



Navigating Rhizo-Curriculum in EFL Classrooms: A Narrative Approach to Teachers' Experiences

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Annotation. This study aims to explore and disclose the experiences of secondary school teachers navigating the rhizo-curriculum in English foreign language classrooms. Narrative inquiry has been applied to achieve this aim. The results revealed that implementation of the rhizo-curriculum depends on the teacher's personality; teachers partly implement the rhizo-curriculum into the teaching and learning process because they usually follow the strict curriculum and prepare learners them for exams.

Keywords: *rhizo-curriculum, rhizomatic learning, Deleuzian-Guattarian approach, English foreign language classroom, English foreign language (EFL), narrative inquiry, narrative analysis.*

Introduction

In this period of rapid globalisation, post-industrial development and increasing climate change, as well as shifting educational paradigms, traditional curriculum models are being increasingly challenged by alternative approaches. In the context of secondary school English foreign language teaching, tension arises between institutionalised, standardised outcomes and the emerging, learner-centred rhizo-curriculum. This creates unique opportunities for learning and teaching, while also presenting

challenges. (Ibnus, 2021; Nguyen & Le, 2024). Several research studied the rhizo-curriculum, including Cormier (2018), Waterhouse (2020) and Wallin (2010). According to Cormier (2018), the rhizo-curriculum is created in real time and can be “separated, combined, returned, modified, and have multiple inputs and outputs” (Cormier, 2008, p. 3). Waterhouse (2020) believes that the rhizo-curriculum is created by participants in the educational process, striking a balance between them. It emerges between the planned curriculum and the lived curriculum, as well as from the interaction of teachers and pupils. Wallin (2010) developed this type of curriculum for those who ‘not yet to come’. This demonstrates that the rhizo-curriculum is a non-linear educational approach based on the interests, contexts and collaborations of students. However, schools and ministries often prioritise accountability and predictability, meaning teachers working within such systems may be reluctant to deviate from strict teaching methods. Furthermore, little research has been conducted on implementing the rhizo-curriculum in English foreign language classrooms, which raises the following research questions: How do teachers navigate the rhizo-curriculum in an EFL classroom? What helps or hinders the development of the rhizo-curriculum?

This research aims to explore the experiences of secondary school teachers when navigating the rhizo-curriculum in English foreign language classrooms.

The research objectives are: 1) to analyse the peculiarities of rhizomatic education, and 2) to investigate teachers’ experiences of the rhizo-curriculum in an EFL classroom.

Literature review

The concept of the rhizo-curriculum has emerged from the insights of post-structural philosophy, which seeks to dismantle fixed structures of meaning and significance. In their work “A Thousand Plateaus” (1987/2004), post-structural thinkers Deleuze and Guattari, present the concepts of the rhizome, the nomad, plateaus, and multiple assemblages (compositions) that reflect interactions without hierarchy, authority, and repressive power. The rhizome, a plant with a horizontal stem that produces shoots and sprouts, becomes a concept describing non-hierarchical connections and escape routes, or “lines of flight”, as sudden changes and rapid creative leaps. Unlike the tree root, which represents a unifying structure connecting the individual elements, the rhizome conveys multiplicity without a unifying core. New rhizomatic multiplicities overlap to form heterogeneous combinations of elements, assemblages, and clutches. Movement occurs in the intermezzo space, the ‘in-between’. Rhizome is constantly spreading, and this movement brings it close to nomads, as defined by Deleuze and Guattari (2004). Nomads move through different territories and lands, occupying new ones, without a clear direction of movement, a defined path or a fixed land (territory). However, territory does not have to be physical; for example, it can be digital.

Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) distinguished triad of lines – molar lines, molecular lines, and lines of flight that allows for an understanding of educational terrains and the changes that occur, leading to deterritorialisations and the opening of new territories. According to Deleuze and Guattari (2004), a rigid molar line that operates in a dichotomous and classificatory manner enables the work of a State apparatus. As Windsor (2015) notes, molar lines are prescriptive and rigid segmentations which are exemplified by political parties, nation states, genders and social classes as binary or hierarchical groupings. Molar lines transmit dispersive fluxes of desire into manageable regimes and patterns by territorialising, organising, and stratifying. In terms of education, – Westman and Bergmark (2018) agree that the molecular lines are elastic, flexible, and open to 'micro-becomings', stepping beyond the segmentary lines. According to Leeder (2024), they can break free and deviate from the norm. Molecular lines appear in the person's daily behaviors, attitudes, and actions. In education. According to Usher (2010), the third type of line, the line of escape destabilises hierarchies, disarticulates strata, destroys unity and coherence, and decenters centers.

In describing how territories function, Deleuze and Guattari (2004) distinguish between the striated plane and the plane of immanence. The striated plane is structured and organised, creating fixed points and boundaries between movements (Roffe, 2010). The striated plane has more power for territorialization, with the State apparatus operating here, which according to Deleuze and Guattari (2004), acts only in its own interests and is controlled by hierarchical powers. On the contrary, the plane of immanence is in constant change and there are no fixed points or boundaries and no restricted movements (Roffe, 2010). The war machine operating in the plane of immanence is associated with the actions of nomads seeking to conquer deserts and expand their territories (Deleuze, 2012). The war machine, as invented by the nomads in opposition to the state apparatus, dismantles the established order, defeats the "power from above" and changes everything in its direction

Rhizomatic learning is based on the concept of the rhizome, making it flexible and open to new ideas and innovation. It allows learners to design their own learning paths. This is in contrast to traditional learning, which focuses on memorisation, testing and control. Rizo-curriculum manifests in rhizomatic education. Waterhouse (2020) points out rhizo-curriculum is a curriculum that emerges in the classroom and disrupts strict curriculum, creates non-linear paths and learning trajectories. According to Cormier (2008), rhizomatic education emerges within a community that shapes the curriculum. Van Limburg (2015) defines rhizomatic education as a complex network learning system in which pupils engage in non-linear, self-organising learning system using information technologies in learning. Pupils and other learners, including their teachers, may join a particular point in the network, interact, and then diverge along their own learning paths at similar or different nodes.

Cormier (2017) and Kramer (2013) distinguish key principles of rhizomatic education as: teachers guide pupils to solve problems in real situations; the learning happens in community, and there is no one right answer in learning; learning is undefined

as a rhizome; learning occurs in difficult situations; pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own and peers' learning; pupils' learning journeys are evaluated, not their activities; multiple perspectives are analysed; action and conceptualisation are intertwined; learning is horizontal. Change is essential in rhizomatic education, so the elements of surprise, creativity and novelty should be built into the curriculum of rhizomatic education.

