous experiences or different motivations for language learning. Through interviewing eleven
different people, including language learners as well as teachers, both from different age groups, it is possible to look at this topic from different perspectives and to compare and contrast different opinions. This, in combination with thorough research of literature on the topics of introversion and CLT, makes it possible to draw conclusions from the respondents’ perceptions and to gain further insight into introverted language learners feelings, preferences and expectations.

3.4.3.3 Age. As learners’ perceptions of language learning can be expected to differ with age, learners of two age groups were interviewed. Partly, perceptions and preferences of younger learners differ considerably from those of older learners. As the difference in age between those two groups is very high, it would have been interesting to interview learners aged around 18 in order to look at the topic from the perspective of rather young learners who are just past the age of puberty, which might have contributed to an even deeper understanding of this topic.

3.4.3.4 Gender. As mentioned above, all respondents are female, except one male teacher. This is certainly no ideal situation, as it is impossible to say whether male introverted language learners’ perceptions of the language classroom differ from those of female introverts. This issue should have been avoided and needs to be taken into account when planning further research.

3.5 Process of Data Analysis and Management

After completion of the interview process, data in the form of audio files had to be transcribed, coded and analyzed. Seidman (2013) explains that there is no single correct approach to organizing data, but that time spent on organizing data “can save hours of frustration later” (p. 115). O'Leary (2017) advises to advance systematically. While Seidman (2013) suggests that analysis should be done separately, O'Leary (2017) argues that through engaging with the data in the process of organization and transcription, the researcher will already make “decisions that will have an effect on analysis and should therefore be recognized
as part of analysis” (p. 326). Thus, I decided to write memos and try to find some categories for later coding and analysis already during the transcription process. I transcribed the interviews using InqScribe and for coding I used the program MAXQDA, which facilitated the coding process considerably. After coding, I tried to find common themes and summarized the results. In this process, some more aspects for analysis became obvious, and I kept adding to the memos for the final analysis where I used both inductive and deductive reasoning.

3.5.1. Transcription. For transcribing, I used the software InqScribe. A trial version was available for free and in contrast to some other common transcription programs offering free trial versions, it is possible to transcribe audio files of any length. It is easy to use, even without a pedal that is frequently recommended.

As Seidman (2013) states, the transcription process is very time-consuming. However, there are numerous benefits of recording and transcribing the interview. Firstly, audio recordings ensure accuracy as the original data is preserved. Secondly, transcribing the interviews and creating “text based files will prove highly efficient and labor saving” (p. 118), which I found to be true during the coding and analysis process. Written data is always the basis for further analysis, be it manual or digital (O’Leary, 2017). Cohen et al. (2009) warn that transforming oral, interpersonal data into written data often creates problems as these systems have very different rules. Seidman (2013) also advises to note all non-verbal signals. As the goal of the interviews was to find out about people’s experiences and perceptions, I considered it only necessary in some cases to note the majority of non-verbal signals meticulously. I noted laughs, pauses and interruptions throughout all interviews, but included more details such as changes in pitch and tone only when it obviously influenced the meaning. Furthermore, I omitted sounds like “uhm” and “mhm” when they did not influence the meaning of the text in any way in order to make transcripts more readable.

Another issue in transcribing interviews was the strong dialect of some participants. Flick et al. (2007) suggest to preserve “dialect words and regional terms” (p. 14) but they also
advise researchers not to change the spelling to make the process of analysis with QDA programs easier. Therefore, the transcripts are largely verbatim but I represented the words, as Kowal and O'Connell (2014) suggest, in standard orthography.

3.5.2. Summary of Data Generated. In total, 4 hours and 52 minutes of interview data was recorded, for more details see the table below. The interview done on March 21\textsuperscript{st} with a sixth pupil is not included in the table due to lack of credibility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Overview of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respondent</strong></td>
<td><strong>Date of Interview</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 1</td>
<td>21.03.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 2</td>
<td>21.03.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 3</td>
<td>21.03.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 4</td>
<td>21.03.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 5</td>
<td>22.03.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>30.03.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>09.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>19.03.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>21.03.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>22.03.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>08.04.2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.3. Coding. “Coding provides a means of purposefully managing, locating, identifying, sifting, sorting, and querying data. It is not a mechanistic, data reduction process, but rather one designed to stimulate and facilitate analysis.” (Bazeley, 2013, p. 125). Through coding data, I was not only able to organize data and get an overview of the most important topics, but it also helped me become aware of connections and develop ideas. According to
Saldaña (2009), researchers do not agree on the amount of data that should be coded. While some say that it is crucial to code everything without any exceptions, others say that it is only necessary to code important parts. Dörnyei (2007), for instance, argues that in the process of coding and re-coding, the researcher should avoid over-coding, which can make it difficult in the following steps to reduce interview data. Besides the one interview that I discarded due to the lack of reliability, I considered it useful to code everything because I agree with Saldaña (2009) when he says that passages that do not seem interesting at first might contain information that the researcher finds to be useful during later stages of analysis.

For coding transcribed data, I used the program MAXQDA 2018 because it is offered by university and seemed to be a sensible software for qualitative data analysis. I read through all interviews to find common themes in order to create a list of codes and do Initial Coding as advised by Saldaña (2009). Then, I went through the data again to re-code it and I added more items to the list of codes. As scholars advise (Bazeley, 2013; Dörnyei, 2007; Saldaña, 2009), I re-coded data several times.

While there is some controversy about the necessity of QDA software to process qualitative research data, O'Leary (2017) argues that “it is certainly worth becoming familiar with available tools” (p. 326). I wholeheartedly agree with that and I am convinced that working with MAXQDA has saved me a lot of time and frustration. Some sources on analyzing qualitative data (Seidman, 2013) argue that becoming familiar with QDA software can be very time consuming, which I cannot confirm, at least not concerning basic functions. There is a very short introductory video offered by MAXQDA, and most other necessary aspects are widely self-explanatory, which is why I can only recommend working with this software. QDA software does not only make it easier to code and organize data, but also ensures that it is “safely stored, categorized, and easily retrievable” (Seidman, 2013, p. 134).

3.5.4. Analysis of the Data. In order to ensure the quality of the analysis of the collected data, I have collected, I consulted several books on this topic (Bazeley, 2013; Flick et
al., 2007; Flick, 2014; O'Leary, 2017) and while taking into account different viewpoints and methods of analysis, I decided to follow most guidelines offered by O'Leary (2017).

O'Leary (2017) emphasizes that the ongoing engagement with collected data—mainly through reading and rereading—is most important for analysis. While she argues that analysis is not a separate process analyzing qualitative data, she warns of analyzing “as you go” (p. 332). It is important to be aware of certain aspects in the research process that might affect analysis. The first step and a key issue of analysis is to identify all possible biases as well as worldviews of the researcher. To mediate bias and to “elicit potential categories for exploration” (O'Leary, 2017, p. 332), it is necessary for researchers to ask themselves what they expect to find out.

The second step O'Leary describes as essential in analysis, is reducing and coding data and finding themes. She explains that reducing is often a one of the most difficult steps for beginners as they see a conflict between reducing data and preserving its richness, which was also true in my case. When reducing data, I was afraid that I would not see the value of a certain part that might in fact be a major contribution to the findings. O'Leary explains that while richness should be preserved, data should be understandable and manageable.

Bazeley (2013) states that comparison is a key element in analysis and advises researchers to “engage in a ‘constant comparative process’” (p. 254). Comparison at first helps to find similar concepts, and later to see different positions and dimensions thereof (Bazeley, 2013). At this point, researchers also have to decide whether the data should be explored deductively or inductively (O'Leary, 2017). “[W]orking towards meaningful understanding often involves both inductive and deductive processes” (O'Leary, 2017, p. 333), which I also considered sensible for my study. I analyzed data inductively because I wanted to approach data as openly as possible to discover different themes, but I also had some specific, predetermined themes I wanted to explore deductively. This led to what O’Leary describes as “engaging in cycles of inductive and deductive reasoning”, which is illustrated in the figure below.
After finding relevant themes, I had to look for patterns and interconnections. Here, inductive and deductive strategies are required again. O'Leary (2017) explains that in practice, there is usually no clear line between inductive and deductive reasoning, and says that researchers usually “rely on both strategies to build the richest map possible” (p. 335). She further advises to include existing literature into the analysis process, which allows for building more in-depth understanding. At this stage, the researcher does not only engage with the research data, but also investigate the relation of the content to theory.

In the last step, I had to draw conclusions from the models built before and to draw conclusions. This includes summarizing the findings and linking them to the research questions. The results of the study have to be seen in relation to current literature as well as the “study’s methodological constraints” (p. 336). O'Leary (2017) emphasizes that while clarity is essential, the researcher should not try to “portray a world without ambiguity and complexity” (p.336).

3.5.5. Credibility Checks. As explained in the section on research design, quantitative approaches are often considered more credible and thus ‘scientific’ than qualitative approaches. While quantitative methodology has a long established tradition in research, the credibility of qualitative methodology is often questioned. However, there are, of course, certain standards also in qualitative research that ensure credibility. It is important to be aware that different modes of research also require the recognition of different credibility indicators (O'Leary,
2017). Flick et al. (2007) argue that “[q]ualitative research is no longer just simply ‘not quantitative research’, but has developed an identity (or maybe multiple identities) of its own.” (p. X) Nevertheless, qualitative approaches are usually contrasted with quantitative approaches, especially when discussing credibility, which is why I will explain most credibility indicators by juxtaposing principles of qualitative and quantitative methodology based on the model of O’Leary (2017).

3.5.5.1 Managing and acknowledging subjectivities. While objectivity is seen as the central aspect of credibility in quantitative research, this aspect is replaced by neutrality in qualitative approaches (O’Leary, 2017). Subjectivity is allowed here, and in part even necessary. Instead of being objective, researchers have to use their own knowledge of the world and of people around them in order to be able to obtain relevant information, make decisions, analyze and draw new conclusions. While positivists must watch from the outside and observe disinterestedly, interpretivists, in contrast, must be insiders and see themselves as participants in their own research situation. By doing this, they need to be aware of their position which comprises aspects such as preferences, social background, interests, etc., as well as of the influence their position will have on interpretations. Instead of trying to maintain objectivity, personal positions should be taken into account. Rather than objectivity, being thorough and balanced is central to interpretivist research. (Thomas, 2009)

Among the reasons for my interest in this research topic is the fact that I am an introvert and have experienced CLT as a language learner myself. At the same time, I am a language teacher and like teaching communicative language lessons. As I have sometimes had difficulties with certain communicative aspects in the language classroom as a learner, I wondered what other people think about it. It is obvious that there is subjectivity involved in this study, but I have also ensured neutrality. What I considered most important in this respect is to look at this topic from various different angles and to acknowledge different viewpoints of all people, both interviewees’ viewpoints and different results of previous research.
3.5.5.2 Capturing truth. Traditional research has aimed at finding out the “a singular truth” (O’Leary, 2017, p. 60). In certain contexts however, especially when concerned with social aspects, “multiple truths may exist” (O’Leary, 2017, p. 67), which is why in this study it is more important to capture an “authentic truth that may sit alongside other interpretations” (O’Leary, 2017, p. 61). Essential for this is to build trust with participants so that they are open and honest, which is why I tried to build rapport and to make them feel as comfortable as possible. To ensure honesty throughout the interview, I listened to the respondents without judgements to avoid that they feel there are certain aspects I want to hear.

3.5.5.2 Consistency of methods. While reliability is a central indicator of positivist research, in interpretive or ‘post-positivist’ approaches, this is replaced by dependability. Similar to the issue of capturing truth discussed above, in social studies it is not likely to get the same results when the study is repeated. Instead, methods must be “systematic, well documented and designed to account for research subjectivities”. The methods and procedure of this study are described in this chapter in detail, which makes it possible to follow the development of the study and how the data came into being. However, researchers have to be aware that it is not possible to conduct a study under exactly the same circumstances. (O’Leary, 2017)

3.5.5.3 Verifying the research. To ensure credibility, it is necessary to explain in great detail, which methods have been used how and why, in order to clarify how and why the researcher came to certain conclusions, which has been done in this chapter. (O’Leary, 2017)

3.5.5.4 Transferability. In quantitative approaches, results should be generalizable. The findings of this study are intended to be ‘transferable’ and relevant for a wide range of people, but will not be fully generalizable due to the small sample size. This is one of the main reasons, why many researchers do not consider qualitative research as credible as quantitative research. O’Leary (2017) argues, however, that generalizability is not the goal because “there is value in delving deep and in exploring the idiographic” and because qualitative research “can meet
rigorous standards of ‘post-positivist’ credibility” (p. 68). In a qualitative study, “findings and/or conclusions from a sample setting or group lead to lessons learned that may be germane to a larger population, a different setting or another group” (O’Leary, 2017, p. 68).

3.6 Summary

In sum, I am convinced that I have chosen the most appropriate methods and procedures for my study. While I am aware of certain limitations, especially since it is a study with a rather small sample, I believe that it meets the credibility standards of qualitative research. Concerning methodology, everything I have done is based on literature about qualitative research and to ensure credibility, all steps of the research process have been explained in this chapter.

4 Results

The main goal of this study is to find out how introverted language learners perceive CLT. In addition, a second goal is to understand the teacher perspective on this. As such, language teachers were interviewed in order to be able to understand possible reasons why learners perceive language teaching the way they do. In addition, they will also provide insight into the extent to which educators are aware of individual differences and needs of their learners concerning the personality factor of extraversion.

4.1 Learners

Interviews were conducted with eight female introverted language learners, of which five were younger learners—also referred to as pupils, with the labels P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5—and three older learners—also referred to as students, with the labels S1, S2 and T4. The reason for labelling the third older learner T4 instead of S3 is the fact that she is an introverted language teacher who was interviewed for both the teacher as well as the learner perspective. For more personal information see table 2.

Like the interviews with teachers, the interviews with the introverted language learners were done in a semi-guided form. The list of prepared questions was very similar for both age
groups of learners, but the nature of the interviews was very different nevertheless. The younger learners needed considerable guidance and establishing rapport was difficult. Most of them only seemed comfortable with very general questions, being reluctant to share personal thoughts and feelings. Therefore, these interviews were mainly about what the pupils do in their language lessons and what they like and dislike.

In contrast, the older learners were very eager to share, which resulted in much longer, more open interviews, deviating from the list of questions and reflecting the students’ unique learning experience, including their feelings. Despite the differences and the fact that I would have liked to find out more about the younger learners thoughts and feelings, all the interviews are valuable contributions to understanding how introverted language learners perceive their language lessons.

Although I wanted to investigate learners’ perceptions of Communicative Language Teaching specifically, I asked learners about their general experiences with language lessons and language learning. There are two reasons for this: Firstly, learners cannot be expected to be familiar with the term or the concept of CLT and they would have been confused if I had asked only about certain kinds of language lessons, and secondly, I considered it sensible to try to find out as much as possible about every learner’s individual learning experience and attitudes to be able to understand and analyze the data more deeply.

