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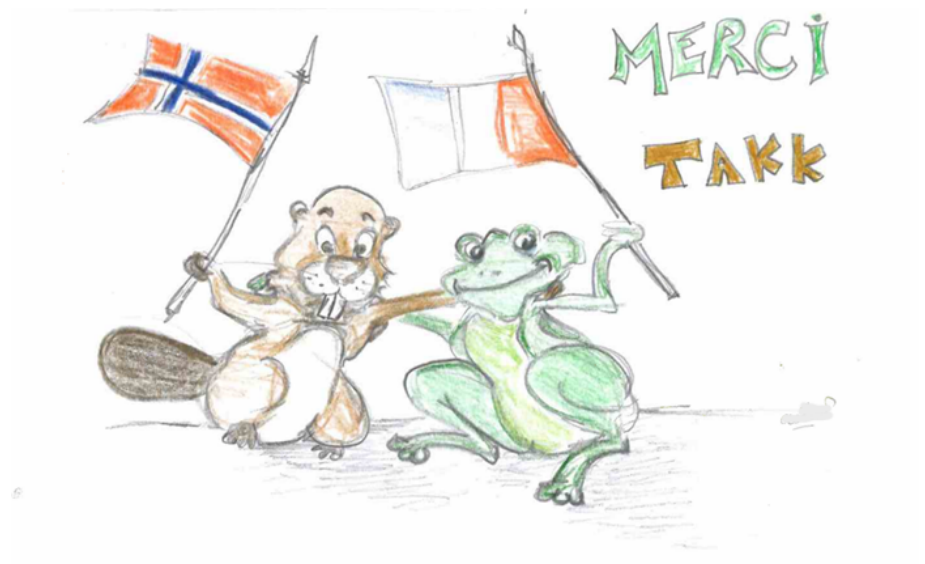
Participation in international collaboration:

A qualitative interview study with primary school teachers in Norway

Master's thesis in Didactics for English and Foreign Language Education

Supervisor: Fredrik Mørk Røkenes

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Abstract

International classroom collaborations offer students an opportunity to meet and interact with people from different parts of the world. Student exchange is not always a possibility, and the digital development over the last decades has opened up for alternative EFL learning arenas. In this thesis, I have explored how Norwegian EFL teachers experience and perceive engaging their students in international classroom collaborations.

Although international classroom collaborations in the context of EFL teaching and learning is researched worldwide, there are not many studies on international classroom collaboration conducted in the Norwegian context. Also, most of the studies I have managed to locate are based on more advanced learners. Some of these are situated within lower secondary, but the majority are concerned with more advanced learners from higher secondary school and upwards. Therefore, I have chosen to focus this study particularly on primary school teachers to learn about their experiences with engaging younger students in international collaboration.

I have conducted individual qualitative interviews with six Norwegian primary school teachers. They are all English teachers and have engaged their students in international collaboration projects. Through a thematic analysis of these interviews, I have found that these teachers perceive the authenticity of the communication situation to be valuable for students. They state that authenticity motivates students to putting extra effort into their work, and thereby supports the development of their communicative competence. Further, I found that they experience international collaboration to be a venue for meeting others with curiosity and openness, discovering similarities and differences and developing language awareness. Lastly, I found that the teachers perceive international collaboration to influence students' perception of themselves and their identity as language users. These findings I have chosen to discuss in the framework of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

This study has shown that engaging young students at primary level in international collaboration is worth considering. It may be beneficial to focus on students' development of strategic competence, ICC, and language user identity through international collaborations from an early age.

Sammendrag

Internasjonalt klasseromssamarbeid gir elever en mulighet til å møte og samhandle med mennesker fra ulike deler av verden. Elevutveksling er ikke alltid en mulighet, og den digitale utviklinga som vi har hatt de siste tiårene har åpnet opp for alternative læringsarenaer. I denne oppgaven har jeg forsket på norske englesklæreres erfaringer med å engasjere elever i internasjonalt samarbeid i klasserommet.

Selv om det har blitt forsket på internasjonalt klasseromssamarbeid i engelskundervisningen på verdensbasis, er det ikke mange studier på internasjonalt samarbeid som er utført i norsk kontekst. De fleste studiene jeg har greid å lokalisere, er i tillegg basert på eldre og viderekomne elever. Noen av studiene er utført i ungdomsskolen, men de fleste av dem omhandler elever fra videregående skole og oppover. Derfor har jeg valgt å fokusere denne studien spesielt på barneskolelærere for å lære om deres erfaringer med å engasjere yngre elever i internasjonalt samarbeid.

Jeg har utført individuelle, kvalitative intervjuer med seks norske barneskolelærere. De er alle englesklærere, og de har engasjert elevene sine i internasjonale samarbeidsprosjekter. Gjennom en tematisk analyse av intervjuene, fant jeg ut at disse lærerne anser autentisiteten i elevkommunikasjonen for å være verdifull for elevene. De mener at autentisitet motiverer elevene til å legge ekstra innsats i arbeidet sitt, og dermed bidrar til å utvikle kommunikasjons-kompetansen deres. Videre fant jeg ut at de har erfart internasjonalt samarbeid som en flott arena for å møre andre med nysgjerrighet og åpenhet, for å oppdage likheter og forskjeller og for å utvikle språkbevissthet. Sist, så fant jeg ut at lærerne mener at internasjonalt samarbeid kan påvirke elevenes syn på seg selv og deres identitet som språkbrukere. Disse funnene har jeg valgt å diskutere innenfor det teoretiske rammeverket av interkulturell kommunikasjons-kompetanse og kommunikatív språkundervisning.