It should be noted that the role of teachers in the educational process remains very important, considering them not only as facilitators and advisors, but also nomads travelling together with the pupils. Lian (2011) notes that students are no longer constrained by their teachers' knowledge or control of access to information. Students are able to generate their own learning resources or materials based on their needs. In line with this idea, it enables students to construct their own lessons. In rhizomatic education, students' paths are guided by the needs they identify or negotiate with teachers, advisors, or technology as they engage with cultural and linguistic tasks of language learning. Upon entering this learning space, students engage in complex tasks that challenge their logical and perceptual processes. According to Chan (2010), teachers and pupils become creators of the rhizo-curriculum, paying attention to the pupils' desires. Thus, in rhizomatic education, teachers play an important role, becoming pathfinders, listeners, decision-making participants.

Waterhouse (2020) believes that the content of rhizo-curriculum is invasive, emerging "between" the planned curriculum and the actually experienced curriculum, "between" the curriculum and students' nomadic desires, "between" teachers and students. Waterhouse (2011) distinguishes principles of rhizo-curriculum based on Deleuze and Guattari insights: connection, heterogeneity, smooth and striated, affective, and transformative. Rhizocurriculum has unfolded structures, many linkages, and variability comparable to a rhizome. A rhizo-curriculum needs to account for the productive tension that exists between smooth and striated curricular spaces, as well as the transformations that occur in between. Rhizo-curriculum is affective and transformative; students impact and transform one another through their affective capacities, resulting in a becoming. Even when becoming changeable, no one knows what transformations will occur.

Bastien-Valenca (2020) points out that in a rhizo-curriculum the teaching/learning experience is not blocked by teacher-pupil binaries, physical spaces, or curriculum documents. Instead, a rhizo-curriculum connects multiplicities and allows for the power of affect to alter and create new transformations and becomings. According to Williams (2021), an assemblage of connections develops, resulting in a rhizo-curriculum that moves beyond the boundaries of the classroom to create fresh discussions between school and community. According to Fendler (2013), rhizo-curriculum is strongly associated with nomadic pedagogy, a learning process in which learning is a change that occurs when learning subjects enter unknown territory, a process of discovery. At the same time,

nomadic pedagogy is a learning practice in which concepts are created, new thoughts are formed, and values are nurtured.

Research methodology

Narrative inquiry has emerged as a qualitative research methodology, based on the study of lived experiences through storytelling. Bruner (1986) first suggested the narrative idea as an essential aspect of human cognition. Clandinin and Connelly (2020) identified three dimensions of narrative: temporality, sociality, and place. Catherine Riessman's narrative analysis (1993) covered techniques for exploring the form and content of stories. Barkhuizen (2014; 2020) offers a specific version of narrative inquiry, viewing it as an umbrella term for research involving stories. The researcher and co-author investigate teaching and learning experiences in applied linguistics and language education through story (or narrative) (Barkhuizen & Consoli, 2021). According to Barkhuizen (2014), narrative inquiry is an especially suitable way of studying the lived experiences of language teachers and learners within a social, historical, and cultural context. We used Barkhuizen (2020) core dimensions for narrative inquiry, which revealed: a) narrative inquiry (narrative as a phenomenon), b) stories from interaction (stories are not fixed, but generated or shaped by interaction), c) greater researcher engagement (researchers are not passive listeners); d) storied data (data in a story form) e) narrative analysis (constructing 'story', 'Story', 'STORY' (Barkhuzein, 2007)).

Barkhuzein (2020) points out that these five dimensions are intended to present the key methodological features of narrative research. These dimensions describe both the actions and decisions of researchers at each stage of the research process. Each dimension is a continuous process, with any methodological action or decision occurring at a specific point within it.

Barkhuizen (2007) notes that foreign language teachers' narratives reveal their personal experiences and explore the context in which they teach. Different narratives support each other at different levels. In this context, we applied Barkhuizen's (2007) three-level narrative inquiry framework: 'story', 'Story', 'STORY'. According to the author, these levels are often interconnected and interrelated, and it can be difficult to distinguish between them. It is impossible to understand one level without considering the others. Therefore, when it comes to language teaching, studying the context necessarily involves studying all three narrative levels.

The 'story', 'Story', 'STORY' were used to analyse the teachers' narratives. This helped to explore the evolving role of teachers in developing a rhizo-curriculum by examining their experiences, the challenges they face, and the strategies they use to incorporate a rhizo-curriculum into their teaching practice. The aim was to identify three interconnected in the teachers' narratives – 'story', 'Story', and 'STORY' – that mutually construct

each other. This allowed us to identify the narrative episodes in which rhizomatic education is most dominant. Barkhuizein (2007) argues that the micro level of ‘story’ presents personal and embodies teachers’ inner thoughts, emotions and attitudes and it includes micro-level social interactions in the teachers’ immediate environment. It could be for example, be informal conversations with pupils, colleagues or others in social networking discussions. Such ‘stories’ teachers’ personal thoughts and emotions, as well as social interactions in which they participate during their teaching practice (classroom lessons, interactions with pupils, colleagues, parents, etc.). The mezo level of capitalised ‘Story’ reveals the interaction that goes beyond the immediate psychological and interpersonal perspectives of the teacher. It reflects the context of action in which teachers have less influence over the process and are susceptible to other decisions made by others (e.g., for school administration) with their attitudes, expectations, and prescriptions that teachers are advised and required to make. This level of narrative can convey the organisation of the educational process at school, the use of educational materials and textbooks, prescribed by various actors at the meso-level.

Another type of narrative, the ‘STORY’ touches on the macro level, the wider social, political and economic context in which teaching and learning occur. Teachers have less freedom to make decisions regarding conditions that may affect their performance.

Examples of ‘STORIES’ emerge when it comes to national and centralised, ministry-mandated curricula, examination assessment systems, tests, etc. At this level, “STORY” refers to the wider macro context and the power associated with it, but this in no way diminishes the narrative value of the individual teacher. However, these different forms – ‘story’, ‘Story’, ‘STORY’ are closely related to each other. It would be impossible for any particular teacher to understand any one level without regard to the others. Exploring context in language education necessarily involves exploring stories at all three levels.