4.2.1 Language lessons and learners’ preferences. At the beginning of the interviews, the introverted language learners were all asked rather general questions about their preferences in the language classroom, leaving it open to the interviewees whether they wanted to comment on activities, work form, setting, teachers, or other aspects. This openness of the first questions was considered important to establish rapport and enable the learners to choose how to approach the subject. The younger learners mostly commented on certain activities, while the older learners commented on more basic requirements such as the setting. The following list
summarizes what the introverted learners consider most important for enjoyable language lessons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What makes language lessons enjoyable</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Younger learners</strong></td>
<td><strong>Older learners</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nice teacher (P2, P4)</td>
<td>competent teacher (S1, S2, T4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>games such as “English King” (P1, P3)</td>
<td>good atmosphere (S1, S2, T4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning things by heart (P1, P2)</td>
<td>nice classmates (S1, S2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presenting dialogues (P1, P2, P4)</td>
<td>getting to know classmates (S1, S2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saying an English prayer together (P3)</td>
<td>target language as language of instruction (S1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking (P4)</td>
<td>forming new groups every lesson (S1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>manageable level of difficulty (S2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This list of what is most important for learners in their lessons, as well as learners’ likes and dislikes analyzed below, is a starting point for learning about introverts’ perceptions of foreign language learning, but it must be kept in mind that extraverts might have similar preferences and in some cases, age differences seem more important than personality. It must also be noted that the nature of younger learners’ answers was mostly very different from older learners’ answers, the reason of which is probably their level of reflection. When the introverted language learners were asked about what they like and dislike in their language lessons, younger learners mostly talked about specific activities and exercises they like and dislike in their language lessons, while for the older learners general teaching methods play a more important role than specific activities. Regarding this question, most of the interviewed learners had a lot to say about role play, which is why it will be discussed in a separate section below.
Even though there are certain aspects of language learning that can be difficult for introverted language learners, none of the interviewees said that they do not like learning languages. All three older learners, as well as P1 and P4 said that either English or another foreign language is among their favorite subjects. P1, for example, likes English best because she does not have the feeling that she has to study so hard in the lessons. Lessons are a lot of fun, for example, playing games and watching movies does not feel so much like studying, but can be effective nevertheless. P1 said that she likes everything they do in the English lessons, except copying long vocabulary lists: „Also die Words zum Schreiben das ist immer viel… weil wir haben jetzt 2 Seiten zum Schreiben gehabt… aber sonst mag ich alles ganz gern. [Copying vocabulary is always a lot… because we have had 2 pages to copy last time… apart from that, I like everything]"

T4 has always liked her language lessons, especially when she had teachers whom she felt were able to teach her a lot. Her favorite lessons were those where they got some input from the teacher at first and then had to work on an exercise on their own or write a text. Writing is a task that most of the learners enjoy. When the learners were asked what they would change about their language lessons if they could, P5 and S1 said that they would do more writing tasks. S1 said that she has always enjoyed writing very much and that she would like to learn grammar through writing. She said that she is good at filling gaps in many languages but is not so good at actually forming sentences on her own. She feels that writing authentic texts would be a much more effective way of practicing grammar.

The authenticity of texts is important for learners not only in writing. S1, for example, is very motivated to find out about more about the countries the target language is spoken in. For that she considers it very important to have authentic texts. She finds the texts in her French textbook very boring and demotivating because they are not authentic.

For S1, the people around her are the most important factor for enjoyable language lessons. This refers to her classmates and how comfortable she feels interacting with them, but
also to the teacher who should be able to create a pleasant atmosphere for interaction with classmates. As a non-native speaker of German, she enjoys her German lessons very much because interacting with the other non-native speakers is easy for her, and her teacher encourages interaction with all classmates by creating new groups every lesson. In her other language lessons, in contrast, she does not feel included because neither the students nor the teacher use the target language very much, which she finds demotivating.

For S2, teachers and classmates are an important factor, but also the amount of speaking and the level of difficulty determine whether she enjoys her language lessons. In higher level courses, she does not like speaking, because she is afraid of making mistakes. In a lower level course she usually feels more comfortable with speaking, but this also depends on whether the teacher is able to create a nice atmosphere. Speaking makes all interviewed introverts uncomfortable in some way, which is why it will be discussed in more detail in a separate section.

As can be expected, most of the younger language learners like playing games in their English lessons, which has probably more to do with age than personality. What is interesting, however, is that their favorite game is “English King” (some also called it “Words King”). All the interviewed pupils are from the same school, where this game is played frequently, which is why all the pupils know it. It is a game for revising vocabulary – students have to stand up and the teacher says a word, addressing two students at a time. The person who is faster in saying the translation of the word remains standing, the other one sits down. The last person standing is the “Words King”. For this game, they have to speak, shouting out a word quickly, which is something most of them are rather uncomfortable with in other situations. Nevertheless, all pupils mentioned this game when they were asked what they like about their language lessons.

Many of the preferred activities do not seem to be connected to their introverted personality, and are similar to what learners generally seem to like about language lessons.
However, it is obvious that some of the interviewed language learners like activities or teaching methods that would probably not be considered fun by most other learners. T4, for example, said that one of her Italian teachers in high school always had them translate texts and sentences. Most of her classmates found these lessons horrible, but she enjoyed translating very much.

Of the younger learners, P1, P2 and P4 enjoy learning dialogues by heart. While homework is not usually very popular with pupils, but P1 likes doing the homework exercises, such as writing texts, doing matching exercises or draw. T4 also enjoys writing texts for homework. P3’s favorite part of the lesson is the beginning, where they always say an English prayer together.

Another controversial aspect, which is often discussed in relation to CLT, is grammar. The younger learners do not like learning about grammar, while the older learners do like it. T4 said that she has always liked grammar exercises, including gap fills, and that she has always wanted to be able to use the correct structure. S1 also likes studying grammar, but she feels that in most of her language classes in the past, her teachers have focused too much on doing grammar exercises, especially gap fill exercises, which she does not find efficient. In her opinion, being able to fill gaps does not mean that a person can communicate. She sees writing texts as better way of practicing grammar, but in general, communication is much more important to her than correct structures. Using grammar effectively in communication is also what S2 is concerned about. However, like T4, she also wants to have the correct structure, which means that she studies hard to be able to use grammar correctly in communication. P2 is afraid of making mistakes in speaking and wants to use correct grammar, but at the same time, she do not like grammar exercises very much. According to the interviewed teachers, however, most of the grammar tasks are taken from the book “More”, which are mostly traditional, with only a few included aspects of CLT. As most pupils like writing their own texts and dialogues, it would be interesting whether they would be more motivated to practice grammar with communicative writing tasks as S1 has suggested.
4.1.1. Role Play. Most interviewees—not only students but also teachers—feel strongly about role play. Some love it and some hate it. Learners and teachers were explicitly asked about their opinions on role plays but most of them mentioned role play on their own accord in questions about what they do and do not like in their language lessons.

As the extraverted teachers like role plays very much and the introverted teacher does not like them, I assumed that the interviews with the introverted learners would show that most introverts do not like role plays. This is true for the older learners, who usually feel highly uncomfortable in role play situations, especially if dealing with delicate topics. When they do role plays, they identify with the role they are playing, which makes it very difficult for them to say something they would not say themselves in real life. S1, for example, does not mind simple role plays about shopping, but she has been very uncomfortable in situations where she has had to complain or pretend to be the boss.

The content of the role play is also important for T4. She might have liked role plays better if they had been asked to write their own dialogues or plays. At school, she usually thought that the dialogues did not make much sense, and she felt very uncomfortable acting them out in front of the class.

T4: I really did not like role plays. I always hated them at school. Especially when you had to get out to the blackboard and present your stuff. I really hated that. I don't know why, but sometimes there were, kind of, weird dialogues that you had to act out. And I never really liked that. I never wanted to kind of take on a different role or so or present it. I was very uncomfortable doing that.

While many introverts do not like role plays, there are many factors that can make them more enjoyable and less embarrassing. S2 said that she has never liked role plays, the only exception being her French course at university. She explained that in this course, they had rather simple role play situations and that she appreciated these opportunities for speaking.

The younger learners do not have the same aversion against role plays. P1 and P2 like role plays very much. They enjoy learning dialogues by heart and then presenting them to the class. P1 mentioned that she likes to bring props from home, for example when acting out a
restaurant scene, they brought pizza boxes and plates. T2 said that she has her pupils bring props so that they have something to focus their attention on and to make them feel more comfortable, which P1 confirmed to be successful. P4 also likes role plays, but only if she does not have to say too much:

P4: Yes. I like it, but if I have to say many sentences I'm not so the type of speaking so much.
I: Okay. So if you don't have to speak so much, it's fun, but if you have to say too much then it's not so much fun anymore?
P4: Yes. [laughs]

T2 is also aware of this fact and gives smaller roles to pupils who do not like to speak much. P3 and P5 do not like role plays, mostly because they do not like to speak in front of many people.

P1 and P2 are the youngest learners in this study and they were the only learners who generally like role plays. This shows that T1 was right when she said that younger learners are usually comfortable with role plays and that it only becomes embarrassing when they grow older.

4.1.2. Speaking and other uncomfortable situations. Feeling anxious or uncomfortable in a lesson can inhibit learning considerably and compared to other subjects, language lessons can be particularly face threatening (Du, 2009). Therefore, all learners were asked about situations in which they feel uncomfortable in their language lessons or whether there is anything they are afraid of. The younger learners were reluctant to answer this question, while the older learners seemed glad to be able to share their experiences of uncomfortable situations. Although the older learners’ answers were much more detailed, there were similar results for both age groups. Only S1 mentioned uncomfortable situations that are not related to speaking. Afraid of making mistakes affecting the group’s overall grade, she feels anxious doing group work with very ambitious peers—including group work that does not involve speaking. Furthermore, some writing tasks, such as writing a letter of complaint, have her
feeling uneasy. Apart from these situations mentioned by S1, all other uncomfortable situations concern speaking, which shows that speaking anxiety can be a serious problem for introverts.

All the interviewed learners are afraid of making mistakes in speaking in some way. Making mistakes in writing is entirely different from making mistakes in speaking, according to S2, P1 and P5.

S2: Mhm, as I told you before, I mix all my languages so I'm aware that I make mistakes in writing. But that doesn't bother me that much. Not the same as in speaking. Because I'm not here when the teacher is correcting my writing.

The level of anxiety learners experience in teaching also depends on the amount of people listening.

P1: Ja... also wenn ich merk, dass irgendwer anderes was anderes tut und nicht so genau zuhört ist mir das eher wurscht aber wenn mehr zuhören, weiß man, dass mehrere lachen könnten. [Yes… so when I see that the others are doing something else and are not listening so carefully then I don’t really mind, but when more people are listening, you know that there are more who could laugh.]

P5, although she wants her mistakes to be corrected, feels uncomfortable when teachers correct her in front of the whole class. She said it would be better if there were only a few people listening. P1 is afraid that her classmates laugh at her when she says something, the more people listening, the worse. S1 generally feels anxious when she has to talk to many people. She is afraid that she says something wrong or that people see that she is shy, which is why she often prefers to stay in a corner of the classroom.

P3 and P5 are afraid of speaking mostly because they think they are not good at it. This is similar for S2 who is afraid of speaking in higher level classes, thinking all the others are better than her: “There are so many people and I think they are all so perfect when they speak”.

In lower level classes, she usually does not mind speaking, especially with teachers who encourage making mistakes.

I: Yeah, I'm really interested in this kind of lesson. What was it that made you… made you feel so comfortable? In these lessons?

S2: That's interesting, I have never thought about. She created an atmosphere for all of us that was easy-going. She laughed. And she said... Oh yes she said that it is good if we make mistakes. She asked us... She offered us, in a way, to make mistakes. Maybe this... And it was really fun because... I think it was all about her... She laughed when we made mistakes, but she laughed not AT us but...
I: Oh I see!
S2: Yeah, because there were some funny expressions we brought up... and also
the way she taught us. With some games. It was really relaxing and easy-going.
P4 is also a bit afraid of making mistakes in speaking, but she is very motivated to get
better and thinks that speaking should be practiced during the lessons much more often. S1 says
that she is not so afraid of making mistakes in speaking anymore. She is a non-native speaker
in Austria and her German is not perfect yet, but she has become used to making mistakes.

For older learners, speaking anxiety obviously takes its peak in role play situations. For
the younger learners, role play situations can also be frightening, but P1, P2 and P4 enjoy them
anyway, especially when done in small groups and when they have smaller roles.

Unknown situations can also be a source of anxiety for introverts. S1 explained that she
has become more comfortable in language courses in general, because she has already attended
numerous language courses. Interestingly, she says that she is even more outgoing in language
lessons than she is in everyday life, because she feels confident in such familiar situations.

The list below summarizes what makes introverted language learners feel
uncomfortable or anxious in their language lessons.

| Situations that make introverted language learners feel anxious or uncomfortable |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **Younger learners** | **Older learners** |
| Making mistakes in speaking (all) | Making mistakes in speaking (all) |
| Many people listening to them speaking (P1, P2, P3, P5) | Many people listening to them speaking (S1, S2) |
| Role play (P3, P5) | Role play (all) |
| Speaking in general (P3, P5) | Overly ambitious colleagues (S1, S2) |
| People laughing at them (P1) | Higher level courses (S2) |
Not knowing the answer when the teacher asks her a question (P4)

Sensitive writing topics, e.g. letter of complaint (S1)

Sensitive discussion topics (S1, S2)

Group work/pair work (S1, S2)

4.1.3. Work form—individual work or collaboration? People might assume that introverts generally prefer individual work to working with others. While this is true in some cases, it clearly depends on various factors and cannot be generalized. The interviews have shown that especially younger introverted learners sometimes even prefer pair or group work to working alone. Whether introverted pupils feel comfortable working in a group is largely dependent on the group size. P1 and P4 said that they always like working with other people, but emphasized that this is only true for working in pairs or groups of three. P3 prefers individual work and does not like working in big groups, but thinks that in some cases, working in small groups is a lot of fun. P3 as well as P1 and S1 feel most comfortable with speaking activities when done in groups of two or three. P5 said that she does not like role play, but that she could imagine it being fun when done in much smaller groups. Feeling comfortable with collaborative work also depends on the amount of group work done in the lessons. P2 and P5 reported that they do not usually do a lot of group work, but would prefer to do more while students who reported doing a lot of group work (S1, S2) conveyed that they prefer individual work.

Another interesting point is the role introverted learners assume in a group. P4 prefers working with others to working alone, but said that she rather listens than talks when she is in a group. This changes when they have to create something, for example, a PowerPoint presentation: “I prefer to listen, but if we have to create something, then I like to say my ideas.”

The introverted pupils see many advantages in working with others, most important of which is that their peers can help if there is anything they do not know. They also feel that they
learn more and that working together is usually more fun. Like the other young pupils, P2 and P3 like group work, but they often prefer working alone which makes it easier for them to concentrate.

All the older language learners prefer individual work to collaborative work. T4 likes group work in some cases, for example, discussing and analyzing a certain topic:

When the teacher introduced a new topic, especially in the last years before our final exam, I think there was a lot more discussion than at the beginning, more complex topics. So I really liked the discussions, where you really had to talk about a topic and say what you think about it or analyze things a bit. So I liked that.

The nature of the topic is highly important for students feeling comfortable in group discussions. Especially for S2, it is very important that she feels comfortable with the topic being discussed. In one of her language classes, she has had the feeling that the topics were not suitable for her age and she did not know anything to say about it. As it was a higher level course, she felt very pressurred and overwhelmed. Also for S1, the topics discussed in pairs or groups matter, but she refers more to sensitive topics she would not even like to talk about in her first language.