Denne studien har vist at det er verdt å vurdere å engasjere unge elever i internasjonalt samarbeid. Det kan være fordelaktig å fokusere på å utvikle elevenes strategiske kompetanse, deres interkulturelle kommunikasjons-kompetanse og språkbruker-identiteten deres gjennom slike internasjonale samarbeid fra ung alder.

Acknowledgments¹

After several wonderful, but busy, years working as a primary school teacher, being allowed to spend two years focusing solely on the English subject has been genuinely motivating. Immersing myself in the subject that is the closest to my heart, as both student and teacher, has doubtlessly led to a professional development that I am grateful for bringing with me now that I am going back to teaching. Both time and effort has been spent writing this thesis, and I would like to thank those who have made it possible for me to fulfil this project.

First, I wish to thank the most important people in my life; my husband Ole Gunnar and my sons, Vetle and Aksel. You have been impressingly patient during my weeks and months of working in the office, and I appreciate all the encouragement that you have given me along the way.

I would also like to pass sincere gratitude to my supervisor Fredrik Mørk Røkenes for backing me up and helping me reach my goal. Always positive, always supportive, always seems to know exactly what advise that is needed. I have truly enjoyed our over-coffee-discussions throughout the year.

My friends and my family for encouraging me and offering logistic support along the way. I would especially like to thank my good friend and mentor Sigrid Ness for numerous "walk and talks" and coffee breaks discussing both writing and the general aspects of life. Thank you for reading and commenting on my thesis.

My dear colleagues for encouragement throughout the last year, and a special thanks to my previous colleague Markus Leithe-Lajord for critically reading my thesis before submission. I would also like to thank Mona Elisabeth Nøstdahl for piloting my interview questions, and my fellow students for useful feedback and enjoyable moments in the last two years. A special thanks to Ingrid Heesbråten Steinarsson for digital piloting and numerous exchanges of ideas, thoughts, and perceptions.

Last, but not least, I wish to thank my informants. I cannot tell how much I appreciate you taking the time to help me. Without your contribution, this thesis could not have been accomplished.

Marianne Valstad Hallager

Verdal, May 23rd 2022

¹ The picture on the front page was lent to me by one of the kind participants of this study, and is published with permission. The picture was received by the participant after the completion of a French-Norwegian collaboration project.

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1. Introduction

Children today meet “otherness” to a much larger extent than before. They are as mobile as their parents and have different cultures and different languages represented in their daily lives from a very young age (Byram, 2008). This is a call for an intercultural focus in English language teaching, English being the language which is aimed to be a door-opener for young people ready to explore the world.

In this thesis, I wish to explore how Norwegian EFL primary school teachers experience and perceive international student collaboration.

1.1 Background

There are several reasons for this choice of topic. The initial reason for choosing to conduct a research study on international collaboration has to do with my own experience as a primary school English teacher. A few years back I engaged two groups of students in international classroom collaboration projects, and I found this work both rewarding and demanding. It was hard to find other teachers who wished to engage themselves in this work, which also made it a lonesome journey. My students were enthusiastic, so it was worth the effort, but I found myself wondering why I had heard so little about this type of international classroom practice. During the last years, I have thought about these international projects several times, and I have been longing to talk to other teachers about this topic. I have been curious to find out why teachers choose to engage themselves and their students in international collaborations, and if they perceive it to be worth the effort.

A wish to enhance and develop opportunities for international interaction between students from different countries and cultures is prevalent in the policies of both the Norwegian ministry of education², and, at a larger scale, the European Commission³. The European Commission underlines that the European Union operates under the motto “united in diversity”, and that this motto symbolizes the essential role of linguistic diversity and language learning in the European project. This perception of languages functioning as a bridge between people of different cultures is also present in the statement claiming that “Languages unite people, render other countries and their cultures accessible, and strengthen intercultural understanding” (European Education Area, retrieved 5/5/22). This is a call for European countries to put effort into cross-culture and across-borders language learning in their educational systems.

In regards of Norwegian EFL education, the Norwegian school curriculum LK20⁴ underlines the importance of equipping students with skills that make it possible for them to communicate with people all over the world, regardless of cultural and lingual backgrounds. Students need to develop an intercultural understanding of different ways of life, and there is an aim of preparing them for both an educational, a social and a work-related global life (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Further, LK20 states that students should be allowed to collaborate in authentic situations where they experience using and exploring language and making use of

²The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dep/kd/id586/>

³The European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/info/index_en

⁴LK20 Læreplanverket. <https://www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/lareplanverket/>

different strategies necessary to succeed with communicating. By learning about culture and society, students will develop intercultural competence that enables them to deal with differences and see their own and others' identities in a multilingual and multicultural context (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

Considering these aims for the English subject, international classroom collaboration as learning arena should be investigated. LK20 states that students, already after 2nd grade, are going to be able to "use digital resources to experience the language via authentic language models and interlocutors" (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 70). A focus on developing understanding of both their own and others' cultures also continues throughout primary school. This calls for not considering international collaborations to belong solely within higher education, but to be of interest for primary education as well.

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research have in their report *Strategy for Norway's participation in Erasmus+ and the European Education Area*⁵ (Ministry of Education and Research, 2021) stated that Norway is going to make more efforts within the area of internationalisation. Their aim is to equip young people, the adults of the future, for world cooperation on global challenges such as pandemics, sustainability and climate. Erasmus+⁶ is described as the main platform for internationalisation in Norway today. A report on Norway's participation in Erasmus+ in primary and secondary education (Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills⁷, 2021), however, states a concern that the number of students taking part in cultural exchange has gone down over the last few years. The situation with Covid-19 was challenging in this matter. Along with focusing on mobility, this report also highlights online collaborations as important for equipping students with knowledge and perhaps, in the future, motivating students to study abroad. While Covid-19 hindered physical student exchange, online collaborations were enhanced. The Covid 19-situation led to isolation, but also to a digital renewal within the education area. The possibilities that come with this digitalisation are aimed to be used within future international work (Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills, 2021).