Fourteen upper secondary English teachers from different Lithuanian secondary schools took part in the study. A convenience sample was used, consisting of English teachers who had expressed a willingness to participate. This approach ensured the timely and effective collection of useful data. The teachers provided diverse narratives of contexts and experiences, giving valuable insights into the teaching and learning process in the EFL classroom. The interview began with introductions and the teachers’ autobiographical accounts, before moving on to the research questions. Teachers were asked questions inviting them to describe how they integrate pupils’ informal learning beyond the classroom into their teaching. Such integrations allow the rhizomatic curriculum to manifest in the teaching and learning process. Teachers were encouraged to express their thoughts freely. In cases of ambiguity, the researcher made notes and asked and asked for clarification. All the interviews together lasted about 14 hours. Teachers provided narratives about learning English outside the classroom, informal

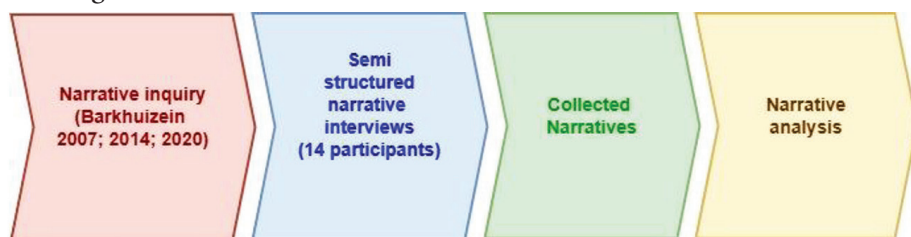
learning in the educational process and the different learning methods. Actions, events, and extended narratives were more prevalent here (Figure 1).

Narrative researchers need to become acutely sensitive about researchers' interactions and relationships with their participants as well they make decisions and presenting stories (Barkhuizen, & Consoli, 2021). In terms of researcher positionality, while interpreting the narratives of the participants, the researchers reflected on their own professional identities and their experiences of teaching of English as a foreign language and intercultural communication at school and university level. Reflecting on these experiences, which lasted for several decades, enabled the researchers to recognise and better understand teachers' feelings, thoughts and practices in implementing the rhizo-curriculum, as well as their experiences of tension between control and freedom, and between regulation and improvisation. During reflection sessions, the researchers questioned and challenged their own positionality in choosing a post-structuralist approach and Deleuzian-Guattarian theory, which conceptualises alternative forms of teaching and learning in terms of rhizomatic learning and the rhizocurriculum. The researchers aimed to critically reflect on the compatibility of this sophisticated, theory-laden approach with the practical views of learning and teaching held by the research participants, and with their lived experiences.

The research ethics has been ensured by seeking to minimise the risk of harm, not putting participants in a position of discomfort and by ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. The names of participants were changed, and highly sensitive information was not included in the research report. Deceptive practices were avoided by providing interviewees with them clear information. The participants were given the opportunity to withdraw at any stage of the research process and to suggest changes to the procedures (Sahu, 2021). Informed consent was obtained to ensure that participation in the research was voluntary, and to provide participants with information about the research, and explain why and how they were taking part.

Semi-structured narrative interviews (Barkhuizen et al., 2014) were used, with preliminary questions to direct the interview. At the same time, the questions were open-ended to allow participants to provide detailed descriptions and enable researchers to develop themes.

Figure 1
Research Design



In analysing the teachers' narratives, we looked not only for the manifestations of rhizo-curriculum, but also for how their stories unfolded at these levels.

Out of 14 interviews, four narratives of teachers were selected, which present distinctive and exceptional experiences of the teachers and reveal episodes of "story", "Story", and "STORY".

Results

Struggling for Pupils Motivation and Engagement in English Learning (Teacher Laura's Narrative)

The teacher who presented this narrative has very extensive experience in teaching English, she has the highest professional qualification category of Teacher-Expert, is an assessor for the National Matura exams, she has taught in an English immersion class and has completed her university education abroad.

The teacher's narrative presents episodes of a "story" that reveal attitudes, emotions, and experiences. On the other hand, she has more freedom in her teaching practice. The teacher notes that she has a good relationship with the pupils and tries to find activities that would interest them (e.g., showing an educational film about colour psychology and inviting them to learn vocabulary). With regret and disappointment, she admits that these efforts are not enough – the pupils are still not engaged. She feels that the pupils' interests lie elsewhere, in other activities, and in other areas.

I wouldn't say that I have a bad relationship with my pupils, I always have a good relationship, I ask them what they are interested in, last year I showed them a film on the psychology of colour, if I say let's go to a lecture, some of them are very interested in psychology, I give them articles, it's not like I'm giving them a book on psychology, I do a good job, I discuss what conclusions you will come to, I'm told point blank, "Teacher, what do you say, why do we need this?", those who are interested will read it, but there are only 2 people out of 12. (Laura)

As this narrative excerpt shows, the teacher feels that the pupils live in their own world and this mismatch between their interests and activities in class leads to tense situations in class. This frustration and disappointment felt by the teacher is indicative of an environment that doesn't encourage rhizomatic education. The teacher develops a rather difficult relationship with the pupils, as it is difficult to spark an interest in them, in things like watching psychological films and/or learning vocabulary. The pupils seem to live in their own world, outside the school, in Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) deterritorialised territory, which leads to tense situations in the sedentary classroom. This is a rather sensitive frustration for the teacher, and from the given situation, it is clear that rhizomatic education is not developed in such an environment.

In this situation, the teacher tries to arouse the motivation of the pupils by showing a film about the psychology of colour.

I can notice that there are years when they are interested in Stephen King, you give them a reading before they realise they have seen the film and they say “no, the film is better”, and they go on for about 10 pages, I think they are overloaded with video material.

(Laura)

It is obvious that pupils change their activities as soon as it is convenient for them. Through the escape lines described by Deleuze and Guattari (2004), pupils try to escape from reading; they either watch films, which is an activity that develops listening skills, or they watch the film with subtitles, where reading-listening assemblages can be formed. As the teacher notes, despite her attempts to integrate into the EFL classroom activities that the pupils use in everyday life situations, they still lack motivation. As this narrative shows, the teacher is situated between separate realities – she follows the national curriculum and the competences prescribed by the State Apparatus and relies on traditional teaching methods and technologies, reading literary texts rather than watching a film). It is clear that the teacher values the flexibility of the curriculum and the freedom of teachers to choose according to the interests of the pupils. Unfortunately, the pupils do not keep their attention for long, so the teacher looks for short films.