While the younger learners and T4 did not seem to have an aversion to group work, S1 very strongly dislikes collaborative work, seeing it as a necessary evil in learning to speak, and S2 reacted highly emotional. S1 said that for her, it is stressful having to concentrate on others and on their goals. Working with very ambitious peers puts the most pressure on her, because she is afraid that they would get a worse grade on collaborative work because of her. S2 has had bad experiences with pair work which is done frequently in her language classes. She says that she hates pair work, but that group work is even worse: “I think I'd rather do pair work than group work because the pressure... I think the pressure in a group is higher as in pair work.” S2 is not sure where her strong dislike of collaborative work comes from. She feels that it might depend on the teacher, the level, the topic and on how well the group fits together, because in
another language course, she felt much more comfortable with pair and group work: “In French, it didn't bother me. It was real fun in both groups.”

For a better overview, the list below contrasts the advantages and disadvantages of group work that the introverted learners mentioned in the interviews.
Table 6

Advantages and disadvantages of group work from the perspective of introverted learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages of group work</th>
<th>Disadvantages of group work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>more fun (P1, P3, P4)</td>
<td>sometimes difficult to concentrate (P3, S1, S2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helping each other (P1, P2, P5)</td>
<td>feeling embarrassed (S1, S2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practice speaking (S1, S2, T4)</td>
<td>working in large groups is uncomfortable (S1, S2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expressing ideas (P4)</td>
<td>uncomfortable topics (S1, S2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listening is fun (P4)</td>
<td>not knowing what to say about the topics (S1, S2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pressure (S1, S2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Brackets refer to learners who mentioned respective factors explicitly.

4.1.4. Assessment and Grading. The first aspect I considered when asking introverted learners about assessment, was whether they know what their teachers take into account when grading. P1, P4 and S1 (in some courses) do not know exactly. P1 said that she does not know precisely how they are graded because their teachers have never explained it to them explicitly, but she believes that the final grade might consist of written exams, participation and homework. P2 claimed to know that the final grade consists of participation and written exam grades. Interestingly, P1 and P2 are in the same group, which means that either the teacher has not told the pupils about grading, or that P1 has forgotten or was absent at that time. Grading, as well as transparency of grading, might seem minor points in investigating how introverts perceive learning a language, but it can, in fact, be a highly important aspect because grading usually has considerable influence on motivation.

Although not all pupils knew exactly what the final grade consists of, they all said that they would be able to get a better grade if they raised their hands more often, which shows that active participation can be a considerable issue for introverted pupils, especially when it is a significant component of the final grade. P1 expected to get a two or a three in English in her
final report, and got a three which she says is probably because she does not raise her hand often. For P4, written exams are very easy, but she explained that she got a two in the final report because she does not raise her hand often enough. According to the pupils, active participation does not always affect the grade to the same extent; however. P5 thinks she would be able to improve her grade by improving active participation, but she usually has a three both in written exams and the final report, which means that the grade is not affected negatively by lack of active participation. As P4 and P5 are in the same group, it seems that their teacher expects much more from better achieving students also concerning active participation.

For the pupils, getting good grades in active participation is most difficult. The reason for that, according to the young learners, is that they are afraid that their answers might be wrong. P1 says that she is often annoyed with herself for not raising her hand when she finds that her answer would have been correct. There is the question to what extent introverted learners’ reluctance to speak and to answer questions in front of the whole class affects their grade and to what extent it affects language learning in general. While P2 thinks that teachers consider participation very important and that she would be able to get a better grade if she raised her hand more often, she does not believe that pupils who are open and talkative are better language learners or get better grades in language classes in general. P3, on the other hand, has the feeling that she is generally at a disadvantage in her English classes because she does not speak much.

As found in the interviews with teachers, active participation is a particularly difficult topic when introverted learners are concerned. The interviewed pupils’ language teachers equal good active participation with frequent oral contributions, which suggests that the definition of active participation as ‘raising one’s hand’ and ‘frequency of oral contributions’ poses a greater problem for introverted pupils than active participation in the sense of actively doing activities and exercises. Not all teachers and learners have the same definition of ‘active participation’.
S1 thinks that in her language courses at university, active participation means to listen to the teacher and participate in activities.

The interviews have shown that introverts feel at a disadvantage in grading only when speaking is involved. In addition to active participation, the introverted learners were asked whether they prefer oral or written exams. Only P4 prefers oral tests. She says: “When you speak then you can just... speak. And when you write then your hand maybe hurts. And in speaking... I like to speak because I like it how it sounds.” All the other learners prefer written exams. P1, for example, says that this is because in written exams, nobody can laugh at her: “…auf dem Zettel hat mich keiner auszulachen […on the sheet nobody is to laugh at me]”. S1 does not like the oral exams she has to take in her French course, because she feels that they do not practice speaking often enough in regular lessons for her to feel prepared for an exam. However, she says that her dislike of oral exams certainly also stems from her general dislike of speaking exercises. Discomfort when speaking the target language in front of classmates and teachers is also the reason S2 gave for disliking or even fearing oral exams. As mentioned before, speaking anxiety is often a problem for introverted language learners, which is obviously worse in exam situations.

4.1.5. The role of the teacher. The teacher can be considered the most important factor influencing learners’ perceptions of language lessons and language learning. There are various other aspects that determine whether language learners have an effective and pleasant language learning experience, such as presented in the sections above, but the teacher has an influence on almost all of these aspects. Speaking, for example, can be a great issue in language learning when introverts are concerned, which teachers will not be able to change easily; however, they definitely have a great influence on creating an atmosphere in the classroom that can make speaking easier for introverts. To all learners, it is important to have a supportive teacher. Especially S1 and S2, who have had many teachers in many different language courses, emphasized that a good teacher is a teacher who is able to create a pleasant atmosphere. S2
mentioned several times that she does not like speaking, nor any kind of group or pair work, but one teacher has been able to make it a rather pleasant experience. She said that this was because her French teacher was able to create a nice atmosphere for working together. In this course, S2 was not afraid to make mistakes because instead of giving her the feeling that she had to be perfect, like other teachers have done before, the French teacher very much encouraged making mistakes to promote learning. With this teacher, who was very patient with her language learners, she never felt any pressure or the need to be perfect. For S2, positive feedback, as she has experienced in this French course, is very important. She wants her mistakes to be corrected, but she said that teachers should be able to judge people how to give feedback in order not to embarrass them.

In addition to creating a safe environment for speaking, there are various other aspects the teacher is responsible for, according to the interviewed language learners. S1 explained that while a good atmosphere is highly important for speaking, it is also necessary for other parts of the language lesson to be effective. In S1’s opinion, to create a friendly and supportive atmosphere, it is necessary for the teacher to help learners get to know each other. Her German teacher did that by having them form new groups for every group work activity. In her French course, in contrast, where the teacher always had them do pair work with the people sitting next to each other, it was very difficult for her as a shy person to get to know classmates other than the ones sitting next to her.

The younger learners were uncomfortable talking about their language teacher or about language teachers in general, but they said that it is important to them that the teacher is nice. P4 said that ”the teacher shouldn't shout at a student”, and P2 said that teachers should be in a good mood. This is more basic than what the older learners said, but it also confirms that a pleasant atmosphere is important to introverted language learners.

Besides, language teachers also have great influence on their learners’ motivation. S2 chooses the language courses at university by choosing the teacher, which is very important for
her and her motivation to work hard in the course. S2 always chooses teachers who obviously love what they do. S1 finds it crucial for a language teacher to use the target language as much as possible. She is very demotivated if language teachers do not use the target language much, which was the case in her French course. For P2’s motivation it is important that the language teacher has an extensive repertoire of activities to provide for a diverse language learning experience. In order to motivate T4, teachers have to be competent and give her the feeling that they can teach her a lot. She considers herself very lucky because all her language teachers at school have been able to motivate her that way, which she thinks is also the reason why she decided to study languages at university. This shows how much influence teachers can have on their students, not only on their motivation and performance at school, but also on their later lives.

4.2 Teachers

For this study, four teachers were interviewed; three female, one male. As explained in the methodology chapter, in order to preserve the male teachers’ anonymity, all teachers are made female. In order to preserve also the anonymity of the other teachers, as much personal information as possible will be omitted. For personal information considered relevant to this study, see table 1. What must also be noted at this point is that while T4 uses some elements of CLT in her lessons, she does not claim to use CLT as an overall teaching approach. This is fine because she was not chosen with the intention of interviewing her students, but to gain further insight into this topic from a rather special viewpoint. I have found that very often, T4 does indeed have different opinions and approaches than the other three teachers. The reason for that might be her own introversion, which would be interesting to investigate in a further study.

4.2.1. Good language teaching practice and individual teaching approaches.

Before analyzing teachers’ opinions on introverted learners and CLT, I will present how the teachers describe their own language teaching styles, what they think is good language teaching practice and what activities and methods they frequently use in language teaching. The question
on what teachers believe is good language teaching practice was intended to be a rather broad question where many different answers are possible, so that the teachers say the first thing that comes to mind when they think about good language teaching. Answers ranged from how a teacher should act in the language classroom, to work forms to the skills learners should acquire and suggest that CLT is dominant in T1, T2 and T3’s lessons. T1, T2 and T3 consider communication most important. For T1 and T3, this can be in written or in oral form: “T3: Just doing more the essence of a language than purely grammar”. For speaking, T1 thinks it is necessary to give learners enough time to think about what they want to say. T2 considers speaking the most important aspect, followed by grammar, writing, etc. At the beginning, she finds speaking rather difficult, so learners should start with only a few words or sentences or learning dialogues. When she was asked how she teaches it or thinks it should be taught, she said that she speaks English as much as possible and uses the book “More” which contains many communicative exercises, in her opinion.

T4 thinks that the teacher’s behavior is among the most important aspects of good language teaching. Students should know that the teacher is there to help and is on the same side. In addition, T4 considers it very important to be organized and to provide clear structures, so that they know exactly what they have do and how they are assessed.

Subsequently, teachers were asked which methods and work forms they use to teach certain skills, etc. This in combination with what teachers consider good language teaching practice, gives us an idea of what their language lessons look like approximately and how communication in general or CLT is implemented in their lessons. This is especially important for T2 and T3, as they are the interviewed younger learners’ English teachers.

At the end of the interview, T1 gave me some advice for my future teaching, which summarizes what she has found to be most effective in language teaching.

Always try to have […] a huge range of methods that you can use. So have a good toolkit, basically. And really try to think of different ways to teach. So it shouldn't only be frontal, it shouldn't only be pair work. It should be group
works, pair work, single work, also let them think about what they are going to say. Give them enough time to conduct an exercise. Even though it's not always that easy. […] And just try and talk to the students, because usually, after some time they open up. And they tell you about their problems and how they feel and […] try to create an atmosphere where everybody can learn.

In addition, T1 frequently sings songs with younger learners, especially in first grade. She also lets them create their own choreographies, which they love very much, but when they get older, they usually do not want to do choreographies anymore. T1 said that this is similar for role play, which she does more frequently with younger learners, as older learners tend find it rather embarrassing.

T2 uses the book “More” very often and she does a lot of listening exercises. In most lessons they do team teaching, so they often split the groups to give the learners more opportunities to talk. Another method they frequently use is that pupils have to learn a dialogue at home and then present it to the class in form of a role play. T2 feels that role play is the most popular activity with all students. What the students also enjoy very much and which they often do at the beginning of the lesson is the game “Words King”. There are always two opponents who are given a word by the teacher. The one who is the first to say the correct translation wins. At the end, one student, the “Words King” of the day, remains. In the fourth form, where learners should already be able to speak freely, they are given topics they can speak about, such as singers, how they celebrate Christmas, etc. They have to prepare it at home and then speak one or two minutes about the topic in front of the class. Sometimes she just gives them a few minutes to prepare and then they present it to their partner.

T3 also does a lot of role play in the language classroom and like T2, she also has a set of certain topics learners have to prepare at home and then speak two minutes about it in front of the class. In addition, she said that she sometimes does very simple activities that seem boring, for example she asks students what they have done during the weekend or the holidays. Sometimes she would also ask them to write her a mail about their experience and then trick
them into speaking by saying that she was not able to read the mail and ask them whether they can tell her briefly what they wrote.

What T4 personally likes very much, usually for speaking, but sometimes also for writing, are story cubes. She has also tried them in year 2, where the pupils found it rather difficult, but had a lot of fun. In general, she likes all kinds of creative picture stories, so in order to practice speaking, she often thinks of a story and puts pictures on a PowerPoint presentation. Then, she shows one picture at a time and the pupils have to create a story with those pictures. She feels that this is fun and motivates most of the students, “but some don't really care and you have to stand next to them to make sure they actually talk in English”. It is especially challenging for her to motivate all students to talk in English when there are many students in the classroom, as it not possible to listen to everybody.

While the T2 and T3 mostly talked about how they teach speaking, T4 also focuses on the methods she uses for teaching grammar. T4 finds it important to give good examples. She uses both the inductive and the deductive approach. Although she explains that there is some controversy about fill-in exercises, she finds them very helpful at the beginning. After that, T4 tries to engage students in activities in which they can “use the language more spontaneously and try to get across their own opinions, or their own things they want to get across”. However, she often feels it is difficult to find or create really good activities. What she also considers difficult is to make students aware of grammar in writing. Many do not pay attention to grammar when they write, so sometimes she asks them to circle all the verbs or asks them to pay attention to other specific aspects. In general, she has a topic and then practices different competences around these topics and tries to include a bit of grammar in all of them.

4.2.2. What makes a “good” learner? When teachers were asked to define what being a “good” student means for them, all of the teachers gave very different answers. T1 considers motivation and effort most important. She said that it is mainly the willingness to improve that characterizes a good student. For her, it is not so important to have the best
language skills. “If I can see that he or she […] is trying hard, it’s a good student for me.” T3 also does not put performance and success above all. In contrast to T1, however, for T3, fun and interest are the most important aspects. For her, a good student is somebody “who doesn’t avoid to have fun because he is sitting in a class”. T3 said it is important that a student puts at least 80% of her attention on what is happening in class. She explained this by comparing some students she has this year. One student is very enthusiastic about speaking and learning English. She is not very good at it, makes many mistakes, needs a lot of time to “prepare her brain to speak”, but she does it often and enthusiastically. A few other students, on the other hand, are always well prepared, hardly ever make mistakes and write perfect texts but when they speak, they do it in a very quiet, monotonous voice without any sign of fun in it. T3 thinks that these students only do the exercises because they have to. According to T3, being a good student very much depends on personality, which “should be vivid”.

T4’s definition of a good student is very different from these viewpoints. In her opinion, it is most important to be organized. For her, a good student has the books ready and pays attention to the course. She also thinks that, “you’re a good student if you really know how to study and what to focus on, and also when you have to ask a question or what you have to do when something is not clear”. She explains that it is the “responsibility you have for yourself” that characterizes a good student. In her opinion, this depends mostly on personality, as she sees motivation, organization and interest as part of personality. T4 thinks that interest plays one of the most important roles in language learning, “because if they like English, they probably will study and will do things that improve their language skills, but if they don't care, or so, or if they just think it's a burden, they don't want to improve their knowledge or their skills.” What she said about interest is similar to what T1 said about motivation and what T3 said about fun in the language classroom.
T2’s definition of a good student contains most of the aspects the other teachers have mentioned. She, however, emphasized that this is a description of an ideal student, who she thinks does not exist in reality.

T2: Well the best students are the ones who have their home exercises, who take part in the lessons, always. That's not possible. For one lesson it's not possible. Who are interested, who ask a lot, who try to speak and explain everything in English, try to ask in English.

In short, all of the interviewed teachers think that interest and motivation play a significant role in learning and characterize “good” students. T2 and T4 think that organization and conscientiousness are vital aspects of being a good student. T2 and T3 also emphasize the importance of speaking and active participation.