The digital platform integrated into the Erasmus+ program is named eTwinning⁸ (Figure 1).



Figure 1 The Erasmus+ and eTwinning logo⁹

⁵Strategi for norsk deltakelse i Erasmus+ og Det europeiske utdanningsområdet (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021).

⁶ Erasmus+. EU programme for education, training, youth, and sport. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

⁷Direktoratet for høyere utdanning og kompetanse. <https://hkdir.no/>

⁸eTwinning. Digital collaboration platform integrated into Erasmus+. www.etwinning.net

⁹The Erasmus+ and etwinning logo. <https://iesunamuno.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/logo-etwinning-1024x230.jpg>. Retrieved 5/5/22, <https://iesunamuno.com/proyectos-2/erasmus>

At the current moment, more than 5300 Norwegian teachers at more than 1500 schools and kindergartens are members of the eTwinning portal (Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education¹⁰, retrieved 5/5/22). Although the eTwinning platform is not of specific focus in this study, I am aware that most of the participating teachers have experience with use of this platform.

The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education¹¹ (2015) mapped Norwegian school owners' and teachers' perceptions and practises with internationalisation in the Norwegian primary- and secondary school. Their study found that despite being time consuming, both students and teachers learned a lot from participating. It became clear, however, that engagement and support from school leaders was crucial for successful participation. There was a substantial difference between upper secondary schools, with a trend of leaders taking responsibility for international projects and collaborations, and primary schools, where there was extended lack of strategy and plans for this type of work. Another interesting finding was that there were clear differences between the perceptions of those who had tried this out and those who had not. Those who had participated in internationalisation were overall positive regarding its value, while those who had little or no experience with internationalisation tended to view it more negatively, focusing more on barriers. This study concluded that more research on internationalisation in the Norwegian primary and secondary school is necessary (Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education, 2015).

Although internationalisation was part of the English curriculum of primary education in Norway long after it was included in the curriculum for higher education (Fenner & Skulstad, 2018), a report regarding Norwegian participation in Erasmus+ in primary and secondary education (Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills, 2021) describes how international collaboration also beyond higher education now receives more attention. This report states that internationalisation now is aimed to be an integrated part of Norwegian education at all levels in the process of strengthening education quality in Norway.

Current research on EFL internationalisation is to a large extent centred around advanced learners (Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017; Munezane, 2021; Pennock-Speck & Clavel-Arroitia, 2018). A recent review of 36 studies focusing on the role of texts in fostering intercultural competence in the English language classroom, concludes by stating that we need more research on this topic in primary and secondary English Language Teaching "to study potential differences in how intercultural learning processes unfold across age groups" (Heggernes, 2021, p. 10). Lee and Markey (2014) and Avgousti (2018) also state that further research centred on less advanced learners and primary school is necessary to find out more about intercultural learning in younger students.

¹⁰Direktoratet for internasjonisering og kvalitetsutvikling i høgare utdanning (DIKU), now part of the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills.

¹¹Senter for internasjonisering av utdanning (SIU). Part of DIKU from 2018, now part of the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills.

1.2 Purpose and research question

The aim of this study is to gain insight into Norwegian EFL teachers' experiences with international student collaboration. By talking to teachers about their experiences, I hope to gain insight into why they choose to engage their students in international collaboration and what they perceive to be both the benefits and the challenges with this type of work. Because of both my own background as a primary school teacher and indications from previous and current research, I choose to focus on the context of the primary EFL classroom in this study. Hopefully, this study can lead to some implications for international collaboration in primary EFL education. Based on these perceptions, my chosen research question is:

What are Norwegian EFL primary school teachers' perceptions and experiences with students' participation in international collaboration?

In the following, I will elaborate on terms that are relevant for defining the aim and scope of this study.

1.3 Definitions of terms

International classroom collaboration is the term used describing projects in which the teachers in my study have engaged their students. This term refers to collaborations between Norwegian students and non-Norwegian students resident in another country. These collaborations can be in writing or oral, synchronous in real-time or asynchronous, and online or conducted in an old fashion way through pen pal or other paper-post-based collaborations. Student exchange is not part of this study's scope. The term **international collaboration** may also be used in situations where the classroom context is less of focus and international collaboration is discussed in a wider sense.

The term **Telecollaboration** is frequently used in different research studies that are referred to in this project. Telecollaboration "involves the use of Internet communication tools by internationally dispersed students of language in institutionalized settings" (Belz, 2003, p. 68). The aim of telecollaboration is to promote development of language and intercultural competence (Belz, 2003). Since this term refers solely to online collaborations, it does not fit as a general description for the collaborations in my study.

EFL (English as a Foreign Language) is a term used when English is being learned and practiced by non-native English speakers in and outside the classroom. The term ESL (English as a Second Language) is also frequently used in literature to describe a similar setting (Krulatz et al., 2018). In this thesis, the term EFL is chosen over ESL. Naming the English language *foreign* in this situation opens for a broad use of the term. Naming it *second*, on the other hand, excludes the common situation in Norwegian classrooms where English is not the student's second language, but perhaps the third or the fourth. Although there are students in the Norwegian EFL classroom who also have English as their *first* language, naming it foreign is a statement that most students are learning English as a foreign language in addition to their other languages, not presuming that they speak only one language from before, as the term ESL may indicate.

English as Lingua Franca as also frequently referred to and discussed in this paper. *Lingua franca* is a term describing a language being the contact, or system, "which serves as a common means of communication by speakers of different first languages"

(Krulatz et al., 2018, p. 19). This means that when English is the only language that interlocutors have in common, English becomes lingua franca in the communication between these interlocutors.