You have to look for a short film, you have to know the pupils’ interests, it’s a big job for the teacher to choose that film, and if it was put on the curriculum to watch this film, this film, or this film, that would not be good. (Laura)

Today’s pupils watch a lot of visual material because society lives in a world of technology and innovation, where everything is changing and new things are appearing that are engaging and attention-grabbing. At the same time, the young people do not hold attention for a long time; they change and form assemblages in their learning.

The “story” episodes reveal that the teachers try to fulfill the desires of pupils. She presents a variety of films. The teacher reveals a rhizomatic curriculum, and in particular talks a lot about learning English by watching films. Her lessons sometimes include a choice of films, from fairy tales to classics.

Sometimes I give a choice of films to watch, you have a choice of three films, one I give to the family [of the pupils] to watch, obviously not Bambi, a fairy tale would probably be there, one because they like it very much, to make it psychological so that they start to watch it and find it interesting, and the third one is a classic. And I formulate the task. [A pupil says] “[teacher], it is your choice how to motivate me to see the film”. And there is no answer to the question [provided by teacher to pupils], not on the Internet, not anywhere. It depends on how you, the teacher, formulate the task. (Laura)

It can be seen that the films presented by the teacher belong to different genres and that specific formulation of the task is needed. Deleuze and Guattari’s (2004) “in

between” is maintained here. It is the balance between the educational programme and the nomadic desires of the pupils, between teacher and pupils, that appears on a smooth plane. The lessons aim to get the most authentic information from the pupils, to develop critical thinking and to allow them to choose the films.

The teacher also engaged into creating a rhizo-curriculum, she is balancing between planned and lived curriculum.

On the other hand, you can go to the museum or go on an excursion. There are many excursions in our town. Volunteers give tours, but there has to be a task for the pupils. I conduct an excursion myself, if the health allows, I take the pupils to the old town, but after that, you they know that there will be a task given about this excursion, to go to this area, just to speak English, to look at the sights - what is the goal, when we talk about an English lesson, there has to be either a Summary, or a Composition, or an Opinion Composition or a Discussion. (Laura)

This narrative shows that the teacher is innovative and tries to teach English by inflicting pupils’ interests and moving learning activities outside the school. Together with pupils, she searches for a new territory through deterritorialisation – going to the museum, to the old town, where soft molecular lines allow to create choices of free, interesting, experiential learning. During these excursions, the pupils form assemblages with human (a teacher, classmates) and non-humans (museum, old town, walls, etc.) elements through soft molar lines. The teacher does not forget to implement the goals of the planned curriculum by giving tasks to the pupils, but at the same time she seeks to help them to go through their lived experiences. The pupils return to school from outdoor activities and engage in academic tasks of a striated plane such as discussion, essay compositions. Thus, they participate in changing the territory of the traditional curriculum and sedentary schooling and create a new territory that is the result of reterritorialisation.

The episodes of the teacher’s “**STORY**” relate to exam preparation and assessment criteria. Lessons are prioritised to prepare for the national matura exams, and, as the teacher notes, there is simply no time for rhizomatic education. Here, as Deleuze and Guattari (2004) describe, the State apparatus operates in the striated plane full of regulations, requirements, and bureaucracy.

When you are there, you have to prepare for the exam, not for language and literature, history, or geography, I think first of all that we are in a limit, a time limit. In fact, the workload of the pupils is very heavy, if you make it, they are taking three exams now. (Laura)

These words of the teacher show the importance of exams as a goal of teaching and learning i, where the molar lines convey strict rules and a hierarchy that have the power from above to determine the future path of the pupils’ lives by measuring their abilities. This appears as a striated plane, as described by Deleuze and Guattari (2004),

based on molar rigid lines, no escape lines, only strict rules, ranges, assessments, and decisions. According to Deleuze and Guattari (2004), each molar segment has one or more centres. The “STORY” is reinforced by the teacher’s emphasis on reviewing the assessment system.

If they used to drill those phrases, now the pupils’ language is very peculiar, and in fact, if you look at the grammar - the heavy artillery, only those complex sentences - maybe you should look at the assessments, the systems, in a different way, as they say, because the language has changed, there are a lot of slang words, and they are mainly communicate with friends who live abroad or who travel by themselves, and they have adopted a real language, not the one that we learn. (Laura)

It can be noted that the assessment of the matura exam is more lenient because the pupils’ English learning changes over time, new words, loanwords, jargons, slangs, etc invade the target English. Pupils call for reterritorialisation in a striated plane and try to express their everyday language forming Deleuze and Guattari (2004) assemblages of jargons, slangs, loanwords by showing resistance to a target language. Pupils are affected by the actual use of the language and their speech becomes irregular, but assessment is not abandoned, only changes in the assessment systems are proposed.

This narrative has shown that the teacher is trying to incorporate some elements of the rhizo-curriculum, but she is still disappointed with the results. While she tries to overcome obstacles, she sincerely seeks feedback from pupils. She knows the pupils’ interests and makes efforts to include them in the lessons, sometimes successfully creating a rhizo-curriculum with pupils, sometimes feeling disappointed by the pupils’ lack of motivation.

Territorialization, Deterritorialization, and Reterritorialization: Balancing In-Class and Out-of-Class Learning (Teacher Elena’s Narrative)

The teacher who told this narrative has a bachelor’s and a master’s degrees in English. Her professional experience is more than 20 years. She is a Teacher-Methodologist, which is the second highest category of professional qualification.

The teacher’s “story” episodes reveal emotional reflections on how learners engage in deeper study of literary works in the classroom. She regrets that only a few pupils have shown interest in the EFL classroom activities.

In the years that I have been working at the school, every now and then there is a pupil who comes up, but there are isolated cases, and last year I had eleventh graders who said to me: “Teacher, how interesting would it be, because we had a passage, a piece of literature during class, we talked about the author, we looked at the vocabulary of the passage, what kind of adjectives he uses, what does it tell us?”. (Elena)

Some inquisitive pupils who would like to apply the same approach to English literature as in Lithuanian classes: vocabulary, adjectives, text interpretation,

meaning-making. They come to the teacher and express their “voice” that penetrates into the English language curriculum. In other words, they try to integrate their experiences from their mother tongue lessons. They want to reterritorialise a planned curriculum. Despite this, the teacher regrets that only a few pupils have given her advice on how to improve English learning.