**4.2.3. Introverted learners’ advantages and disadvantages.** In general, introverts are seen to be at a disadvantage in terms of active participation, which usually plays an important role in language teaching and is therefore summarized in a separate section. In addition to that, there also other aspects of language learning where teachers feel that introverts are at a disadvantage. However, teachers also reported advantages they feel that introverted learners have.

Concerning introverts’ disadvantages besides speaking and active participation, T2 also thinks that extraverts, in contrast to introverts, usually have “no problems in life, in their jobs”. She also thinks that writing tests is easier for extraverts because they are not so anxious. She thinks that the biggest problem introverts often have is that “they are blocked and can’t work and can’t do their things”. T2 said “for a language, it's a little bit better if you are a bit more extraverted”.

T3 thinks that introverts need more help in the language lessons, and she feels that it is her responsibility “to bring something out of them.” She finds it important to show respect, “and then, of course, the outcome will not be as large as from the others, but it works.” Another disadvantage is that introverts are being bullied in class more often than extraverts.
An advantage introverts have is that they are usually better at writing, in T2 and T3’s experience. Often, T2 underestimates introverts—she does not expect them to write such good texts and is very surprised when they do. According to T2, a great advantage is that they know much more than others would expect; “[…] the others say what they know and that's it”. T3 has found that besides their writing skills, they are sometimes also better at structural exercises. She thinks that outgoing pupils often have problems joining structural knowledge with active usage. She knows this from her own experience because for her, functional and structural knowledge were entirely different things for her when she was at school.

T1 lets students use their individual strengths in group projects, for example, where they have to do a handout and/or a poster which can be done by introverts and people good at speaking can do the presentation. T3 is sometimes surprised by what introverts know, such as a student whom she has this year, who does not speak much, but is very focused in the lessons, always giving correct answers when he is asked directly. T3 feels that through their better ability to focus in the lessons, introverts have more input and thinks that, introverts are usually good learners at home.

T4 has observed that introverts tend to be better organized, work more carefully and reflect more. She thinks that they are very good at working on their own. “So if I give them a task, they really do it carefully and try to finish in time.” Extraverts, in contrast, ask more questions and get distracted more easily.

Being an introvert herself, T4 sometimes struggled with teachers’ attitudes towards introverts. Teachers often told her not to be that shy, but she did not understand why being shy or quiet was not accepted. Now, she thinks that, “it is not always bad to be shy”. T4 feels that the biggest problem for introverts is that they are often underestimated, which makes them worry about their own personality and undermines their confidence.

I am a teacher now and I think that sometimes some people think that it is better to be an extravert. As a student or a teacher. Also extraverts, they are sometimes more dominant, or so, and in positions where they, kind of, have more influence.
Because they talk more, they are more self-confident, I think the main thing is self-confidence. And I think that sometimes introverts are really underestimated or so, because I also felt that at school... Because a lot of teachers are extraverts and they talk a lot and also very loudly […]

In T4’s opinion, the greatest advantage extraverts have is that they are not so afraid of asking questions or making mistakes, which is why they are more fluent. In some cases, however, she feels that this can also be a disadvantage, as some ignore structural aspects entirely.

**4.2.3.1 Advantages and disadvantages for teachers.** Besides the abovementioned advantages and disadvantages introversion can have for the students themselves, teachers also reported some advantages and disadvantages they see for themselves in teaching introverted learners. Teachers feel that introverts are often easier to teach.

T1: Because they don't talk as much it's just easier for you to teach your lesson and to really stick to your plan. So usually there are no surprises. You can really prepare a lesson very well and you can just conduct them without any difficulties.

T3 said that introverts are needed at school. “You can't have a class full of extraverted pupils”. According to T4, introverts are usually more polite towards teachers. T2 confessed that she sometimes likes them better because they always listen to her. Additionally, she can feel with them because she said that as a student, she was also very introverted.

**4.2.4. Extraversion and learners’ success.** T1, T2 and T3 think that extraverted students are more successful in language lessons. They said that speaking and active participation play an essential role in grading. As active participation grades depend to a great extent on how often pupils raise their hands, extraverts tend to have better grades than their introverted peers. T1 said that in grading, she tries to be as objective as possible, but admits that this is not always possible. “For the students who are very present in the classroom and are more extraverted than introverted, you just take notice of them much, much more. And what a lot of teachers, and me included, do then is that we count that as participation in class”, which
is why she would say that even though she tries to avoid that, extraverted students are in general more successful at school.

T1 and T2 both added after the interview that after thinking about it, grading how often pupils raise their hands is not entirely fair. T1 said in the interview that she tells students who raise their hand very often that their participation is very good, “even though the participation of a very shy student might not be worse than that student's participation, but we just don't take notice of it as much”. She thinks that it very much depends on the approaches, which students are obviously active in class. In a question-based lesson, she would only notice those students who raise their hands, whereas in a lesson with group or pair work she would really see who is doing what.

T2 does not think that extraverts are more successful at school in general, but as speaking plays a very important role in language lessons, T2 also said that introverts probably need to work harder in order to get a good grade. T2 even went further and said that while extroverts do not necessarily have to be more successful at school, they will generally be more successful later in their lives and in their jobs, because it is required to interact with people all the time and to present oneself. Therefore, she considers it important that introverted children learn to communicate and interact with others in order to be successful in their adult lives.

When T3 was asked about her definition of a good student, she explained that such a student “should be vivid”. However, in her opinion extraversion is not necessarily related to success at school, but it depends on the way of teaching. In her teaching, she believes that more outgoing students are at an advantage. However, active participation plays an even bigger role in her Science lessons than in her English lessons: “There could be a problem in Science for instance, […] where they get their marks by interact with me, with the others, by thinking and trying to think logically” They get points for correct answers, but they need to raise their hands in order to get these points. Sometimes, she also asks pupils who do no raise their hand, “because there are the silent pupils who will never raise their hand”.
Also in English, her more quiet students need much more help, and she often pays much attention to their work, because she believes it is her “task to help the quiet students” and “to bring something out of them”. While T3 feels that extraverted pupils do better in language lessons, she also mentioned that it can be counterproductive if they are too extraverted and if “they exaggerate their behavior”. Pupils who exaggerate outgoing behavior, in her experience, often “try to hide the fact that they are quite shy”. Besides success in school subjects, T3 feels that interaction with peers outside the lessons is generally easier for more extraverted students, as she has experienced that many introverts are being bullied.

When T4 was asked whether she thinks that extraversion and introversion is related to pupils’ success at school, she expressed a rather different view.

Maybe. I'm not so sure about that. I think it depends more on interest in general. I think that interest is the most important thing because it triggers motivation and then you automatically study if you are motivated or interested in something you study. But what I have seen is that a lot of students who are more quiet, or introverts, that they tend to be a bit better organized. That's what I've found. And they also tend to reflect a bit more. And some of them are also more polite towards teachers, I think.

T4 clearly sees the advantages of introverts and wonders whether these advantages might make them more successful learners in general. She feels that as an introvert, she has not had any difficulties in learning a language, but is not sure whether that applies to all introverts. After some thinking, she concludes that it is not possible to find a clear relation between introversion/extraversion and general success in learning.

Because when I look at my students, for example, this year, there are some students who are really quiet and they do really well, although they don't want to talk a lot, there are also a lot of students who love talking and I think they are extraverts, but they also have success in language learning.

Concerning active participation grades, she thinks how often students raise their hands depends more on personality than on actual knowledge. There are students who always raise their hands and want to talk and others, who do not do this often. She also explained that it very much depends on how a teacher defines what ‘active’ participation really means.
Maybe extraverts tend to talk more and ask more questions in class or they might be more active or they might come across as more active than introverts. But I think there is always the discussion about active... being active or not active in language classes and I think that students who always talk and raise their hands are considered active in class, but I think also the ones who are more quiet really listen and pay attention and do their work carefully, they are also very active. Also if it just comes to listening to the teacher. So I think you also have to be kind of active to understand what they are saying.

T4 appreciates it very much when students want to talk a lot, but it is not a very important criterion for grading, “because I know it would be unfair to other students who also know the answer but they are just too shy to say it or just don't want to talk in front of the group”. Instead, she tries to ask all students regularly and also considers whether they are actively listening or actively doing exercises in class. The participation grades also include revisions and homework. T4 has observed that many pupils expect to get a better grade if they raise their hands frequently, but there is often the problem that they are not as good as they think they are in other aspects. Therefore, making grading as transparent as possible and explaining what they need to do to get a good grade is important to her.

In short, all teachers think that introverts are at a disadvantage if active participation in the sense of students raising their hands is taken into account in grading. T1 and T2 agree that this is slightly unfair, but they still consider it an important aspect in language lessons. T3 tries to reduce disadvantages by also asking more quiet learners, and T4 has a different definition of what ‘active’ participation means and tries to eliminate potential disadvantages for introverts by assessing participation differently.

4.2.5. Change personality? T1, T2 and T4 talked about changing students’ personality. T1 and T4 think teachers must not try to change students’ personality, whereas T2 thinks that it is necessary for introverts to change in order to be successful in their future.

T1 thinks that it is possible for people to change their personality throughout life, depending on “what experiences they collect over the years. However, she believes that some traits stay the same and that an introvert cannot suddenly turn into an extravert. She also gave
me the advice never to try to change students, as this would not work and “and just make them feel more uncomfortable”. While she thinks that teachers should encourage students to speak in class, she is convinced that teachers must not force the students to talk.

Because I know that some people just don't like standing in front of big crowds. And that's not a problem, I mean, why should they? They will never find a job or choose a job where they have to do that. And I think it's not good to try to change the personalities of students.

T2 feels that it is necessary for introverts to become more outgoing. She was more on the quiet side when she was younger and had the feeling that this often placed her at a disadvantage at school. Later, she learned to become more outgoing. T2 thinks that it is necessary to be outgoing in order to be successful later in the workplace.

I think in jobs at this time, normally, you need it. To present yourself, to be self-confident. These are very often the most important facts.

When T2 was asked explicitly whether she thinks that personality can change, however, she thought about it and came to the conclusion that personality cannot change. So she feels that even though introverts cannot become extraverts, they should become more comfortable acting more extraverted.

T4 believes that concerning introversion and extraversion people do not change much throughout their lives. She has always been an introvert and being a teacher now, this has not changed. Sometimes, however, she has the feeling that other people think that it is better to be an extravert, as a student and even more so as a teacher. In her opinion, however, both personality types have advantages that people should acknowledge and value much more.

4.2.6. Differentiation and student personality. Differentiation is an important issue in current teacher training. Most teachers differentiate based on performance, so I wanted to find out whether teachers also take student personality into account when planning their lessons. T1 does not have much experience in teaching which is why she finds it difficult to focus on so many different aspects. So far, she has mainly been focusing on how to teach students and she has never had problems with quieter students. T1 offers all students to come to her if there is
anything they do not want to say in front of the others. In her opinion, this has worked quite well. In general, however, T1 finds it important to consider learners’ individual differences, such as religion, ethnicity or fields of interest. She said that she integrates different traditions and ethnic backgrounds into teaching, “so that they don’t really lose the sense of where they come from or where their parents come from”.

T2 sometimes takes introversion into account when doing role plays. Quieter students usually get smaller roles. This, however, also includes weaker students who would have problems with learning and presenting longer texts. T2 said that during the Advent season which is the quiet time of the year, they do a lot of quiet exercises, which she thinks makes it the most comfortable time for introverted learners.

When T3 was asked to what extent she considers student personality in lesson planning, she said that she plans according to learners’ knowledge and abilities. For example, if a writing task is too difficult for a student she tries to encourage them to write just a few words. Weaker students usually get “very reduced tasks. […] So that they are not disappointed, just sit around and try to hypnotize the first sentence.” In contrast, she does not think that it is good to differentiate openly between introverts and extraverts.

I wouldn’t give them a special position in class officially. So just, when I see they need help, I’m with them, and try to help them. […] So that they begin to trust in me. And then it’s easier to tickle them out a little bit.

T4 sometimes considers different personality types in her lessons, especially in speaking activities. All students get the same task but she takes care to put them together in groups she thinks might work well together. T4 thinks that this is especially important for her quieter students, as it is often easier for them if they can speak to friends or other people they get along with. In certain classes, this is also important for other students, because there are some boys who start fighting if she puts them together in the same group. In addition to grouping, she also considers it important in speaking activities to be understanding of pupils who feel uncomfortable talking. If she sees that a student feels uncomfortable, she “would not ask them
more questions or [she] would turn the conversation into a direction where the student feels a bit better”.

4.2.7. Shyness or introversion? As mentioned in the literature review, introversion is often used as a synonym for shyness, despite the actual difference in meaning. Therefore, I was interested whether teachers are aware of the difference in meaning, how they would define those two terms and whether teachers’ definitions have an effect on how they see introverted learners.

When teachers were asked whether they think that there is a difference between shy people and introverted people, all of the teachers were surprised by this question and had to think about it for some time which indicates that they have not thought much about potential differences. However, all came to the conclusion that there is at least a slight difference between those two terms. At first, T1 said that it is rather the same. Later, however, she reasoned that introverts do not like to talk about themselves, whereas shy people need some time to get to know people and then they open up. She thinks that introverts only “have very specific people who they really talk to”. T2 said that the difference between being shy and being introverted is that introverts are not necessarily too shy to present themselves, but they might simply not want to do so. For T3, introversion and shyness does not necessarily have to be the same. According to her, introversion has to do more with a person’s individual form of expression:

I have a pupil in the third form who is very clever, very intelligent, most of the time focused on the topic we are dealing with, but doesn't speak a lot. But if you ask him, he also gives you correct answers. He goes into dialogue situations with others, but not in a very loud way. But he is not shy, definitely not. It’s just his form of expression.

T4 who is an introvert herself has thought about this topic more than the other teachers.

She explained that she believes introversion is innate and that shyness develops dependent on experiences throughout a persons’ life.

I just read that you are introverted from birth on, and it depends on your brain structure or so. And you get shy from experience, because for example in school when students laugh at you or make fun of other students, so that they make negative experiences they become more shy.
4.2.8. Situations in which learners tend to be shy. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between introverts and shy learners. Shyness is often more obvious to teachers than introversion. All teachers said that students are predominantly shy in speaking and that they have been trying various strategies to make introverts and shy learners more comfortable. T1 explained that about 20% of her students are shy and do not want to speak. Most of all, they do not want to speak in front of crowds, which is why she does a lot of paired exercises in which they can talk to their friends which makes them more comfortable and as a consequence, they talk more. Similarly, when T4 does speaking exercises in groups, she puts shy learners in groups she feels would work well together. T1 also gives them the opportunity to write things down and hand it in in written form instead of speaking.

So in their cases [...] I try to make them write more, so whenever I do an activity I always collect the written forms and the written exercises. [...] Just because they're shy and they don't wanna speak doesn't mean [...] that their English is not good.

What makes many learners uncomfortable, in T4’s opinion, is coming to the blackboard and giving presentations. To make them feel more comfortable, she tries to talk to them in a nice way and she does not allow any unkind behavior of classmates.

T1 further explained that most students are shy when they have to do role plays, but this depends on the age of the learners. Younger students are more comfortable doing role plays, according to T1. T2 tries to make students more comfortable in role plays by allowing them to bring things with them, for example if they play a dialogue in a restaurant, they can bring plates and so on that gives them something to hold on to and that draws the audience’s attention away from the speaker. Focusing learners’ attention on something else is also a strategy T3 has found useful. For very young students, she often uses socket puppets for speaking in order to make them feel more comfortable. To avoid anxiety, T3 finds it important to use topics they can relate to and that are easy to talk about, for instance what they experienced in their holidays. In
addition to that, she feels “the most important thing is to give them respect, to show them the respect, to trust in them and to develop a good relationship between them and you.”