In the theory and result sections of this paper, there are frequent references to the term **Identity**. Shortly explained, identity is “a self-image created as a result of the interaction of the inner self and the world around us” (Krulatz et al., 2018, p. 101). Krulatz et al. (2018) further describe how identity is constituted through childhood but evolves and develops throughout life. Identity is closely connected to language, since language is the communication system that helps us connect with those around us.

1.4 Chapter summary and structure of thesis

In this first chapter, I have presented the topic and background for this thesis. Relevant terms have been explained, and I have presented my research question. Following in chapter two, I will present the theoretical foundations for this research. I will also present previous research within the field of international student collaboration. Chapter three includes a thorough description of my philosophical foundations and research design, followed by a description of how data has been collected and analysed in this research project. Ethical considerations and research quality is also discussed in this chapter. In chapter four, the results of the analysis are presented. In chapter five, these results are discussed according to the theoretical framework and previous research that is included in this study. Finally, the findings of the study are presented as EFL classroom implications in chapter six. This chapter also presents perceived limitations of this study along with suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical foundations

In this chapter, I will present the theoretical foundations that are chosen to provide knowledge about the topic of this thesis. The research question is concerned with teachers' perception and experiences with international collaboration in the EFL classroom, and this theoretical framework presents a twofold concern. Firstly, theory is chosen to provide knowledge about students' learning from participating in international classroom collaborations. I have chosen to focus on global citizen skills as described in the introduction of this thesis and have therefore chosen the framework of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) as main theory. ICC builds upon the concept of communicative competence, which is also referred to in this thesis and described initially. Secondly, theory is chosen to provide knowledge and perceptions about what teaching through international collaboration projects may mean and imply. I have chosen to see teaching through international collaboration in light of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), scoping in on authentic learning. I will also briefly present my overarching view of how languages are learned. A literature review is included at the end of this chapter. This review provides findings from previous and current research related to important aspects of this research project and the presented theoretical framework.

2.1 Communicative competence

Communicative competence has been the most fundamental concept in second language and foreign language teaching in the Norwegian classroom since the mid-70s. All aspects of English didactics in the EFL classroom today relate to this concept (Fenner & Skulstad, 2018). In 1972, Dell Hymes provided a common-sense explanation of communicative competence as knowledge of "when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner" (Hymes, 1972, p. 277, as quoted in Bøhn et al., 2018, p. 28). Although scholarly definitions of communicative competence tend to be more complex, Hymes largely managed to sum up its essence through this sentence.

The Norwegian school curriculum, LK20, presents "communication" as one out of three major core elements in the English subject, stressing that students must learn to use suitable strategies to communicate in different situations. Further, it is also stated that students should be given the opportunity to express themselves in situations which are *authentic* (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). This clear call for authentic communication practice is a point which is particularly relevant for the focus of this thesis and can be used as an argument for including international collaboration as an authentic arena for practicing and developing students' communicative competence in the EFL classroom.

In this thesis, communicative competence, as defined and described by Canale and Swain (1980) and van Ek (1986), is of interest. Canale and Swain (1980) single out three subcomponents of communicative competence. The first component is *grammatical competence*, which includes learning the components and structures of language. The second component is *sociolinguistic competence*, which includes learning that an utterance can be appropriate in one context, but offensive in another. The last component, *strategic competence*, is particularly interesting in the context where Norwegian EFL students are practicing communication in the EFL classroom and will be elaborated more thoroughly. Canale and Swain (1980) explain that *strategic competence* consists of verbal and non-verbal strategies that are used to compensate when the communication is in danger of breaking down. Communication can break down due to

both insufficient language competence and due to difficulties performing in the communication situation. van Ek (1986, p. 49) also addresses the notion of strategic competence by stating that "The linguistic code is our tool of communication par excellence, yet none of us has such a perfect command of it, not even in our native language, that we do not encounter communication problems". Examples of strategies can be paraphrasing or rephrasing ("Let me put that in a different way"), asking for assistance ("What do you call it again") and using gestures, mime and sounds to make oneself understood (van Ek, 1986, p. 49). What makes strategic competence particularly interesting in this thesis, is how Canale and Swain (1980) comment that this "coping" strategy is likely to be acquired through real-life communication, "but not through classroom practice that involves no meaningful communication" (p. 31). Hopefully, this thesis can provide implications on how meaningful communication can be practiced in the EFL classroom.

When discussing communicative competence in the context of intercultural learning, in this example through international classroom collaboration, these definitions do not shed light on what is different when students practice English with peers versus when they practice with other EFL learners with non-Norwegian background. A challenge pointed to by Byram (2021)¹² when talking about communicative competence in language learning today, is that the term does not origin from the EFL discipline, something which may make the term insensitive to factors of social identities and cultural competence when practicing English as a foreign language. Byram discusses that *sociolinguistic* competence has received much more attention than *sociocultural* competence and hence, the first has developed more than the latter. Byram also addresses the fact that historically, the native speaker has been the ideal in EFL learning, and that this has contributed to neglecting the sociocultural aspect of communicative competence and leaving the power of the social situation in the hands of the native speaker. This view can be associated with Kramsch (1993) who argues that language learners have the right to use the foreign language for their own purpose. Knowledge about the culture where the language is being used is required, but the language *learner* is key in this situation. This perspective is interesting when studying language learning in the context of international collaboration where students from different cultures and with different levels of language competence are communicating. This discussion of the intercultural speakers' role in overcoming the traditional power hierarchy (native vs non-native) in the communication situation has also been addressed by Byram (2003).