The teacher’s narrative revolves around the episodes of the “story”, which reflect rhizomatic education, the interaction and integration of pupils’ learning experiences outside the classroom into the formal classroom. In order to successfully integrate pupils’ learning experiences, the teacher develops projects of “detritorialisation” outside the classroom and adapts them to the curriculum through “reterritorialisation”.

I call it a project. I give them an independent assignment, an essay or something like that, and as homework, a kind of continuous work, they read texts of their own choice, they listen to videos, they choose what is interesting to them, the topics do not have to be related to what we learn in school, in our class, in the unit, So, please, come on, and choose. It is important for us to get them to be motivated by this place and to relate to it in their leisure time, and to attract them to our lessons. I give them a little bit of homework, it’s not just a YouTube video, it’s, homework, or independent work, and it’s turned into a grade, it’s not some kind of module. - No. (Elena)

This fragment of the narrative shows that pupils’ rhizomatic learning outside the classroom is being related and transferred into the classroom. Here nomadic experiences from outside the classroom (detritorialization) are adapted, transformed and integrated into the ELF classroom (reterritorialisation). At the same time, in the plane of immanence, there is a freedom of choice for the pupils, the voice of the pupils is heard, and a horizontal learning of English takes place that develops in a natural way – the pupils learn from what they find interesting and enjoyable. They freely go through molecular lines to detrterritorialised territories (YouTube platforms, articles on the Internet, etc.) and learn things in English according to their interests. Pupils create assemblages with platforms, articles, tasks, etc. The war machine works freely and pupils travel like nomads in their pleasurable activities. The rhizo-curriculum maintains a balance between the teacher and the pupils, between the planned curriculum and the nomadic desires (Waterhouse, 2020). The teacher interestingly presents the rhizo-curriculum in an interesting and innovative way.

Teachers integrate not only films, but also inspirational speeches. Teachers are trying to replace articles in textbooks with interesting activities such as listening to TED Talks outside the classroom.

We use TED Talks speeches in the classroom, and we really tailor it to the topic, and there are usually exercises for that vocabulary as well, writing down a word or a synonym with the words that we use to expand the vocabulary, as a kind of a lecture, to start a discussion, to improve speaking skills, is also very good, and at the same time to bring the topic, to update the topic for them, because anyway, an article in the textbook doesn’t necessarily connect with the pupils. It’s very good for learning that there are subtitles, and

there are those transcripts, all these texts, and like I said - you drive, you have a long way to go from home to school, and vice versa - after school, I don't know, half an hour or more, or in the car, or something, and you can do this English for that project work there. (Elena)

Indeed, the use of inspirational TED Talks, related to the topic, develops pupils' critical thinking, expands their vocabulary, allows them to learn new synonyms, antonyms, etc. As the narrative fragment shows, the lesson develops a rhizomatic content, balancing between what is presented in the textbook and what is relevant to the pupils' real-life situation. In addition, reading the transcripts of TED Talks develops pupils' reading skills and watching these TED Talks with subtitles allows them to create reading-listening assemblages. There are also signs of rhizomatic education in this narrative: inspirational speeches are used to stimulate discussion and excitement, there is an attempt to analyse many of the pupils' points of view, where there is no one truth, and pupils are brought closer to real experience.

The teacher supports the entire teaching and learning process, encouraging pupils to establish alternative connections, new networks of thinking, and novel ways of interaction with one another (Brailas, 2020). It is questions like these that create a comfortable atmosphere, build confidence and stimulate discussion.

The **"Story"** episodes disclose history of the English language is a theme that is usually covered in mandatory textbooks that are compulsory to use. The teacher tries to improve the teaching process by not only reading from textbooks but also discovering new films.

I have discovered about 5-6 years ago the documentary History, that is a channel, and I discovered a documentary about the history of the English language, and it is really interesting, on a serious channel, and the presenter of this film as the main speaker is well known, either as a linguist or as a historian, but it's really very visual, it's very much from all the historical periods, it shows all sorts of artefacts, books from that period and so on, and we don't watch it every year, but with the 11th graders I watch it, I particularly like it, we have a section where we talk about languages, about language learning, about how languages are formed. (Elena)

This narrative excerpt shows that the lesson is filled with historical traditions of the English language when the teacher tries to engage pupils in interesting learning. In this lesson, conquest, invasion, and language exchange are shown. By watching this subtitled film, pupils can create reading-listening assemblages, enrich their vocabulary, and introduce them to the subtleties of accents and tongues. However, in the classroom, watching films is not only a pleasure, it is also about eliciting a learning response from the pupils, which is the beginning of rhizomatic education, when a balance is struck and disrupted between the pupils' desires and the planned curriculum (Waterhouse, 2020).

From a critical point of view, although the film focuses on the main ('major') language, English, it is likely that in the future pupils will also be introduced to minor languages, which is according to Deleuze and Guattari (2004), are less dominant, such

as Black American or Jewish and so on. Interestingly, the pupils watch and listen to the video and audio material twice in the classroom. The teacher tries to create a listening experience for the pupils because it is required by the national curriculum that pupils listen to audio material during the final exams.

And another point that is very close to their reality is that when we have a material that is prepared specifically for learning, a listening material: whether it's a video or audio material, when we do it, we listen to it twice. It's really useful, it takes preparation, pupils are not so willing to do that in my experience, but when you do it, it's really interesting and really very valuable. (Elena)

This excerpt shows the relationship described by Deleuze (1994) as the idea of difference and repetition, where it is appropriate to repeat in order to understand differences. This repetition of video and audio material allows us to notice authentic details, to create new meanings and to better understand the English language. Such activities bring pupils closer to real-life situations and the deterritorialised territory in which they use English.

The episodes of the teacher's "STORY" highlight the fact that the pupils are being prepared to be measured, tested and ranked on their knowledge:

In the lessons we are moving towards the exam, towards the exam tasks, it is not only the language itself that needs to be improved, but it is the training for the exam that needs to be done, and the pupils themselves think and imagine that they are now preparing for the exam, when they do the exam tasks, or as close to the exam as they can get, so we are really moving more towards the exam in the lessons. (Elena)

Here we see the operation of a State apparatus in a striated plane, as described by Deleuze and Guattari (2004), where vertical learning is expressed through molar lines. Although the pupils' imagination is also enhanced, the examination tasks, the assessment dominate, the ranging and the results of the matura exams can also determine the path of the pupils' choices.