4.2.9. Role Play. Role play is certainly the most controversial teaching method as far as introverts are concerned. As we have seen in the learner interviews, some enjoy it, but others have a strong aversion against it. Within the teacher interviews, it is interesting to note that the three extraverted teachers like role plays, while the introverted teacher does not like them.

In T1’s opinion, role plays are a good opportunity for students to produce language and “a good way for them to also copy everyday situation they might really be confronted with in the future”. T1 feels that whether learners enjoy role play mostly depends on their age. In the first and second grade, she feels that most of them like role play, but “they want to be really really cool and some things are not cool anymore when they turn thirteen all of a sudden”. However, it also depends very much on the individual students. If they do not want to do it, she does not force them to do it, but tries to encourage them and she does not give up easily. She has found that “when everybody does it and when the others say, come on, just try it, then they do try and in the end it's okay”.

T1 always does role plays in small groups. She prepares role play cards allocating roles to all students. For example, in a role play about asking permission, one would be the child who asks for something, and the other one would be a mother, father or even grandmother. On the role-play card, there are some characteristics of the role, for instance, “you get really annoyed or angry at the end of the role play” or “you are a very open-minded grandmother and you think it's okay whatever your grandson and granddaughter does”. However, she also has them come up with their own situation, which usually works very well and they are very creative and come up with very funny situations. She feels that for them, creating their own situations is more fun and some also feel more comfortable presenting their own role play. That creating their own situations can be more comfortable for learners is confirmed by T4 who said that at school, the
“stupid dialogues” that “didn’t make sense” made her feel uneasy. T4 has never liked role play, which is why she also does not use them in her classes now.

If teachers do role play in their lessons, they have to like it themselves in order for it to be efficient, in T2’s opinion, as the teacher is able to convey her enthusiasm to the pupils. T2 does a lot of role play and she feels that it works so well in her classes because she likes them very much herself. T2 thinks that all of her students like role play and that it is the most popular activity. She often has them listen to a dialogue, assign roles, they learn their part at home and then they present it to the class in form of a role play. To make shy students more comfortable, they are allowed to bring props, so that they do not feel that all eyes are on them when they speak. When assigning roles to the students, she sometimes does that randomly, but often she also gives bigger roles to extraverted children so that the introverts or weaker learners do not have to speak so much.

T3 also uses a lot of role play in her teaching. She feels that students have to get used to role play when they are very young, ideally in first grade, when playing is still natural to them.

And if they are used to do small sections of role play, always, twice a week for instance, they can get used to it, and of course there are some... I don't know the English word for that, but in German you say ‘Rampensau’. […] And others who are quite shy, but as they get used to it, and very often do these things within the same group, they come out of themselves.

4.2.10. Accuracy and fluency. There are two reasons for asking about the importance of fluency and accuracy in teaching languages. Firstly, according to research (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999; Hamedi, 2015; Verhoeven & Vermeer, 2002), extraverts tend to be more fluent than introverts, while introverts sometimes outperform extraverts in terms of accuracy. Secondly, the aim was to find out more about teachers’ perceptions of CLT and its significance in the language classroom. As I explained in the methodology chapter, when selecting participants it is difficult to determine whether their language lessons are as communicative as the teachers claim they are. For interpreting learners’ experiences of CLT classrooms, it is
helpful to find out about teachers’ different interpretations of CLT, as these differences can be expected to affect learners’ experiences of language learning considerably.

For T1, fluency is a bit more important than accuracy. She only corrects learners when the meaning is distorted by their mistakes, for example, Germanisms or misunderstandings through using a wrong tense. Most students have fun using English, not caring much about mistakes they make, but there are also some students who want to get everything correct. Also for T3, fluency is more important than accuracy. She encourages learners to speak even if they make mistakes, “because you just block them if you interrupt them any time they do a mistake. And as long as it's English which everyone would understand, as long as it's communicative, no breakdown of communication, then it's okay”. Accuracy is practiced separately in her lessons. In year three and four, pupils should be able to speak freely, but she is aware that if they have to present something, the weaker ones still learn it by heart.

T4 sees this matter slightly different. She feels that accuracy equally if not sometimes more important than fluency, as in her opinion, fluency comes from accuracy to a great extent. “First you have to learn something and then you can use it.” If students do not know the words and the structure, they cannot talk. “I would rather have them think a moment and say the right thing than just talking without, like, paying attention to the language they use.” In speaking, she usually does not interrupt students, especially if they talk about something personal. Instead, she tries to make them aware of the mistake by rephrasing what they said. As she has the feeling that this does not always work, she sometimes also addresses mistakes directly, if she thinks it is necessary. Accuracy is even more important in writing than in speaking, in her opinion, because in writing, “they have more time to think about what they want to write”. Despite the fact that grammar is highly important to her in language teaching, she often tries to teach communicatively and create authentic situations. As she is only in her first years of teaching, she has the feeling that she still needs to learn that. In her opinion, it would be ideal to have something between very open communicative tasks and traditional structured exercises.
Where you have a bit of this guidance on the structure but where they can also use it the way they would like to. I think it's really hard to get them away from the mechanical fill-in stuff to the actual talking or writing.

4.2.11. Relationship and atmosphere. Teachers were not asked about relationships or atmosphere explicitly, but T1, T3 and T4 all mentioned in some way that they find it important to build a good relationship with the students and to create a good atmosphere in the classroom. T1 explained it is important that a language teacher makes students feel like they cannot do anything wrong. Despite the fact that she sometimes has to tell students that she is not satisfied with their work and that they need to work harder, it is crucial to create an atmosphere that is comfortable for all learners. In order to build a good relationship and to make learners feel comfortable, she reminds them that they can talk to her in private, which she thinks is especially important for quiet students who are often reluctant to discuss their issues in front of the whole class. What she considers also important is not to pressure students to do something they really do not want to do, as this would create an atmosphere that does not encourage learning. T1 further said that it is much easier to build a good relationship to the students the more time the teacher spends in a class. The lower classes usually have four lessons per week, which makes building a relationship much easier. T4 feels that especially in languages it is easier but also more important to get to know the students. When students get to know their teacher, in T1’s experience also the quieter students open up “and they tell you about their problems and how they feel”. T4 has recognized the importance of a good relationship throughout the school year. At the beginning, she did not know her students, but the more she gets to know them, the easier she finds teaching them. She thinks that her students trust her much more now, which she thinks makes the students feel more comfortable. The essence of a good relationship between students and their teacher is respect, according to T3 and T4.
5 Discussion

Students’ language learning experiences are as diverse as their individual personalities that are determined by many more factors than only extraversion levels. Similarly, teachers’ attitudes and teaching methods are diverse, creating unique learning experiences for their students. Investigating how introverted learners experience CLT and how teachers’ attitudes and teaching methods address the individual learner, provides for a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of different teaching methods and the importance of differentiation in instruction and grading.

5.1 The ‘Extravert Ideal’

As in most other western countries, CLT is the most frequently used methodology in Austrian foreign language classrooms and part of the Austrian school curricula (Lehrplan der allgemeinbildenden höheren Schule, 2018; Lehrpläne - Neue Mittelschulen, 2018; Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation & Entwicklung, 2011). While the overall aim of CLT is communication and does not place speaking above the development of the other skills (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011), speaking is often seen as the most important skill in the CLT classroom. T1, T2 and T3 said that in their language classrooms, communication is most important, which can be speaking or writing, according to T1 and T3. For T2, speaking is the most important aspect. They did not mention any receptive skill as most important, which shows a clear emphasis on the productive skills. A reason for this might be the fact that reading and listening are expected to be acquired automatically during speaking and writing activities. Another reason, however, could also be the focus on verbal expression, predominantly on speaking, in western cultures (Kim & Markus, 2002). While in some Asian cultures, speaking is believed to impair higher-level thinking, in western cultures, thinking is often associated with speaking (Kim & Markus, 2002), which is why collaborative work plays a more and more important role also in school subjects other than languages (Cain, 2013). As a result, talkativeness and openness often describe an ‘ideal’ student personality (Brown, 1973; Cain,
2013). While also conscientiousness (T2, T4), interest (T4) and motivation (T1, T4) were mentioned as characteristics of a ‘good’ language learner, T3 described the ‘good’ language learner as enthusiastic and having a “vivid” personality. Also for T2, a good student is somebody who participates, talks a lot and asks many questions.

This connects to what Cain (2013) calls “the extravert ideal” and Brown (1973) calls “cult of extraversion” (p. 236). Extraverts are considered at an advantage not only in language learning, but also in the workplace and everyday lives. According to Cain (2013) and Smith (2018), extraversion is often considered preferable over introversion in modern western society. Western cultures sometimes treat introversion as a condition that needs to be ‘cured’, while some Asian cultures value introvert traits, such as introspection and being a good listener, and consider excessive talking rude (Kim & Markus, 2002). A British study by Vries and Rentfrow (2016) has found that highly extraverted people are more likely to come from more advantaged family backgrounds and have a “25% higher chance of being in a high-earning job” (Vries & Rentfrow, 2016, p. 2). Following this study, Dickens (2016) urged schools to “teach skills linked to the ‘extraversion’ personality trait so that disadvantaged children are not left behind in the jobs market”. This view is supported by T2, who thinks that it is beneficial for children to become more extraverted as they will be more successful in their adult lives and that teachers should therefore ‘help’ them change. While a study by Harris et al. (2016) suggests that extraversion levels can change throughout life, trying to change others’ personality can be highly problematic. In T1’s opinion, teachers must not try to change their students’ personalities because it would make them feel very uncomfortable and would create “an atmosphere that does not encourage learning”. Smith (2018) explains that introverts are sometimes more sensitive and “better skilled at picking-up cues related to disapproval, such as […] subtle criticism” (pp. 95-96). A supportive classroom atmosphere is very important for the interviewed learners, particularly for S1 and S2, who said that it is essential especially for being comfortable with speaking exercises. For S2, speaking anxiety is connected to the learning environment
created by the teacher. Her French teacher was able to create such a pleasant atmosphere that in these lessons, there was no trace of the speaking anxiety she had suffered from in various other language courses. In the French course, S2’s personality was accepted and she was therefore able to flourish. This shows that when teachers try to change learners to become more extraverted, this might actually have the opposite result and cause them to withdraw even more.

According to Smith (2018), “long-term benefits are more likely to be seen by accepting that introverts simply behave in a different way” (p. 95). Cain (2013) recommends helping children with social skills, if necessary, but advises to “celebrate these kids for who they are” (p. 349).

 Teachers’ attitudes towards teaching introverts probably depend on their own personality and on the awareness of introverted learners’ needs. T2 explained that she was introverted herself when she was younger and became extraverted as an adult. She confessed that sometimes she likes introverts better because they are more polite. Nevertheless, she thinks that introverts need to change and become more outgoing. The extraverts T1, T2 and T3 said that in their lessons, introverts are at a disadvantage in grading, as they take into account how often students raise their hands, even though T1 and T2 feel that it might be unfair towards introverts. The introverted teacher T4—who had been interested in introversion/extraversion before—thinks that in her language courses, introverts have approximately the same grades as extraverts. However, she feels that introverted learners tend to reflect more and be more organized, and wonders whether this makes introverts better learners than extraverts. How successful introverted learners are in the language classroom, in comparison to extraverts, clearly depends on grading schemes and teaching styles. T3 explained that in her Science lessons, active participation in the form of students raising their hands, is even more important than in her English lessons, because the number of answered questions is a major part of the grade. To help “silent pupils who will never raise their hand”, she asks them directly.

Cain (2013) and Smith (2018) emphasize that introverted peoples’ skills are as important as extraverts’ and should not be underestimated. T2 explained that she often does not
expect quiet learners to write good texts or exams and is very surprised when they do. In T4’s opinion, being underestimated is one of the biggest problems for introverts. T4, who is an introvert herself, has experienced the concept of the ‘extravert ideal’ first hand, as people have often insisted that she needs to become more extraverted. She, however, shares Cain (2013) and Smith’s (2018) view that introverted personalities and skills should be cherished. While introverts might face some difficulties or disadvantages, they have their own individual strengths—or “the power of introverts”, as Susan Cain (2013) calls it—to compensate.

5.2 CLT as an Effective Methodology for Teaching Introverts?

It might seem that CLT is not an ideal methodology for teaching introverts. However, this study indicates that CLT can be as effective and enjoyable for introverts as it is for extraverts, especially since there are many different forms of CLT. Essential for an effective and pleasant learning experience—for introverts and extraverts alike—is for teachers to be aware of their students’ needs. The following sections will help understand introverted learners’ needs more deeply.

5.3 Affective Factors

First, it is important not to confuse introversion with shyness or social anxiety. People can feel anxious or shy in a variety of situations, regardless of their extraversion levels (Cain, 2013; Henderson et al., 2010). The introverted teacher T4 was aware of these differences; whereas T1, T2 and T3 have not thought of any differences between shyness and introversion, but after some thinking, they came to the conclusion that there is at least a slight difference. One reason for introversion and shyness often being confused is that both look similar to others (Henderson et al., 2010). Another reason is that there are often overlaps between shyness and introversion (Briggs, 1988). For example, introverts may become shy when they are given the feeling “that there’s something wrong with their preference for reflection” (Cain, 2013, p. 12), what is especially important for teachers to keep in mind. Teachers’ well-meant attempts to “bring something out of them” (T3) or to make them more outgoing (T2) are thus very likely
to cause shyness. This is also because introverts are more sensitive to signs of disapproval (Smith, 2018).

To improve teaching for introverted language learners, it is, therefore, also important to look at shyness and anxiety in language learning. Creating low anxiety classrooms is essential for learning—for introverts as much as for extraverts (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014). Anxiety plays a bigger role in language classrooms than in other subjects, because language learning is self-expressive and often perceived as being face-threatening (Du, 2009; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014). While fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety affect all levels of extraversion to the same extent, communication apprehension affects significantly more introverts than extraverts (Du, 2009). T2 thinks that introverts are generally more anxious, for example in exam situations, however, this was not confirmed by the learners. When the learners were asked what situations make them feel uncomfortable, none of them mentioned test situations. Instead, speaking is the number one source of anxiety for introverts and will be discussed in detail in the section below. S1 was the only learner who mentioned uncomfortable situations that do not necessarily have to do with speaking. When doing group work, especially with ambitious peers, she is afraid that her making mistakes might affect the others’ grade. Another source of anxiety in her language lessons are certain writing tasks, especially writing a letter of complaint. This indicates that S1 is probably a highly sensitive introvert, who, according to Cain (2013), have high levels of empathy and feel more guilty for possibly hurting others’ feelings.