2.2 Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Intercultural competence as a concept in EFL learning was first introduced in the Norwegian national guidelines for upper secondary school in 1994. In 1997, it was also included for students in primary and lower secondary school (Fenner & Skulstad, 2018). This implies that the concept of interculturality is fairly new in the Norwegian educational context. Fantini and Tirmizi (2006) shortly describe intercultural competence as "a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (p. 12). ICC is most often described in similar matters (Byram, 2021; Deardorff, 2006), but the dimension of communication is highlighted in addition to intercultural competencies.

¹²The book *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* by Michael Byram (2021) is a revisited version of the 1997 original.

Definitions of ICC are often broad and extensive, but the British Council offers a definition which is short and sums up its essence: "Intercultural communicative competence, or ICC, refers to the ability to understand cultures, including your own, and use this understanding to communicate with people from other cultures successfully" (British Council¹³, retrieved 14/05/22).

Compared to the earlier presented concept of communicative competence, ICC is different in its focus on functioning despite lingual and cultural differences. ICC is doubtlessly a complex concept, and the distinction between intercultural competence and ICC has been problematised. Some abilities, like switching register or dialect can be a matter of communicative competence which requires the same lingual competence from a mono-lingual as from a bi- or multilingual. This competence is not limited to intercultural competence (Belz, 2007). Belz (2007) highlights the importance of seeing the development of ICC as a cognitive development that includes shifting perspectives and gaining insight on an extended level.

There are, however, some key variables that are agreed upon, and that need to be present in order to say that a person has developed ICC, or the ability to act "interculturally" (Deardorff, 2006). Michael Byram is one of few scholars who as early as the 1990s started operationalising the notion of intercultural competence into foreign language teaching and learning. He produced a detailed explanation of learning objectives which has been helpful for curriculum planners, teachers, and learners, along with having also displayed that the model requires further critical evaluation (Belz, 2007). Byram (2008) stated that the description of communicative competence as we knew it was problematic, since it was based on native speakers and how they interact with each other. The term does not take into consideration that speaking in a different language, whether it is *with* a native or with someone who you only have the new language in common with, is something quite different. Therefore, Byram found that the theory of communicative competence needed to be changed and developed to consider what happens when people meet different languages, different ways of behaving and different understandings of the world – a different culture. Byram's point of perception in this matter is people moving and residing in a new country (Byram, 2008), a point that has been criticized (Belz, 2007). Belz (2007) claims that when Byram bases his theory of ICC development on travelling to and interacting within a different country, he presumes that this is a possibility that all learners posit. However, much second language learning takes place under conditions of occupation or invasion, or economic and social marginalisation. Belz states that when Byram refers to language learning as being context-dependent, these contexts must also be remembered and included when discussing contextual factors. I find it possible to adopt these thoughts and points of view onto a situation where students learning English as a foreign language meet other EFL (or native) learners in the context of international collaboration, whether they are taking part in mobility programs or meeting online.

Byram (2008) describes acting interculturally as seeing how different cultures relate to each other and being able to mediate between different aspects of language and culture. This presumes, among others, taking a stand of being curious and open, and having knowledge about social groups and the individual interaction involved. Further, it

¹³British Council. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/>

presumes being able to interpret and relate elements from the other culture to one's own, to learn from other cultures and to be able to evaluate critically the practices within the different cultures (Byram, 2008). When taking part in an international collaboration project, students meet and interact with different people from different cultures, and it is therefore interesting to investigate the relationship between ICC and international collaboration.

2.2.1 Byram's model of ICC

Byram (2021) has presented the objectives of ICC in a model which will be presented in this sub-chapter. In this model (Figure 2), as visualised by Waliński (2012, p. 6), Byram (2021) links intercultural competence to communication, describing the term ICC as a person's ability to relate and communicate with a person not only speaking a different language, but also living in a different cultural context. He presents the model of ICC as a set of skills, or competencies, that are necessary to build to develop ICC. In principle, these competencies can be acquired through experience and reflection. But they may also be acquired with help from a teacher, who implements it within a broader educational philosophy, such as aiming to increase students' critical cultural awareness. The different competencies included in the ICC model can all be taught and assessed, something which underlines the importance of this model being meant for teachers teaching ICC, and not just a model of learning (Byram, 2021).

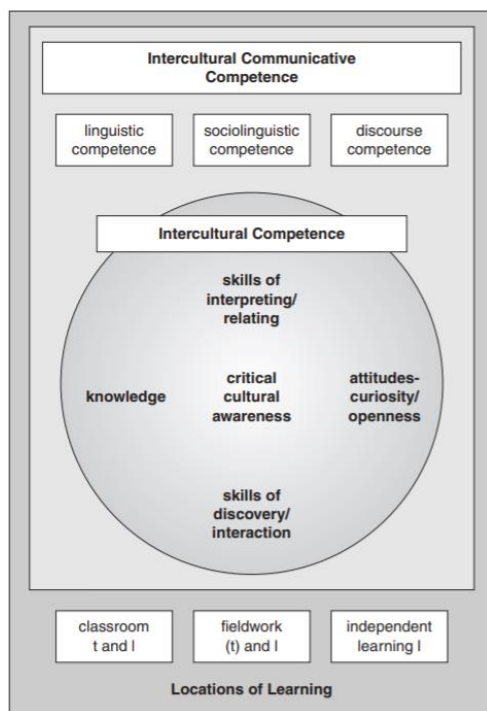


Figure 2 Byram's model of Intercultural Communicative Competence as illustrated by Waliński (2012, p. 6)

The illustration of Byram's ICC model (Figure 2) first presents three dimensions of communicative competence that we recognize from Canale & Swain (1980) and van Ek (1986): Linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence. However, when shifting focus from the native ideal to the intercultural speaker, Byram states that these terms need to be redefined. This is done in his description of communicative skills in the ICC model (Byram, 2021).