In conclusion, the teacher integrates the pupils' rhizomatic learning experiences outside the classroom, balancing between the planned curriculum and the pupils' interests. This is a good initiative to integrate nomadic pupils' practices into the rhizo-curriculum, to travel with pupils to unusual, inexperienced places, and to add value to teaching and learning in the EFL classroom.

Learning Otherwise: Moving From Frustration to Innovative and Smart Decisions (Teacher Kristina' Narrative)

This teacher has a bachelor's degree in English from university and has only two years' teaching experience in a school. She has previously worked as a private tutor and translator. The teacher's "story" episodes show her frustration with her pupils' motivation to learn. It is becoming increasingly difficult to get today's pupils interested in reading literature.

When I first started working in a secondary school, I was given a book in English to read, which I found quite interesting. I read it myself, it was about a pilot who survived a plane crash, and then afterwards, he tells his story. But the pupils weren't really interested in it, maybe I didn't know how to present it. I had just started working in a secondary school, so that's why the reading was so sidelined. (Kristina)

This fragment of the narrative also shows the teacher's reflection on her work. The teacher regrets that it is difficult to arouse the pupils' interest and hopes that in the future she will analyse literature that is interesting not only for teachers but also for the pupils.

Nowadays, despite the widespread use of technology, communication and human contact are not forgotten, which is why traditional games serve as an excellent tool.

We also played a game called Speed Dating, two circles, with girls sitting in the middle and boys on the outside. Everybody gets a card, let's say a character, the boys get some men, the girls get some women, and by the time they're in Speed Dating they have to talk to each other, and they've gone round the whole circle, and only then do they get to choose who they're going to ask for a second date. It's a game we used to play, but I try to use it from time to time, to make it fun, to make it more than just learning from books. (Kristina)

This fragment of the narrative shows that it is possible to diversify the content of a lesson with traditional games that have been forgotten by today's young people. Playing such games not only develops English language skills, but also cognitive skills, critical thinking. A 'speed dating' game could certainly be a lot of fun, imitating many of the TV shows that pupils like to watch. However, this type of activity could be seen as a war machine, eroding the traditional notion of the classroom as a boring and emotionally stable, and therefore safe, environment. Needless to say, the teacher introducing this 'dating' activity should be aware of the possible negative emotional and social impact on the pupils and use all her skills to prevent such effects. As Waterhouse (2011) points out, a rhizo-curriculum maintains the creative tension between smooth and striated curricular areas, as well as the transformations that take place in between.

In this case, pupils are engaged in a playful activity and through lines of flight becoming players. At the same time, there are also some rhizomatic manifestations, such as the critical nomadic thinking that takes place in the playful dialogues, where the aim is to create a text out of different words and to use it to speak.

Pupils bring in ideas from outside the classroom and express creativity in other tasks.

Well, the last one was a creative one, so now it's the short pictures that are popular, the little picture with the words, the meme, that's what I had given the task, and during the lessons, as I said, I mainly watch the videos, and then we have discussions, we talk, and that's what the main thing, the visual material would be if it was during the lessons. (Kristina)

The rhizo-curriculum places particular expectations on the teacher. Referring to Waterhouse's (2011) texts, due to the teacher Kristina's desire to engage in a teaching relationship with her pupils, the teacher sees herself as part of her unique life experiences rather than an actively controlling subject. The teacher deterritorialises the teaching/learning process. The development of these videos develops pupils' reading-writing skills, fosters creativity, promotes proficiency in the English language, and encourages creative solutions and discussions. The teacher chooses films according to the pupils' interests. Watching and discussing films can be one of the interaction tasks.

Movies before the holidays, before Christmas, before summer, before Easter. Here the pupils chose 'Up' before the holidays, we watched that, and then there was another one, I think it was called 'Wonder', about a boy with a disability, and then everything changes. Then we watched 'Instant Family', which is about adopting children, a family and the real issues that are involved. I also remember it was quite popular and everyone watched it during the pandemic, which was Bird Box, when. You can't go outside; you have to cover your eyes because there's a virus in there. We used to watch it, I used to watch some short films in the EFL classroom. (Kristina)

This fragment of the narrative reveals that to some extent rhizomatic education is being created, as the pupils are also the creators of the educational content (Waterhouse, 2020). Pupils are allowed to choose their own films, and this way of watching films in a deterritorialised classroom. The films are followed by in-depth discussions and debates. This shows that Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) nomadic thinking of pupils is appropriate, it enables them to listen to different opinions and to get feedback from pupils. It is important for pupils to hear correct English.

The teachers' episodes of **"Story"** at mezo level incorporate internal people and the rhizomatic education depends on pupils' engagement into the learning process.

There is a significant focus on learning new vocabulary and pronunciation development, so that pupils can practise outside of the classroom.

There's a British Yunglish page, and there you can choose an accent, British, American, Australian, all of them, and you can type in a word and see how it's pronounced, and there's a vocabulary exercise that you can do, and I tell the pupils all the time, because they don't know how to say it, or at home, I say, "You're at home, so you're busy, come in and have a look". (Kristina)

As Deleuze's (1988) notes, there is no one English language in the world, it is divided into accents, dialects etc. This all relates to certain countries and their regions. It is appropriate to encourage pupils to learn about the different dialects of English, to pay attention to pronunciation, to listen, to understand. Learning English can take place both inside and outside the classroom.

We don't do traditional lessons. There was a field trip to the court in our city, one of the chapters in the book was Crimes, so we went to the court. We went to the Čiurlionis Art Gallery, because it was about Art, so we went there. <...> The drama groups, they do plays in English and they come, so we went to 2 or 3 plays with some of the classes. (Kristina)

This narrative expert shows that the teacher with the pupils seeks a new deterritorialised territory - the plane of immanence. As Bogues (2004) claims, rhizo-curriculum reconfigures learning as an apprenticeship in challenges and an engagement with diversity. Pupils are taught to solve problems in real situations, in deterritorialised environments – such as the art gallery, etc. As Deleuze and Guattari (2004) note: “*Artists are stagemakers, even when they tear up their own posters.*” (p. 316). Thus, the pupils have the opportunity to explore the masterpieces and life of Lithuanian painter and musician Čiurlionis.

In her episodes of “**STORY**”, the teacher reveals her attitudes towards state-controlled issues such as exams and the curriculum.