5.4 Speaking

It is often expected that extraverts are better language learners than introverts (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Studies that have tested overall language proficiency, have not been able to find correlations with extraversion (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999; Naiman, 1996), and one study investigating characteristics of high-achieving language learners has even found that these learners are often introverts (Ehrman, 2009). Studies specifically focusing on
speaking, in contrast, have found that extraverts are more fluent than introverts (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999; Hamedi, 2015; Verhoeven & Vermeer, 2002). Among the reasons for this is introverts’ frequent overarousal and its impairing effect on short-term memory (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999). When teachers were asked which situations they have experienced to make learners feel uncomfortable or act shy, all referred to situations that involve speaking. This is in line with what learners said about uncomfortable situations—almost all uncomfortable situations involve speaking. Speaking anxiety can be a serious problem for introverts. This does not mean, however, that all introverts suffer from speaking anxiety. An excellent example for this is P4, who likes speaking foreign languages very much and loves to do all kinds of speaking activities in her language lessons. She is very motivated to learn to speak the language and she would like to practice speaking more often. A small source of anxiety speaking in front of many people and role plays in which she has to say a lot of text. Other than that, she is entirely comfortable with speaking. P3 and P5, in contrast, generally feel uncomfortable when speaking the target language. For the others, it is mostly dependent on certain circumstances. According to data, the teacher is what appears to be the most important factor in creating an enjoyable, low-anxiety language learning experience, which is confirmed by Gregersen and MacIntyre (2014) and Dörnyei and Murphey (2008). Especially the older learners emphasized the importance of the teacher. For S2, who suffers from speaking anxiety in a variety of situations, such as role play or group work, enjoyed these same tasks in her French course because of the teacher who was able to create a pleasant learning environment. Zaimoğlu (2017) urges teachers to “create a supportive, friendly, and harmonious atmosphere in which students have the chance to overcome their speaking anxieties” (p. 42). S2 has attended many language courses throughout her life, and only one teacher has been able to create an atmosphere for her to overcome her speaking anxiety. This indicates that especially for sensitive learners with higher levels of speaking anxiety, such as S2, there are many more aspects the teacher has to consider.
Being aware of the following aspects can help teachers to reduce their learners’ speaking anxiety and to increase the willingness to speak.

First, most interviewed learners feel anxious or uncomfortable when they have to speak in front of many people. For all learners, speaking anxiety is significantly lower in smaller groups. Most of them are afraid of making mistakes in speaking, which according to S2, P1 and P5 is entirely different from making mistakes in writing. Fear of making mistakes in speaking also depends on the amount of people listening actively. P1 explains that she is more comfortable when she sees that many classmates do something else while she is speaking. This shows that there is some fear of negative evaluation (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014), which can be a “strong source of language anxiety” and is defined as “being overly concerned with others’ opinions” (Du, 2009, p. 163), affecting learners of all personality types. Gregersen and MacIntyre (2014) explain that making language mistakes is often an issue for anxious learners “because of their tendency to engage in negative self-talk and brood over poor performance” (p.2). This consumes space in their working memory (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014) and when considering that introverts generally tend to have a weaker short-term memory (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999), this combination has a devastating effect on their capacity to process information and thus on their performance. Interestingly, S1 said that since she has become used to making mistakes in speaking—being a non-native speaker of German living in Austria—she is not afraid of making mistakes in speaking (language mistakes) anymore, but is generally uncomfortable when she has to talk to many people because she is afraid to say something wrong content wise. Therefore, she often prefers to stay in a corner of the classroom, avoiding interaction as an attempt to avoid others seeing her shyness, which in turn makes her appear even shyer. According to Du (2009), learners who suffer from fear of negative evaluation “feel that they are not able to make the proper social impression” (p. 163), which is clearly true for S1. Strategies of avoidance are very common for learners suffering from
language anxiety and students sometimes even skip classes or drop out of language courses (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014).

Another important aspect that has to be considered at this point is self-confidence, which Du (2009) sees as the most important personality factor in language learning. Lack of self-confidence seems to be a problem for S1, but also for P3, P5 and S2 who are afraid of speaking because they believe that they are not good at it, and therefore often avoid it. Focusing on failures rather than achievements is characteristic for anxious learners (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014). Lack of self-confidence and resulting speaking anxiety is often a result of negative experiences in speaking in the past (Hedge, 2008). It is therefore the responsibility of teachers “to counter the development of anxiety by building self-confidence through positive early experiences, through providing reassuring feedback and through promoting self-perception of developing proficiency” (Hedge, 2008, p. 21). Although P4 does not speak much, she has confidence in her abilities and wants to do more speaking exercises to improve even further. According to Dağtaş (2017), learners’ “perceptions of their speaking abilities affected their WTC [willingness to communicate]” (p. 65), which is why improving learners’ self-confidence also leads to higher WTC. S2 is less confident and more afraid of speaking in higher level classes, which is also in line with Ay’s (2010) findings that language anxiety in productive skills increases with learners’ levels of proficiency.

When talking about speaking anxiety and willingness to speak, we also have to consider the type as well as the content of the speaking exercises. Speaking about sensitive or unfamiliar topics can be stressful, and especially the older learners have an aversion to role play. They feel very embarrassed when doing role plays, especially when they are perceived as face threatening or do not seem to make sense. Choosing an appropriate topic for the role play is essential, as emotional topics might “cause a great deal of distress” (Ladousse, 1996, p. 11). Taking on a different role can cause psychological stress for some learners, while for others, the opposite is true (Ladousse, 1996). S1 identifies with the role and is uncomfortable saying something she
would not usually say herself. Also for T4, when she was a student, she never wanted to take on a different role. Books on CLT and on teaching methods in general, usually praise the effectiveness and advantages of using role plays in the language classroom (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Petty, 2014; Willis & Willis, 2011), while very few discuss possible problems and disadvantages (Ladousse, 1996). Considering the fact that many of the interviewed learners feel uncomfortable performing role plays, it is necessary to raise awareness of the problems learners have with role plays. Whether learners feel comfortable with role play clearly depends on the age and on whether they are used to it. T1 explained that her students usually like role play when they are younger, but they become more embarrassed when they are older. T3 said that learners should become used to role play when they are young and playing still comes natural to them. This seems to be true, as the youngest pupils, P1 and P2 enjoy role play very much. T2 feels that her learners enjoy role play because she enjoys it herself and is able to convey her enthusiasm to them, which is confirmed by P1 and P2. Interestingly, in T2 and T3’s lessons, the learners have to study dialogues by heart and present it to the whole class, which, according to Ladousse (1996), should not be the main purpose role play in the language classroom. The main purpose of role play is to practice interpersonal skills (Petty, 2014) and to mirror real-life situations (Willis & Willis, 2011). Ladousse (1996) says that the focus should be on using the language and on the aspect of “play”, and there should be no audience. Even the teacher listening might inhibit learners. Performing the role play in front of an audience “is not essential and should only be done when students are well-used to role play, or when they are particularly extravert” (Ladousse, 1996, p. 11) as it may induce anxiety otherwise. Apparently, P1 and P2 being used to role play makes also performing in front of an audience an enjoyable experience. As a strategy to make learners more comfortable in performing, T2 has learners bring props so that they can focus their attention on something other than the audience, which P1 likes very much. P4 also thinks that role play can be fun, but only if she does not have to say too much. P3 and P5 do not like role play, but this is mainly
because they do not like to perform in front of an audience. Following Ladousse’s advice, it seems sensible to make performing in front of an audience optional.

Another aspect that is important for an enjoyable learning experience, according to data, is the classmates. Also Dörnyei and Murphey (2008) insist that good group dynamics is essential for a pleasant language learning experience. The interviewed learners find it easier and less stressful to work together with nice people they trust not to laugh at them when they make mistakes. P1 is very afraid that people might laugh at her, and also T4 thinks that learners laughing at each other is bad. Interestingly, there seem to be exceptions to this. While S2 is usually rather anxious when speaking, she said that her French teacher used to laugh at them when they made funny mistakes, which she did not mind at all—instead, she felt that this created a very relaxed atmosphere.

While S1 emphasized the importance of nice classmates and a friendly atmosphere, she feels that the teacher has much influence on this. Since she is reluctant to approach people, it can be difficult to get to know classmates other than the people sitting next to her, which is why she relies on the teacher to do activities that enable her to get to know her classmates. Dörnyei and Murphey (2008) explain that for good group dynamics, learning about each other is very important and should be facilitated by the teacher, for example, through including “low-risk self-disclosure activities” (p. 20). Also proximity is an important factor to consider in terms of group dynamics. Dörnyei and Murphey (2008) therefore advise teachers to have learners move around at the beginning of the school year. S1 enjoyed her German course very much, because the teacher had them form new groups every lesson, so that she was able to get to know all her classmates. She felt that this created a very friendly atmosphere that encouraged learning.

According to Cain et al. (2017), working with new people is often a great opportunity for introverts to get to know new people. Creating new groups every lesson is in contradiction with what T1 and T4 said about learners feeling more comfortable working with their friends. The younger pupils did not mention whether being with their friends makes them more comfortable
in collaborative activities, which suggests that it is not very important to them either. This indicates that in a classroom with good group dynamics, learners do not mind working with people they are not friends with, which is also what Dörnyei and Murphey (2008) assert.

5.5 The Communicative Potential of Other Work Forms and Skills

CLT teachers often do not recognize the communicative potential of skills other than speaking. When teachers were asked what they consider important in a CLT classroom, they did not place much emphasis on receptive skills and writing. Interviewed learners prefer listening to speaking and enjoy writing very much. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) explain that CLT tasks are characterized by “information gap, choice and feedback” (p. 122), which shows that not only speaking activities can be communicative. When the learners were asked what they would change about their language lessons to make them more enjoyable, P5 and S1 said that they would like to write more. S1 said that in her opinion, writing texts is the best way to practice grammar. S1 likes learning grammar in general, but believes that filling in gaps is not useful for a communicative usage of the language. While the focus in CLT is more on fluency than on accuracy, grammar is needed in order to express meaning and is therefore still an essential aspect of language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In contrast to the older learners, the younger learners do not like grammar exercises. This might be because they mostly do traditional grammar exercises. Writing texts, as S1 has suggested, might also make practicing grammar more appealing to the younger learners. S1 considers the authenticity of texts very important—in writing assignments but even more so in reading. She feels that many textbooks include texts that do not make much sense, which she finds very demotivating. The authenticity of tasks and texts is important in CLT language teaching (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014), and shows that many aspects of CLT are very effective in teaching introverted language learners.
5.6 Collaborative Work

Considering introverts’ preferences to keep to themselves, we would assume introverts generally prefer individual to collaborative work. While this is certainly true sometimes, most introverts, especially younger ones, also enjoy collaborative activities very much. Cain et al. (2017) explain that on the one hand, working with others can be draining for introverts, while on the other hand, it often means less pressure.

All older learners showed clear preference for individual work. Especially S2 has a strong aversion to collaborative work which means a lot of stress and pressure for her. She has had very bad experiences with pair work, but she feels that group work puts even more pressure on her. Similar to her speaking anxiety, she has had entirely different experiences in her French course, where she enjoyed pair and group work very much. How comfortable she feels with group work depends on the teacher, the level, the classmates and the topic. The topic of a collaborative exercise is also important for T4, who enjoys group work in some cases, for example discussing and analyzing interesting topics. S1 dislikes group work and like S2, she considers it stressful; especially working with highly ambitious peers puts a lot of pressure on her. Many researchers advocate using technology in the language classroom to facilitate collaboration and social interaction. Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008), for example, suggest using mobile phones for collaborative speaking and writing activities. So and Brush (2008) have found that in blended learning, which combines traditional classroom instruction with the use of technology, many learners perceive collaboration more positively than in other collaborative lessons. In their study, a shy learner who had had unpleasant experiences with collaborative lessons before, felt a stronger sense of belonging and emotional bonding in the course where collaboration and communication with the other classmates took place over the internet, in addition to regular face-to-face interaction (So & Brush, 2008).

The younger learners’ attitudes towards collaborative activities are very different from older learners’ attitudes. Only P3 prefers individual work, but she said that some small-group
activities can be a lot of fun. All other young learners enjoy group work, because they think it is usually more fun and they have the feeling that they learn more as they can help each other. Laal and Ghodsi (2012) have found that the implementation of communicative activities has numerous positive social, academic and psychological effects, for example, it decreases anxiety, establishes a positive atmosphere or builds “social support systems” (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012, p. 487)

How enjoyable collaboration is for learners, according to data, depends on various factors, such as task type, amount of collaborative work and, most importantly, group size. All young learners said that they like working in pairs or groups of three. Discomfort in group work seems to increase with group size. In addition, it depends on how often group work is done in the lessons. P2 and P5 said that they do not do so much collaborative tasks and they would like to do more. S1 and S2, in contrast, who do not like pair and group work, usually do it very often in their language lessons. It would be interesting to investigate in a further study, how much collaborative work introverted learners find enjoyable. Moderate amounts of collaboration seem well-received by introverted language learners, while according to Cain et al. (2017), too much pair and group work often makes introverted learners feel overwhelmed and drained. P2 and P3 also explained that concentrating is much easier for them when working alone.

Another aspect that has to be considered in collaborative assignments is the role of the learner in the group (Cain et al., 2017). P4 explained that in a group, she rather listens than talks, but if there are creative elements, she likes to express her ideas. Cain et al. (2017) advise learners to try to find a suitable role in a group, which will probably be a role that does not put them in the spotlight. In P4’s case, this would be the creative aspect of the group assignment.

5.7 Active Participation

Teachers’ attitudes and learners’ experiences of grading, or more precisely active class participation grades, are certainly among the most important findings of this study. As I have explained before, extraverts are often believed to be better language learners than introverts
T1, T2 and T3 said that introverts need more help when speaking is concerned, but apart from that they do not think that extraverts are better language learners in general. Nevertheless, they explained that extraverts usually get better grades than introverts because they have better active participation grades. The reason for this is the fact that ‘active participation’ grades are essentially based on how often learners raise their hands in class. As many introverts rarely raise their hands, they have to work much harder in order to get a good grade, according to T2. T1 and T2 said that they uphold this grading scheme even though they think that it is slightly unfair towards quiet students. T1 explained that the problem is that teachers do not notice quiet students as much as louder ones, even though they might be equally active in the language classroom.

T1 and T3 try to reduce the disadvantages of reticent learners, for example, through cold-calling. Shea (2017) found in his study that this is usually an effective strategy and many learners appreciated a push, however, it increased reticence of students suffering from severe language anxiety. Whether cold-calling makes learners more comfortable to contribute to discussions or even increases anxiety, depends on several factors, such as the level of formality or peer pressure (Shea, 2017). Again, this emphasizes the importance of the teacher’s ability to assess individual students’ needs in specific situations.

Despite the attempts to eliminate introverts’ disadvantages, T3 thinks that with her teaching style and grading scheme, quieter learners are still at a disadvantage. This is confirmed by the younger learners, who all said that they would be able to get a better grade if they raised their hands more often. Interestingly, the extent to which the grade is affected by lack of ‘active participation’ differs, according to the pupils’ opinions. While P5, who had a three on her written exams, believes that she might be able to get a two in the final report if she raised her hand more often, P4 said that she got a worse grade in the final report than she had gotten on her written exams because she had not raised her hand enough.
Whether getting good active class participation grades is difficult for introverted learners depends entirely on the definition of ‘active participation’. There are many different opinions on what ‘active participation’ means, and there are no specific guidelines in Austria. §18 of the education act (SchUG, 2018) says that grading in all subjects is to be based on assessment of student performance in oral, written or practical exams or other work forms, as well as participation in the classroom, with more detailed criteria to be found in the curricula. Neither the SchUG, nor the curricula (Lehrplan der allgemeinbildenden höheren Schule, 2018; Lehrpläne - Neue Mittelschulen, 2018; SchUG, 2018), however, offer a definition of ‘participation’ and what it entails.