Coperías-Aguilar (2002) also states that we should now be beyond communicative communication and has displayed a comparison between van Ek’s proposal and Byram’s redefinition of communicative competence (Figure 3).

van Ek’s proposal	Byram’s redefinition
Linguistic competence: The ability to produce and interpret meaningful utterances which are formed in accordance with the rules of the language concerned and bear their conventional meaning ... that meaning which native speakers would normally attach to an utterance when used in isolation.	Linguistic competence: the ability to apply knowledge of the rules of a <u>standard version</u> of the language to produce and interpret spoken and written language.
Sociolinguistic competence: The awareness of ways in which the choice of language forms ... is determined by such conditions as setting, relationship between communication partners, communicative intention, etc. ... [this] competence covers the relation between linguistic signals and their contextual – or situational – meaning	Sociolinguistic competence: the ability to give to the language produced by an interlocutor – whether native speaker or not – meanings which are taken for granted by the interlocutor or which are <u>negotiated</u> and made explicit with the interlocutor.
Discourse competence: The ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and interpretation of texts.	Discourse competence: the ability to use, <u>discover</u> and <u>negotiate</u> strategies for the production and <u>interpretation</u> of monologue or dialogue texts which follow the conventions of the culture of an interlocutor or are <u>negotiated</u> as intercultural texts for particular purposes.

Figure 3 Coperías-Aguilar’s comparison of van Ek’s proposal and Byram’s redefinition of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence (Coperías-Aguilar, 2002, p. 96).

Byram’s redefinitions of van Ek’s proposals are mainly situated around the focus on the native ideal. Byram suggests to rather focus on a standard version of the target language that is suitable for producing and interpreting spoken and written language. Sociolinguistic competence as described in Byram’s version also focuses on the fact that the interlocutor is not necessarily native (unlike earlier definition). Discourse competence is no more centred around the appropriateness as is set from an ideal native viewpoint, but rather, how it is negotiated between the interlocutors (Coperías-Aguilar, 2002).

In addition to displaying these three aspects of communicative competence, Byram’s model of ICC (Figure 2) secondly shows a simplified version of the five dimensions of intercultural competence that we find in Byram (2021, pp. 62-66):

- **Attitudes** of relativising self, valuing others, being open and curious
- **Knowledge** of oneself and the other and of interaction between the two, individual and societal
- **Skills** of interpreting and relating self and other
- **Skills** to discover and interact with the other
- **Political education** and critical cultural awareness

These competencies can, according to Byram (2021), both be taught explicitly and be assessed as learning objectives within an established assessment framework. Measuring and assessing intercultural competence is complex, but should be possible, presuming that scholars can agree on the definition of ICC (Deardorff, 2006). Belz (2007), however, criticizes this establishment of an assessment framework, stating it to be “a blow to the validity of cultural relativity” (Belz, 2007, p. 138). An assessment framework will,

inevitable, be built from an assumption of a cultural threshold, which will be both value-laden and culture specific. Thus, points of reference will be formulated in terms of the dominant cultural values, undermining the presence and importance of diversity (Belz, 2007). Belz (2007) specifically mentions international human rights agendas in relation to moral orientation. Both Byram (2021) and Belz (2007) note that international human right doctrines have been developed within a certain context of Western ideology. We must be aware that in this situation, implicitly, these Western belief systems are valued over non-Western beliefs (Belz, 2007). Due to its complexity and also limited research within the field of young language learners (Byram, 2021), ICC assessment will not be part of this thesis' scope.

Byram (2021) states that research on aspects of intercultural competence in young learners is underdeveloped compared to research on older learners, and he underlines the importance of considering what he describes as the "developmental factor" (p. 67) in young learners and ICC. Children need to be of a certain age, or at a certain stage of maturity, before they manage to shift focus away from themselves and see from others' point of view. Usually, they manage to do this when they are aged seven to ten. Also, previous research has found that young children's competence is developing from lower stages to higher levels, from skills such as observing and comparing to skills such as recommending and planning. Being able to reflect is crucial for the evolution of attitudes, and this development can be seen as an intercultural reflection and growth (Byram, 2021). This developmental factor is to be considered when conducting research that regards young language learners.

In the following, I will describe the five dimensions of intercultural competence as presented in Byram (2021) in more detail, focusing especially on objects for language learning and teaching. All dimensions are interrelated, and every dimension must be viewed as part of a bigger whole (Byram, 2021).

Attitudes of *relativising self, valuing others, being open and curious* concerns attitudes towards people who are perceived as different from ourselves. These attitudes are often negatively loaded through terms such as prejudice and stereotyping and seen as obstacles to carrying out communication. Occasionally, attitudes towards others can be overly positive, and positive prejudice can also hinder mutual understanding. Rather than basing our beliefs about others on stereotyping, we should focus on developing "attitudes of curiosity and openness, of readiness to suspend disbelief and judgment with respect to others' meanings, beliefs, values and behaviours" (Byram, 2021, p. 45). We should try to see our own beliefs from the viewpoint of others. Byram describes this willingness to analyse oneself from the viewpoint of others as an ability to *decentre*, and states that decentring is fundamental for understanding other cultures. Teachers should help students develop knowledge of the process of communication, including prejudice against groups and how it arises, and thereby help students develop their ability to reflect on their own stereotypes and prejudices (Byram, 2021).