I think the content of school should be more important than all the other fun stuff, well, everybody has to go through school, everybody has to learn, and you study sometimes, and you think what nonsense, for general education, all the things, I think school is more important than informal learning. (Kristina)

Analysing the teacher’s narrative, it can be observed that formal education is becoming more innovative and implies smart decisions by teachers, when pupils’ rhizomatic learning experiences occur. It shows that the teacher, together with the pupils creates rhizo-curriculum, draws learning activities to the real-life of the pupils, but on the other hand the teacher does not eradicate the planned curriculum. Instead, the EFL classroom becomes a reterritorialised territory where pupils bring in activities from outside the classroom and nurture their desires to learn in a more innovative way.

Lingering Between Exam Preparation and Rhizo-Curriculum (Teacher Ineta’s Narrative)

Another narrative that is important to understand how teachers deal with the need to navigate the rhizo-curriculum, by created by teacher Ineta, who has the professional category of teacher-methodologist, has extensive teaching experience, has participated as an assessor for national English language matura exams, used to teach English at university and currently teaches in an English language school.

In her “**story**” episodes, the teacher reveals her frustration at the lack of time to prepare for the English exams.

<...> We have 3 weekly modules and one module in year 12, which is very, very little. And even before that, about 15 years ago, we had 4 weeklies in grade 11, then we had 4+1, and now we have 3+1, 4 weekly lessons a week, which is very, very little, considering that everybody passes the English exam, at least in our school, 100 percent passes. (Ineta)

During the implementation of rhizo-curriculum unusual things are happening in the classroom.

Every year I do a screening of little things, like cartoons, and then they have to describe what they have seen, and it's very interesting, because sometimes you think, this is what they can do, or, for example, every year I do a lesson that's not from a textbook. For example, a sentence to deepen the thought, that it's about a tree, or it's about the love of a mother, or something else, it's the videos, they get you going, and the pupils write about what they feel, what they see there, and there's a lot to see. So, in that case, you don't pay attention to the mistakes, you pay attention to the development of the language. Everything has its own value. (Ineta)

This fragment of the narrative reveals rhizomatic education, where pupils are allowed to 'escape' from the content of the textbook, from the striated curriculum, to watch short films and become writers through lines of flight. Here, the pupils' thoughts flow freely, free writing takes place, the pupils can express their thoughts incessantly, and the teacher does not even correct mistakes, but only reviews the flow of nomadic thoughts. In this case, the teacher's role also changes. She gives the pupils the space to express their thoughts and becomes the reviewer of their writing. This is how free writing develops when one writes continuously, regardless of the rules of spelling and grammar. As Deleuze and Guattari (2004) points out "*<...>lines of writing conjugate with other lines, lifelines, lines of luck or misfortune, lines productive of the variation of the line of writing itself, lines that are between the lines of writing.*" (p. 194). This free writing unleashes pupils' thoughts, develops their creativity and nomadic thinking.

Elements of "Story" the teacher presents such books which are bought by the school administration or in the school library. The teacher gives priority to reading. The narrative shows a teacher's willingness to integrate literature into the EFL classroom, to make the EFL classroom more interesting, and to implement deterritorialised projects. Also, she extends the curriculum in order to stimulate pupils' interests.

We are also examining Oskar Wald's "The Picture of Dorian Gray". Well, I'm talking about the books that I asked our school for anyway, not now, before, so that they would at least buy a set of them, so that the pupils would have something to distribute, that's Dorian Gray, Dickens. We didn't do Dickens last year, and a project in half a year, we have literature, and I would say that here <...> I like literature, I would love to teach it, and you know, since the English language is integrated, we integrate everything from childhood, well, if it is with history, we do it about the lives of kings <...>. (Ineta)

This "Story" suggests that pupils should be taught English every day to develop their English language skills and so that they do not lose the skills they have developed. The teacher's episodes in the "STORY" represent the domination of the state apparatus, where national curricula are developed, examinations are conducted, hierarchy prevails, and teachers have no power to change the content of education. This way of learning does not allow for a rhizomatic education of the pupils.

Twelfth graders learn and are exam-oriented, and that is the most important thing <...>. They come, they talk, we go to assess, we go to other schools, we have other assessors,

not just assessors, but implementers from other schools. They don't leave their own people when they are talking. In the examination centre, the pupils are sorted by computer according to their ability. It used to be grade 12, according to the grade of the first half of the year, but now, since last year, it is divided according to the final year grade of grade 11. This means that if there is an 8, he will talk to another 8. Non-formal and informal I would say that this is up to grade 10, in classes there is just no time in grades 11-12. (Ineta)

This narrative suggests that in the upper classes there is intensive, planned preparation for the national matura exams. The curriculum requirements are followed and the national matura exams are completed by the number of marks obtained. Technology is used to classify pupils who take the national exam according to their grades, with a system of hierarchical power, so that they are not free to choose their playmates. Moreover, in such hierarchical learning, rankings and achievements matter. *"We have a lot of winners of [school subjects] olympiads, and we always get first place in the district, so at least we get third place"* (teacher Ineta). As we can see, the school has succumbed to the state management apparatus – traditional hierarchical education, exams, rankings. The "STORY" is supported by the teacher that she is not comfortable with mobile learning (MALL) in the classroom.

Like in church, and if it's a new group, I collect the phones myself, I put them out at the end of the lesson and they pick them up, then we look at lesson 3 and they're already gathering themselves, they already know it has got to be this way. Then it's even quieter. (Elena)

It is clear that there is a formal, traditional approach to learning in the classroom, not only to teach and prepare pupils for the exam, but also to increase the school's ranking. This management-oriented approach is imposed by the State apparatus, described by Deleuze and Guattari's (2004), as the territorialisation of the 'sedentary school' operates on a striated and divided plane, where manifestations of traditional hierarchical education still exist. Analysing this narrative, some manifestations of rhizomatic education could be identified when the teacher is deeply engaged in free learning with the pupils. Otherwise, exams, the school rankings and the pupils' achievements and performance are still important.