Teachers can easily justify including the frequency of students’ raising their hands as a substantial part of the grade, especially in languages, since speaking and communication are essential parts of the curricula and CLT. As the interviewed teachers have indicated, however, there is often no connection between language proficiency and the frequency of students raising their hands, which depends more on personality. There are not many academic studies on this topic, but there has been considerable amount of discussion and non-academic writing. Ortner (2002), who has asked his students and evaluated his own lessons explains that he has found some severe flaws in his class participation grading scheme. The students’ participation grades in his records did not match their performance in oral or written assignments. He found that grading the frequency of learners raising their hands places certain student personalities at a disadvantage. At a disadvantage are meticulous, perfectionist students; hesitant students who are overwhelmed by the pace of the lesson; introvert, reserved and passive students; anxious students; and students with a strained relationship to the teacher (Ortner, 2002, p. 9).

Krumm and Weiß (2000) also reason that the impact of active participation on the overall grade is sometimes questionable, which can be seen in the case of P4. Cain et al. (2017) argue that while encouraging quiet learners to speak up more can be beneficial, some teachers take this idea too far. It would be interesting to observe T2 and T3’s classes, as both place much
emphasis on participation in their grading, and especially T2 is convinced of the importance of introverts becoming more outgoing. Cain et al. (2017) relate an extreme attempt at getting students to speak more: One teacher gave each learner three sticks at the beginning of the lesson and had them throw a stick in the center of the classroom for every contribution to the discussion (Cain et al., 2017). Each student who still had a stick at the end of the lesson would get a negative participation grade. While the teacher succeeded in getting learners to speak up, it had a devastating effect on the quality of the discussion, which was very frustrating for the student interviewed by Cain et al. (2017): “If I have something important to say, I will. But I ended up just saying a quick little sentence about anything so I could throw in the stick.” (Cain et al., 2017, p. 36). Not many teachers employ such extreme methods, but this case illustrates that it is important for teachers ask themselves whether their teaching and grading offers equal opportunities for various different student personalities. When Krumm and Weiβ (2000) asked learners about instances when they felt treated unfairly by the teacher, they found that participation grades are often perceived as unfair. Fairness of grades is highly important because success leads to motivation (Johnson, 2013). Unfortunately, in the present study, the younger learners were uncomfortable talking about issues that might be seen as them criticizing their teacher. When they were asked whether they think that introverts have disadvantages at school, they said that they are at a disadvantage because they talk less and are often reluctant to raise their hands, but did not mention whether they consider that fair. In a further study, such delicate topics could be investigated using a written questionnaire, as introverts can be expected to be more comfortable to open up in writing.

In the study conducted by Krumm and Weiβ (2000), learners considered it unfair that most teachers do not differentiate between the quantity and quality of the contributions and explained that they got a negative participation grade for a few good contributions, while others got good participation grades for simply raising their hands often and talking a lot. Unfortunately, this problem is not so easy to solve. If teachers graded the quality of the
contributions, students might be afraid to say something wrong, which would cause more pressure (Krumm & Weiß, 2000).

Not wanting to say something wrong is often an issue for introverts (Cain et al., 2017). The learners interviewed for this study say that the reason for rarely raising their hands is that they only say something when they are sure that their answer is correct. P1 explains that she is often angry with herself for not raising her hand when she finds that her answer to the teacher’s question would have been correct. Not having enough time to think of an answer and not wanting to say something meaningless further increases this problem (Cain et al., 2017; Smith, 2018).

It is difficult to find a satisfying solution to the issue of grading active class participation. On the one hand, speaking and contributions to in-class discussions are an essential part of every CLT language lesson and learners who make the effort to contribute, should be rewarded. On the other hand, this study has shown that the frequency of students’ contributions depends more on personality and other factors than on actual proficiency or engagement in language learning and almost always places introverted students at a disadvantage.

The only fair answer to the problem of fairness in grading is differentiation, and the famous quote: “Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.” Introverts can raise their hands, even if it is usually not in their nature to do so frequently. They can learn to stretch and step out of their comfort zones and benefit from practicing to speak up (Cain et al., 2017). However, we also have to consider learners who simply seem to be quiet, but are actually highly anxious learners. While many reticent learners may find it very rewarding to step out of their comfort zones in certain occasions (Cain, 2013; Shea, 2017), for highly anxious learners, this may not be possible. This is illustrated by a case of extreme anxiety investigated by Smith (2018). A pupil

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1 This quote is often credited to Albert Einstein, but there is no substantial proof that he said it. https://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/04/06/fish-climb/#note-5880-1
suffered from selective mutism and the first reaction of teachers was to introduce sanctions in order to “make him speak” (Smith, 2018, p. 123). It took them some time to realize that this student who “refused to speak” (p. 123), actually was not able to speak at school because of severe anxiety and needed support instead of punishment. Fortunately, this is a rare case of anxiety and does not have much to do with introversion other than the fact that the respective learners do not talk as much as many teachers think they should. However, it illustrates that regardless of a students’ reasons for keeping quiet, punishing them with negative grades or otherwise cannot be the solution.

Street (2017) and Cain et al. (2017) argue that it is time to rethink the idea of classroom participation. T4 has a different definition of ‘active participation’. In her opinion, quiet students can be just as active in the classroom. Thus, participation grades are comprised of a variety of different factors, including oral contributions, but also participation in quiet assignments. While T4 appreciates verbal contributions in the classroom very much, she thinks that making it a significant part of the grade would be unfair to more quiet students. She says that many talkative learners expect to get a better grade because they raise their hands frequently and do not realize that it is usually not enough to make up for lacking effort in other areas. Therefore, T4 tries to make grading as transparent as possible. Increasing transparency in grading is also what Craven III and Hogan (2001) suggest for making participation grades more objective. They advise teachers to create and use their own rubric for assessing participation, including not only the frequency of contributions, but also other aspects such as listening attentively or being prepared for class (see Craven III & Hogan, 2001 for a sample rubric).

T4’s definition of participation is a much broader concept, which Cain et al. (2017) refer to as ‘classroom engagement’. In university language courses, teachers also seem to have another definition of active participation, according to S1. In her language courses, participation is also an essential part of the grade, however, she explains that participation means that you are really present in the classroom and do not “just sit there and sleep”. This means that for the
final grade, there are no disadvantages for her as a shy introverted language learner. T1 and T4 have observed that introverted learners are usually just as engaged as outgoing learners. In addition to quiet work forms or group work, also class discussions can be valuable for engaging students of both personality types (Cain et al., 2017). To make it easier for introverts to share their ideas, teachers can use the Think/Pair/Share technique or give them more time to think before responding (Cain et al., 2017). T1 includes these suggestions into her teaching and gives quiet learners the opportunity to do some tasks in written form in order to decrease their disadvantages in active participation grades. To accommodate the needs of introverted learners, use of technology in the classroom can also be effective (Cain, 2013; Cain et al., 2017; Jacobs, 2014). With the help of the internet, social-media or smartphone apps, classroom discussions can be conducted in written form. Similarly, as a non-digital variety of this technique, Smith (2018) suggests that teachers can have learners write their answers on their own whiteboards and raise their whiteboards instead of their hands. The advantages of this technique are the engagement of all learners, the additional time it gives them to think of an answer and the fact that no learner is put in the spotlight (Smith, 2018), which is a source of anxiety for most of the interviewed learners.

As explained in the section about speaking, introverts often suffer from speaking anxiety. Smith (2018) explains that it is often tempting for teachers to “try and bring them out of their shells” (p. 137), which often backfires. While making introverts more outgoing is neither necessary nor possible, teachers can help anxious students to decrease their anxiety with appropriate coping strategies. Such a strategy could be “gradually increasing the level of interaction” (p. 138) in certain situations, for example, asking simple follow-up questions about answers written on their whiteboard.

Decreasing anxiety benefits learning as well as the students’ social lives. Practicing interpersonal skills is as beneficial for introverts as practicing to work quietly is for extraverts (Cain et al., 2017). The problem is that many teachers and grading schemes do not value the
individual strengths of introverts to the same extent as they value those of extraverted learners, and perhaps even see quiet learners as problem cases, which has a devastating effect on self-esteem. Therefore, the goal has to be for teachers to recognize and value learners’ individual strengths, differentiate effectively and provide all learners with equal opportunities for learning and for getting a grade that reflects their efforts and accomplishments in language learning.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Summary

For this study, four teachers, five younger introverted learners and three older introverted learners were interviewed. As there has not been much research on the subject of introversion and communicative language teaching before, instead of trying to form and prove hypotheses, the aim of these in-depth interviews was to explore how introverted learners experience CLT and how teachers’ attitudes and teaching methods address introverted learners’ needs. For exploring this under-researched field, semi-guided interviews proved to be the right choice as they enabled interviewees to lead the interview in rather unexpected directions which contributed to a broader understanding of the subject. However, there were some difficulties in interviewing introverted learners because especially most younger learners were uncomfortable answering personal questions and most would have preferred to do a written questionnaire. Based on this study, it will be possible for further researchers to formulate more specific research questions as well as more specific questions for teachers and learners, which is why I recommend written questionnaires as the next step in further research. This would make it possible to work with a larger sample size and it will help respondents to overcome inhibitions about sharing personal information.

Despite some reluctance in answering personal questions, the interviews obtained valuable information. Naturally, it is not possible to generalize introverts’ learning experiences,
as every learner is unique and their perceptions depend on much more than their extraversion levels. However, some aspects of language learning were addressed by most learners and can therefore be expected to be significant in their language learning experience. In line with previous studies, the data suggests that speaking is the only aspect in language learning that causes significant problems for many introverted language learners. Speaking is central to CLT methodology, which means that certain forms of CLT lessons can cause difficulties for introverted learners. However, this does not mean that CLT is not an effective teaching methodology for introverted language learners. Instead, it shows that teachers need to be aware of some aspects in order to make it equally effective for introverted learners. There is no recipe for teaching introverted language learners—but the key would seem to be differentiation. Addressing learners’ individual needs instead of using a one-size-fits-all approach is beneficial for learners of all extraversion levels. The aim of CLT is to enable learners to communicate in real-life situations. It is usually assumed that such situations refer to face-to-face interaction and thus speaking. However, especially in the age of the internet and social media, some students will much more frequently communicate in written form. It is not possible for teachers to predict the form or context of communication learners will be required to master outside of school. Equipping learners with the skills to use the language effectively also in unknown situations is one of the main goals of CLT. Thus, it seems sensible not to overemphasize speaking and instead try to find a balance and a place for all four skills in the CLT classroom and to offer learners a choice sometimes.

While a balance of all four skills is helpful for introverted language learners, there is no denying the importance of sound speaking skills. Teachers who are aware of introverted learners’ needs can help them to improve speaking skills considerably, especially concerning speaking anxiety. Throughout the study, it has become obvious that introverts are not necessarily shy or anxious; however, most of the interviewed introverts suffer from speaking anxiety. Among the reasons for this is the feeling of not being good enough and the fear of
making mistakes. Speaking anxiety decreases with a smaller audience, less pressure, comfortable and familiar topics, good classroom atmosphere and supportive teachers and peers.

Especially the older learners emphasized the importance of the language teachers and their ability to create a supportive and pleasant learning environment. Previous studies indicated that introverts tend to be more sensitive, for example, to subtle disapproval (Smith, 2018). The interviews have shown that this is certainly true for some learners. Therefore, it is highly important for teachers to create a supportive, low-anxiety classroom environment, which is beneficial not only for introverted learners (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2008). When looking at teaching quiet learners, teachers also need to be aware that there can be numerous reasons for a student to be quiet. Although there are often overlaps, introverted students must not be confused with shy or anxious ones because their needs are different (Henderson et al., 2010).

Most of the factors influencing introverts’ language learning experience apply to learners of all age groups approximately to the same extent. Interestingly, there are some factors that obviously depend very much on the age of the learners, most of all the preferred work form and the enjoyment of role play activities. All the interviewed older learners have a strong aversion to role play, which makes them feel very uncomfortable. For the younger learners, it depends on the circumstances, such as the size of the audience, but the two youngest respondents always enjoy role plays. When using role play in the language classroom, teachers therefore need to be aware that it can be a major source of anxiety for some learners. In order to make them more comfortable, it is important that teachers do not try to push anxious learners too hard. Instead, teachers can, for example, do role plays in smaller groups, ask them to create their own role plays to avoid uncomfortable topics, or even offer them an alternative exercise.

All learners of both age groups agree that smaller groups, ideally groups of two or three, are preferable to large groups, but the opinions on how much collaborative work should be done and how enjoyable it is, vary considerably. All older learners prefer individual work to collaborative work, and want to work with others only in order to improve their speaking skills.
In contrast, most younger learners usually enjoy working with others. In addition to the age of the learners, the enjoyment of collaborative exercises depends on the amount of collaboration in the lessons—students who said that they do not usually do much group or pair work enjoy collaborative exercises more than students who do many collaborative tasks. For an enjoyable learning experience, language teachers should keep this in mind when planning a lesson. Again, it is essential to find an appropriate balance between individual and collaborative work forms to meet the needs of both introverted and extraverted learners and at the same time present challenges to promote learning for students of all extraversion levels.

6.2 Implications for Teaching

Based on the findings of this study, a CLT approach that is rich in variety and balanced in terms of work form, methods and practiced skill areas—in combination with teachers who are aware of their learners’ needs—is probably as effective for introverted language learners. I was glad to see that all interviewed teachers try to address introverted learners’ needs in their teaching. However, it was shocking to find that all extraverted teachers appeared to be at least slightly biased towards extraverted personality types.

While I have been aware that western cultures value extravert personality traits very much and that the amount of oral contributions is an essential part of the grade for some teachers, I was very surprised that in all three extraverted teachers’ lessons, introverts usually get lower grades than extraverts, although they reported that there is no difference between introverts and extraverts with respect to diligence and performance in other work forms or exams. I consider grading schemes that place much emphasis on ‘active participation’ highly problematic when it is mostly based on the frequency of students raising their hands. There is the question whether teachers are able to register accurately how often each student raises his or her hand, and secondly, based on the findings of this study, I agree with educators who claim that talking is not necessarily a sign of learning (Strauss, 2013). While curricula and the SchUG say that active participation is to be taken into account in grading, none offers a definition of
what it entails. Therefore, I believe that it is necessary to rethink definition of ‘active participation’ in terms of students raising their hands and instead place more emphasis on students engaging with the course material in any form.

Even more shocking than introverts’ obvious disadvantages in the extraverted teachers’ classrooms, is that some teachers seem to see extraversion as the ideal personality and do not value the strengths of their introverted learners to the same extent. Practicing interpersonal skills is as important for introverts as it is for extraverts to practice quiet skills such as working alone. However, I consider it highly problematic that instead of merely encouraging students to overcome their weaknesses, a teacher is convinced that it is necessary for introverts to change their personality and become more extravert.

Thus, it is high time to increase awareness of introversion/extraversion in order to eliminate the bias toward extravert personality and to value each student’s individual strengths. While it is fine to encourage learners to step out of their comfort zones on occasion, conveying disapproval of a students’ personality can have devastating effects on the self-confidence of every student regardless of extraversion levels.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

6.3.1. Quantitative study. A quantitative study with questions based on the main findings of this study could, for example, try to find out how many introverts suffer from speaking anxiety in comparison to extraverts, whether they feel that certain grading schemes places them at a disadvantage, and how much they enjoy certain work forms or types of activities. Such a quantitative study, especially one with a large sample size, would provide valuable further insights. However, language learning experiences are very diverse and difficult to generalize, which is why with such a quantitative study, researchers would have to be very careful not to make wrong connections and draw wrong conclusions.