To help students develop these attitudes of curiosity, openness, and readiness to suspend beliefs teachers can, among other, focus on enhancing students' willingness to engage with others, their interest in other perspectives on familiar and unfamiliar phenomena and their willingness to question their own values and presuppositions. An interesting point that Byram makes in this regard is that "It is probably easier to question one's own meanings, beliefs, values and behaviours through comparison with others' than to attempt to decentre and distance oneself from what the processes of

socialisation have suggested is “normal”, “natural” and unchangeable” (Byram, 2021, pp. 45-46). As children are able to compare themselves with others from quite young age, this is worth noting considering this thesis’ focus on younger learners with probable less developed ICC than is the case with more advanced learners. Children start categorizing people from a young age, and as they locate themselves inside a certain group, they develop a preference for their “in-group”, which creates distance to “the others” (Byram, 2021).

Knowledge of oneself and the other and of interaction between the two, individual and societal includes two different categories of knowledge. The first category includes knowledge about one’s own social groups and their culture and knowledge about the interlocutor’s social groups and their cultures. This knowledge can be more or less refined through socialisation, primarily in the family and secondarily through education. Knowledge about “others” that comes from socialisation is often prejudiced and biased, and probably differs from how representatives of the “other” culture see themselves. The second category of knowledge includes knowledge about the process of interaction on individual and societal levels. This knowledge is not acquired automatically, but it can be taught. Students should eventually understand how their social identities have been acquired, how they are perceived by others, and how they perceive others from their own point of view instead of believing that their own “truth” is universal. When also becoming aware of how communication and interaction can modify existing perceptions and create new identifications, they have a larger opportunity to achieve successful interaction with others (Byram, 2021). What is interesting in regard of international collaboration, is whether it can offer an arena for developing this type of knowledge.

Skills of interpreting and relating self and other can be described as the ability to interpret an element, for example a political speech that has arisen from a national perspective within another culture, and explain this speech and relate it to a political speech from one’s own culture. This ability requires the learner to identify ethnocentric perspectives, identify areas of misunderstanding and dysfunction and explain them in terms of cultural systems that are present, and to mediate between conflicting interpretations to overcome conflicts (Byram, 2021). These are complex skills, and probably not the most obvious main focus regarding ICC in primary EFL teaching.

Skills to discover and interact with the other includes the ability to acquire new knowledge of cultural practices, for example through interaction with interlocutors from another culture. This requires the ability to draw upon existing knowledge, be sensitive to others, and operate the skills of discovery and interpretation. It also includes the ability to “operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction” (Byram, 2021, p. 65), which includes managing dysfunctions that arise during this interaction. In international collaboration, such real-time communication can, for example, be synchronous online oral communication and/or synchronous writing in a chat. In such interaction with others, one’s existing familiarity with the country and the extent of difference between oneself and the “other” must be taken into consideration.

Political education and critical cultural awareness concerns the ability to critically evaluate the values of oneself and others. This ability is based on a systematic reasoning regarding the values present in one’s own culture and in the other’s culture. This includes being able to identify explicit or implicit cultural values and being aware of own ideological perspectives, and also being aware of potential conflicts between one’s own

and other's perspectives. Sometimes establishing a shared evaluation of a situation is not possible because of incompatibilities in beliefs and values, and then it is necessary to be able to negotiate agreement on the acceptance of difference (Byram, 2021). Critical cultural awareness is a complex competence and can probably be categorized within a higher level of skills. Both focusing on attitudes of curiosity and openness and reflecting on own values and boundaries can contribute to students' development of critical cultural awareness.

In sum, these five dimensions describe the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that, together with communicative competence, make up the notion of Intercultural communicative awareness. All dimensions of intercultural competence are relevant when discussing ICC in the context of international classroom collaboration, since all communication with students from another country includes interacting with a student that represents "the other". It is important to consider, however, the development from lower to higher intercultural skills when teaching young EFL learners.

Lastly, the illustration of Byram's model (Figure 2) shows different locations of learning; the classroom where both teacher and learner are present and active in the process, fieldwork where the student is the active part and the teacher may act as facilitator, and independent learning, directed by the student (Byram, 2021). What is interesting to consider here, is the dynamics between teacher and learner in different settings and locations of learning. In a traditional classroom setting, the teacher has a large degree of control of how the student is acting to learn and develop. But once you shift location to outside the classroom, or even online, the student is more in control of what is going on. The teacher loses some control of the learning situation, and learning is to a larger degree an individual process for the student. The arena for ICC development is also discussed by Belz (2007), who states that both proponents and opponents of intercultural competence in foreign language learning find the classroom to be an insufficiently rich learning arena for practicing the diverse and complex forms of language that can display or constitute intercultural competence. Some even find intercultural competence to be unattainable through teaching and can only be developed through first-hand experiences in "real life" (Belz, 2007). International classroom collaborations offer a learning environment that, although mirroring real-life communication, still represents a context of language learning. It is possible to imply that international classroom collaborations change the framework of locations in Byram's (2021) model (Figure 2) by partly evening out the distinction between classroom and fieldwork.

2.3 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

There are different approaches to foreign language teaching, depending on both the views of how languages are learned and on the aims of the language education. Before discussing how languages can be taught, I will display shortly my reflections about how languages are learned.

The theoretical foundations of this thesis are built on a sociocultural perception of learning. Sociocultural learning theory is based on the publications of Vygotsky (1896-1934) (Berggreen & Tenfjord, 1999), and has later been adapted to foreign language learning (Lantolf, 1995). Within sociocultural theory, interaction and co-construction of knowledge is emphasised, and learning is perceived to develop on basis of social rather

than individual grounds¹⁴ (Berggreen & Tenfjord, 1999). In this thesis, the perception of social interaction in language learning is particularly manifested in the situation where Norwegian EFL students interact with non-Norwegian English speakers. Students participate in a process where they co-construct both lingual and cultural knowledge through different means of communication. In these communication tasks, students need to both support each other and interpret the other's utterances and perceptions to successfully carry out the communication tasks. Communicative Language Teaching carries out principles from a sociocultural view of learning and will be presented in the following.