Discussion

The study revealed 'stories', as described by Barkhuzein (2007), when learning takes place at the micro level and includes teachers' emotions, informal communication with pupils, and psychological factors. The level of narratives named 'Stories' includes meso-level teaching and learning processes, methods, assessment, etc. 'STORIES' describe educational processes that take place at the macro level (e.g. education policy,

government-defined programmes, state examinations). When teachers talk about tests and examinations, rhizomatic education is not identified here, but concepts such as 'striated plane', 'territory', 'state apparatus' can help to capture these processes and the nature of domains under regulation and control. Learning becomes horizontal, pupils' opinions are listened to and heard in the rhizo-curriculum. On the one hand, the teachers' narratives (the level of 'stories') show feelings of frustration and discontent over the pupils' lack of motivation and lack of informal communication with them. On the other hand, despite all the obstacles that the teachers face, they are proud and eager to share how innovative and creative they are, discovering and applying new ideas and methods and solutions in their classroom.

Teachers' episodes that reveal the level of 'Stories' convey communication with school administration, incoming Erasmus pupils, parents, museum staff, librarians, etc. These interactions transcend the teacher's immediate environment; the teachers have less control here and rhizomatic education appears outside the classroom. Teachers implement pedagogical decisions not only by themselves, but also with the help of members of the school community (e.g., the school purchases textbooks) and with external partners who contribute to the teaching/learning process in other institutions and non-formal education settings such as art galleries, libraries, museums. In the episodes of 'STORY' teaching and learning are presented as a part of the functioning of the state apparatus and the national governance and management of the traditional and hierarchical system of education.

The study highlights that rhizo-curriculum can be planned or created in real time. It is in line with the insights of researchers (Kraus, 2013; Cormier, 2008; etc.), who claim that in rhizomatic education pupils learn in a real situation, education is horizontal and opens up diverse perspectives. The research shows some similarities with the insights of the creators of rhizomatic education (Waterhouse, 2020; Wallin, 2010) that educational content is created in real time, and this happens when teachers allow pupils to choose to learn what is interesting to them. Teachers, however, do not give pupils complete freedom, but try to elicit a learning response from pupils by assigning certain tasks that are at the same time creative and non-traditional. At the same time, one can also agree with Wallin's (2010) observations that pupils can create two kinds of educational contents: one that they experience outside of school, and the other that they actively shape within the school setting. This study only confirms the insight that educational content should be created for the people who are yet to come, i.e., for pupils who will create and experience relevant transformations in the learning process. In addition, such people are interested in innovations, look for creative solutions, think broadly, connect unrelated areas and participate in their own activities. As noted, and demonstrated by Waterhouse's (2020), our study showed rhizo-curriculum emerges in the space of 'in-between', when a balance is maintained between pupils' nomadic desires and the educational program, between teachers' intentions and pupils' interests.

Researchers of rhizo-education (Nigar, etc., 2024; Wallin, 2010) encourage developing the content of rhizo-curriculum in a horizontal way, as a rhizome develops according to the concepts described by Deleuze and Guattari (2004), such as assemblages, de-territorialization, becoming, etc.

Comparing the research to Nigar et al. (2024) with our study, despite the fact that the teachers are somewhat preoccupied with preparing for exams, they integrate the rhizo-curriculum into the teaching and learning process and seek to educate their pupils in a rhizomatic way.

The findings of the study show that teachers are still reluctant to fully implement rhizo- curriculum. It should be admitted that nomadic pedagogy is still difficult to penetrate in schools (Cole, 2014; Semetsky, 2008), and there are cases where pupils still learn only in formal classrooms. Lithuanian teachers are not at the beginning of this process – intuitively they feel a need to give pupils more freedom and enrich pupils' language learning experiences. Thus, they get involved in implementing the rhizo-curriculum by bringing in innovative solutions, unusual and smart ideas inside and outside the classroom.

Conclusion

When implementing the rhizo-curriculum approach, teachers aim to strike a balance between the lived and planned curriculum. They give students the freedom to share their ideas while ensuring they still follow established curriculum guidelines.

Teachers' ability to implement the rhizo-curriculum hinges on their openness, creativity, and willingness to deviate from traditional programmes. Such teachers are more likely to experiment with and incorporate rhizomatic learning into formal education. However, the exam-oriented approach in upper-grade classrooms poses a significant barrier to fully implementing the rhizo-curriculum.

This study presents new approaches to English teaching and will be useful for teachers, researchers and educators in the field of philology. For more meaningful integration, changes to curriculum policy are necessary, as well as the professional development for teachers to improve their understanding of and confidence in navigating non-linear, non-strict curriculum approaches.

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Rizominio ugdymo navigavimas anglų kalbos pamokose: naratyvinis žvilgsnis į mokytojų patirtį

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Santrauka

Tyrimo tikslas – atskleisti, kaip vidurinių mokyklų anglų kalbos mokytojai pritaiko rizominio ugdymo turinį užsienio kalbų pamokose. Taikant naratyvinį tyrimą, mokytojų pasakojimai atskleidžia anglų kalbos mokymo ir mokymosi ypatumus bei rizominio ugdymo turinio įgyvendinimo aspektus. Rezultatai rodo, kad mokytojai veikia kaip pagrindinės ugdymo proceso figūros, atlikdami ne tik patarėjų, bet ir moksleivių edukacinių bendrakeivių bei pagalbininkų vaidmenis. Mokinių įsitraukimas į ugdymo turinio kūrimą tampa svarbiu rizominio ugdymo mikropolitiniu veiksmu, kuris atveria naujus mokymosi kelius. Individualus mokymosi proceso supratimas kiekvieno mokinio kontekste prisideda prie ugdymo kokybės.

Įgyvendindami rizominio ugdymo turinį, mokytojai išlaiko pusiausvyrą tarp suplanuoto ir įgyvendinto ugdymo turinio. Viena vertus, jie suteikia mokiniams laisvę išreikšti savo mintis, kita vertus, stengiasi laikytis taisyklių ir reikalavimų. Šis tyrimas demonstruoja naujus anglų kalbos didaktikos metodus, kurie yra naudingi ne tik mokytojams ir tyrėjams, bet ir filologijos srities pedagogų rengimo procese. Taigi, norint pasiekti veiksmingo rizominio mokymosi už mokyklos ribų integravimo į formalųjį ugdymą, būtina keisti mokymo programų politiką, tobulinti mokytojų profesinę kvalifikaciją, jų supratimą, pasitikėjimą savimi ir gebėjimus dirbti pagal nelineinius, negriežtus mokymo ir mokymosi metodus.

Esminiai žodžiai: rizominis ugdymo turinys, rizominis mokymasis, Deleuze ir Guattari prieiga, anglų kalba kaip užsienio kalba, naratyvinis tyrimas, naratyvų analizė.

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