6.3.2. Mixed approach. To avoid the dangers of overgeneralizing results of a quantitative study, a mixed approach might be the better choice for further research. Most
younger learners were uncomfortable sharing personal information when face-to-face with the interviewer, which is why having learners answer questions in written form may allow deeper insights into their emotions. Based on the findings of this study, it is possible to create a questionnaire having more detailed research questions in mind. Additionally, if further research is done in the form of written questionnaires, it will be easier to increase the sample size.

6.3.3. Female introverted learners vs. male introverted learners. Coincidentally, all learners interviewed for this study are female, which is why further studies should aim to include more male respondents. Introverted men’s or boys’ experiences of CLT might be very similar, but society’s different expectations of men might translate into language classrooms and lead to different language learning experiences.

6.3.4. More research on fair active participation grades. I have argued that it is necessary to rethink the idea of grading class participation in terms of the frequency of verbal contributions. There is much discussion on the fairness of grading class participation, and there are many different opinions, but there is not enough research on this topic to find a satisfactory solution. Thus, more academic research is needed in order to increase fairness of grading. It would be interesting to investigate how subjective participation grades are. For that, classroom observations could be done where researchers observe and grade students’ engagement in class and compare it with the grades the teacher would award. In another qualitative study, learners and parents could be asked whether they think grading is fair and what they would do to increase fairness. Then, teachers could be interviewed on how they grade, which would enable researchers to compare and contrast grading schemes that are perceived as unfair with grading schemes that learners and parents consider fair.

6.3.5. Introverted vs. extraverted language learners’ perceptions. For this study, only introverted language learners’ perceptions were taken into account. It would be interesting to include extraverted learners into the study and compare introverted and extraverted language learners’ preferences and perceptions of the CLT classroom.
6.3.6. **Introverted vs. extraverted language teachers.** At the beginning of the research process, I did not aim to include the extraversion/introversion of the language teachers into analysis. However, during research, it became obvious, that the extraverted teachers’ teaching styles and perceptions of teaching introverts differed considerably from those of the introverted teacher’s. Doing further research into this topic would be interesting also because the interviewed introverted teacher conveyed that the ‘extravert ideal’ of western society highly affects introverted teachers, as most people expect teachers to be extraverted and question the skills of introverted teachers. Breul (2018), in contrast, argues that introverted teachers’ strengths are needed in schools, and claims that they are often more understanding of quiet learners’ needs, which would be interesting to investigate in a further study.

6.3.7. **Collaborative work for introverted learners.** This study has shown that some introverts enjoy working collaboratively very much, while some have serious issues with certain forms of collaborative work. There is already some research on how to make collaborative learning more effective or enjoyable for introverted learners (Cain et al., 2017; Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). However, it would certainly be beneficial to gain a deeper understanding of what makes collaboration enjoyable and effective for introverted learners. This could be done, for instance, through classroom observations of different types of collaborative activities and subsequent interviews with learners on how they perceive the activities.

6.4 **Conclusion**

The present study has provided insights that will help teachers to improve language teaching, but more research is clearly needed. We have come a long way in developing teaching methodology and techniques since the times when students had to sit still and listen to the teacher quietly the whole day. In former times, schools were probably a highly uncomfortable place for extraverted learners. Research has shown the strengths and weaknesses of these traditional approaches and has led to a development towards more collaboration in the
classroom. Such a development was sorely needed; however, we need further research to gain a better understanding of learners’ individual needs. When increasing collaboration in the classroom, we have to be careful to keep a balance and not to go into extremes with this development in order to meet both the needs of extraverted and introverted learners.

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Appendix A: Examples of coded data

Example 1: Interview with student

between them and me after some lessons. And I don’t have the feeling to blame myself... more than them.

31 I: Do you feel more comfortable when you have exercises, speaking exercises, where you are in smaller groups, for example you do pair work or groups of three or four?

32 S2: I hate pair work. [laughs]

33 I: Really?

34 S2: Yeah. Because also on the topics... I don’t think I have to say so much. It does not fit for me. I can’t really tell what it is.

35 I: Mhm...

36 S2: I don’t feel confident.

37 I: Does that depend on the topic a lot?

38 S2: It depends also on the topic, of course, yeah, because in, at uni the topic is more or less in context with the age of the students... This was my experience so far. But if you get used to it... It is getting better. But at the beginning it was really hard for me.

39 I: And in your French course, do they also have topics that are more...

40 S2: It was different. It was really different [thinking] We went from... We had this book and there were topics from this book and I think they were different so more general, not so specific. And she made it, it was her, the teacher, who made it really good.

41 I: Yeah, I’m really interested in this kind of lesson. What was it that made you... made you feel so comfortable? In these lessons?

42 S2: That’s interesting, I have never thought about. She created an atmosphere for all of us that was easy-going. She laughed. And she said... Oh yes she said that it is good if we make mistakes. She asked us... She offered us, in a way, to make mistakes. Maybe this... And it was really fun because... I think it was all about her... She laughed when we made mistakes, but she laughed not AT us but...

43 I: Oh I see!

44 S2: Yeah, because there were some funny expressions we brought up... and also the way she taught us. With some games. It was really relaxing and easy-going.

45 I: So you like games in your language lessons?

46 S2: Normally not, no! But... [laughs]

47 I: Really? [laughs]

48 S2: No! But she was very... And the group was very... coherent? Because I was last semester in a 32 course. There were too many people. In this first or second course I had there were ten, twelve, and then there were 28. And
Example 2: Interview with teacher

I: So do you also include some methods or teaching styles that also focus on introverted people?

T1: To be honest, I have not really thought about this as much. So I never thought, okay, I have so many introverted students, what can I do, to be honest. I think that the exercises I choose definitely encourage also shy students to work with me. So sometimes, of course, I can do exercises in the book and I can see that they are working on it. I include group works where not everybody has to present, but some for example have to do a handout or some of them are doing the poster. So the introverted students can focus more on the creative part, and somebody who is really good at speaking, can do the presentation. So yeah, I think these methods... Or sometimes I also would use methods where students have to talk to different people, like speed dating, for example, and where they have the feeling, okay, I do not necessarily listen to only one student speaking or to many different people speaking at the same time. So yeah, that makes them feel a little bit more at ease, I'd say.

I: Do you think there is a difference between shy people and introverted people?

T1: Oh, good question. For me, to be honest, it is kind of the same. If you shy... For me, introverted means that you are kind of locking yourself up a little bit and you don't really open up as much to other people. So you don't really like to talk about yourself and for me, shy people, I mean it's not necessarily that they don't like to talk about themselves... There might be a slight difference. I think introverted people have really a hard time talking about their feelings and stuff and shy people just have to get to know you and then they open up. Whereas introverts, I think they have very specific people who they really talk to.

I: Do you think that changes throughout their lives?

T1: Yeah, I think it depends on what experiences they collect over the years. It could change, but I think that some traits that people have stay the same. So I never think that an introvert can all of a sudden become an extrovert. Because it's just not their personality.

I: So you also... You don't think it's good to try to make them more...

T1: Not! Because I know that some people just don't like standing in front of big crowds. And that's not a problem, I mean, why should they? They will never find a job or choose a job where they have to do that. And I think it's not good to try to change the personalities of students. So I also don't force them. If they don't wanna speak to me in front of the other class, I don't force them to. Because I think it creates an atmosphere that does not encourage learning.

I: So for me it sounds like affective learning is also quite important, so that the students feel comfortable?

T1: Yeah definitely! I think as a teacher you always have to make them feel like they can do anything wrong, basically. I mean, of course, you also say, okay, now you really have to work a little bit harder, because the last couple of lessons I was not really satisfied with the way you worked or blah blah blah. But in general, I think for every student you have to create an atmosphere where he or she feels like, yeah, feels just very comfortable, yeah.
### Appendix B: Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Trifft zu</th>
<th>weder noch</th>
<th>Trifft nicht zu</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ich bin eine Stimmungskanone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ich fühle mich wohl in der Gegenwart vieler Menschen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meistens bin ich die Person, die auf Leute zugeht und Gespräche beginnt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Auf Partys rede ich mit vielen verschiedenen Leuten.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ich stehe gerne im Mittelpunkt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ich rede nicht viel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ich halte mich lieber im Hintergrund.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ich habe nicht viel zu sagen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ich lenke nicht gerne die Aufmerksamkeit auf mich.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fremden gegenüber bin ich eher ruhig und zurückhaltend.</td>
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### Results and Calculation of Cronbach Alpha

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- Total score between 1 and 10 = tendency towards extraversion
- Total score between -1 and -10 = tendency towards introversion
Sehr geehrte Eltern!


Im Rahmen dieser Diplomarbeit führe ich Interviews mit SchülerInnen durch. Um Näheres über die Persönlichkeit der SchülerInnen herauszufinden, wird es am Anfang einen ganz kurzen Fragebogen geben, wo sie ankreuzen, ob eine Aussage auf sie zutrifft oder nicht. Das anschließende Interview enthält hauptsächlich Fragen zum Englischunterricht und was sie daran mögen und was nicht (z.B. welche Aufgaben Spaß machen, wie sie am besten lernen, welche Arbeitsformen sie bevorzugen, usw.). Es gibt keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten; von Interesse sind nur die persönlichen Meinungen und Einstellungen der SchülerInnen. Falls eine SchülerIn/ein Schüler eine Frage aus irgendeinem Grund nicht beantworten möchte, wird zur nächsten Frage weitergegangen. Wünsche der SchülerInnen werden in jedem Fall akzeptiert und Interviews können auch jederzeit auf Wunsch der SchülerIn/des Schülers abgebrochen werden.

Die Interviews sind anonym. Um die Auswertung zu erleichtern, werden die Interviews aufgezeichnet. Die erhobenen Daten werden ausschließlich zur Forschung verwendet und werden nicht weitergegeben.

Wenn Sie noch Fragen zu den Interviews haben oder falls Sie an den Ergebnissen der Diplomarbeit interessiert sind, kontaktieren Sie mich bitte unter anja.krenn@edu.uni-graz.at.

Ich bitte Sie, die Einverständniserklärung auszufüllen und der Englischlehrerin/dem Englischlehrer zu zukommen zu lassen.

Vielen Dank für Ihre Unterstützung!

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Anja Krenn

Einverständniserklärung

Ich bestätige, dass meine Tochter/mein Sohn ____________________________________________
sm Interview teilnehmen darf.

☐ ja ☐ nein

Ich bestätige, dass das Interview zu Auswertungszwecken aufgezeichnet werden darf.

☐ ja ☐ nein

Ort, Datum ____________________________________________

Unterschrift der/des Erziehungsberechtigten ____________________________________________
## Appendix D: Interviews—List of Questions

### Teacher Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main questions</th>
<th>Follow-up questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What subjects do you teach?</td>
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<td>How long have you been teaching?</td>
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<td>What classes do you teach?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you consider good language teaching practice?</td>
<td>How do you teach English?</td>
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<td>What methods do you use?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What do you like about them?</td>
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<td>What activities do you do frequently?</td>
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<td>What makes a good student?</td>
<td>Do you feel it depends on learner’s personality?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel that extraversion is related to pupils’ success at school generally?</td>
<td>And specifically in respect to languages? And why do you think that?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there certain aspects of language learning where</td>
<td>What do you feel is the reason for that?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Introverts do better</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Extraverts do better</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there any kinds of activities that make some pupils feel uncomfortable?</td>
<td>If so, what are they, why do some students not like them and how do you address this?</td>
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<td>Do you do anything to make them more comfortable?</td>
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<td>What?</td>
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<td>When planning activities, do you consider different personality types?</td>
<td>Yes: How? Why do consider that important? Do you specifically attend to extraverted/introverted students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you think there are teaching methods that are more suitable for certain personality types?</td>
<td>What are the benefits? Group work, individual work, role plays, presentations, ...</td>
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<td>Do you consider yourself introvert or extravert or neither?</td>
<td>Was it different when you were younger? Does it affect how you teach, do you think?</td>
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<td>Do you feel that introverted the same as being shy?</td>
<td>If No: What’s the difference? If yes, why do you think so</td>
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<td>How do you try to work with quiet students in the language classroom?</td>
<td>Does it work? How do you think this makes your students feel?</td>
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<td>In what ways do you think they benefit from that?</td>
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<td>Why do you feel that is important?</td>
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<td>Tell me some advantages and disadvantages introverted learners have in learning a language.</td>
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<td>Do you have any other comments about introverted students and about how you teach them?</td>
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## Interviews with Young Learners

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## Interviews with Older Learners

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Describe yourself. What are your hobbies?</th>
<th>What are your strengths and weaknesses? What do you do to relax? Do you like to spend time alone?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How do you like your language lessons?</td>
<td>What kind of lessons do you like best?</td>
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<td>How did you experience language lessons at school?</td>
<td>How are these experiences different from what you are experiencing in your language course now?</td>
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<td>How do you think are your experiences of language lessons different from the experiences of very extraverted learners?</td>
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<td>What do you like the most in your Language lessons?</td>
<td>Which exercises or activities? Why?</td>
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<td>What don’t you like so much in your Language lessons?</td>
<td>What your teacher does or says? How does that make you feel? What do you find exhausting?</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Do you prefer to learn and work with others or alone? Why? What are the advantages?</td>
<td>Group: Is there anything you prefer to do alone? Alone: Is there anything you prefer to do with others?</td>
</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>How often do you do group work or pair work? How do you feel about it? What work forms do you like best? How do you feel about it? What type of work forms do you enjoy most and why?</td>
<td>What do you like about group work or pair work? What don’t you like so much? Are there things you would prefer to do alone or in a smaller group? Are there things you would prefer to do in a bigger group?</td>
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<td>Do you play games in your Language lessons?</td>
<td>What’s your favorite game? What game don’t you like so much?</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>How do you feel about role plays?</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>If you could change anything in your Language lessons, what would it be?</td>
<td>What would you do to make it more fun? What would you change so that you learn more? What kinds of exercises and activities would you do more often? Why? What kinds of exercises and activities would you not do? Why not?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>What are you good at? What are you not so good at?</td>
<td>Why do you think that is? How does your teacher support you (help you)? How does your teacher think you can improve? Do you agree?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>In what situations do you feel uncomfortable? Why? What could help?</td>
<td>Overwhelmed, anxious, stressed, ...</td>
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<td>How do you feel about asking questions in your Language lessons? How do you feel about answering questions?</td>
<td>In which situations do you feel most/least comfortable?</td>
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<td>In which situations are you afraid to make a mistake? How do you feel about making a mistake in writing or in speaking?</td>
<td>What’s the difference? What difference does it make when a lot of people hear/read it or only a few?</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>When you are in a bigger group, do you prefer to talk or to listen?</td>
<td>Why?</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Do you think there are advantages of being a quiet student? Which advantages?</td>
<td>Do you think there are advantages of being an outgoing student? Which advantages?</td>
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**Grading**
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<td>18</td>
<td>Do you prefer oral or written tests? Why?</td>
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<td>What grade(s) do you usually get in the language courses in your report? Why do you get these grades?</td>
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<td>How much do you have to study to get that grade?</td>
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<td>What motivates you to study?</td>
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<td>What would you change to get a better grade?</td>
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<td>Grading? Way of learning?</td>
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<td>Imagine getting a new Language teacher next week. The teacher is very motivated and wants you to learn a lot AND to enjoy the Language lessons. What would you tell him or her what he or she should or should not do?</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Is there anything else you could tell me about yourself or your Language lessons that could be interesting for me and help me with my thesis?</td>
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