In EFL teaching and learning, the ability to communicate successfully has been a main aim of EFL education for decades. A central idea of CLT is that students learn from engaging in real communication which has both a purpose and a function (Fenner & Skulstad, 2018). According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), underlying learning theory of CLT has been discussed to a much smaller extent than the communicative dimensions of language, but they state that it is possible to discern underlying theory from observing CLT practices. They describe three different principles that explain the base of CLT. The first principle is *the communication principle*, which states that "activities that involve real communication promote learning". The second principle is *the task principle*, claiming that activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning. The third principle is *the meaningfulness principle*, which states that "language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 72). Fenner and Skulstad (2018) describe the meaning of "real" and meaningful communication as having a non-linguistic purpose. Meaningful tasks may be problem solving or other tasks that promote cognitive and affective engagement. They also state that meaningful language use should be authentic language use, rather than mechanical practice of targeted language patterns. The principle of *authenticity* is also central in CLT. Richards and Rodgers (1986) state that learning activities that engage students in meaningful and authentic language use are considered conditions needed to promote foreign language learning due to the CLT approach.

The CLT approach can be criticized for not being possible to apply to all levels of a language program, and how to evaluate the approach is not easily defined. Also, the question about how suitable this approach is for non-native English teachers has been raised (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). However, arguing that CLT should be a one and only chosen approach to EFL teaching is not the point of including it in this thesis. Teachers can, as suggested by Drew and Sørheim (2009), choose an eclectic approach to language teaching. This means applying different approaches, including CLT, for different purposes. These choices should always be based on what the teachers perceive as beneficial for their EFL students. Savignon (2007) also states this same point of view, arguing that the complexity and diversity of language learning contexts has led us to a point beyond methods, to rather identify teaching practices or strategies that reflect the needs of the situation. However, if the EFL teacher chooses to include CLT into the English classroom, it is probable to view participation in international collaborations as a possible way of maintaining the important CLT principle of *authentic tasks*.

¹⁴ Perceptions of language learning will not be elaborated further in this thesis due to the scope, requirements, and resources of the thesis.

Savignon (2007) was looking ahead and described 15 years ago how "The emergence of English as a global language, technological innovation and a growing need for learner autonomy are changing the contexts of language learning rapidly and profoundly" (Savignon, 2007, p. 207). Also looking ahead was Kramsch (2011), who stated that CLT is valuable and that the notions of communicative competence have served us well over the last 25 years, but that there is a demand for approaching teaching in a way that "takes into account the actual, the imagined and the virtual worlds in which we live" (Kramsch, 2011, p. 354). Interculturality, she stated, has been left largely unexploited by the CLT approach (Kramsch, 2011). Exploring interculturality through CLT can be an entrance to international collaboration in the EFL classroom.

2.4 Authenticity in EFL education

It seems almost impossible coming across educational language research or English language curricula without coming across the term "authenticity". LK20 also states the importance of allowing students to engage in authentic and practical situations (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). And in CLT, as mentioned, the aspect of authenticity is considered beneficial, and perhaps necessary, for students' language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Authenticity in EFL teaching and learning has often referred to the use of original texts and other learning material that was originally produced for non-pedagogical, natural communication (Kramsch, 1993). Fenner and Skulstad (2018) suggest that in addition to using authentic texts, practicing real-life like language structures that students can come across outside the language classroom is a way of offering authentic learning. Also, performing authentic tasks that people perform in an imagined context can be presented in the students' task to make the task as real-like as possible (Fenner & Skulstad, 2018).

Kramsch (1993) states, however, that we have now moved on from placing meaning in the written or spoken text, to placing it in the dialogue between the learner and the text. Further, she discusses the concept of "cultural authenticity", stressing how this concept "captures much of the paradox of teaching language in classrooms" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 177). Students reading authentic text material in a Norwegian EFL classroom, are indeed in an authentic culture of language learning, but even though the text they are reading is not made for pedagogical purposes, they will still use it in that exact purpose. Rather than imitating native users, Kramsch (1993) expresses that they should be allowed to act as the learners of language that they actually are. Students should be given tools for critical understanding of the target culture and its conventions, and not learn to imitate nativity. This view is also supported by Breen (1985), who argues that learner authenticity includes practicing language learning combined with reflections on how the student best learns language.

Authenticity is stated to be a beneficial component in language learning (Breen, 1985; Richards & Rodgers, 1986) and the role of technology in this matter has changes profoundly during the last decades. Media used in language education has traditionally consisted of texts, audio, video, and images. Now, the technical format of these media has changed dramatically. From being available only through localized digital resources, they are now available to us any-time and any-place through networked digital means. In addition, technology has become a facilitator for authentic language learning experiences through social networking (Otto, 2017). This, in sum, can be relevant to Kramsch's (1993) question about how we are going to integrate the authentic cultural

perspective in the EFL classroom. In the context of international collaborations where students communicate with students from different parts of the world, the aspect of authenticity is probable to find in the situation itself. The written and oral communication produced by the students can be labelled as authentic use of the English language, since it serves a communication purpose.

2.5 Review of previous research on international collaboration in the EFL classroom

When reviewing literature for this thesis, I found it relevant to investigate the field of international student collaborations as perceived by teachers and students. The aim of conducting a literature review is often to use knowledge from the past and the present to find new knowledge and implications for the future (Torraco, 2016), and that is also the case with this review. The field of international collaboration is extent, and this review will only cover a fragment of it. Because of my focus on ICC and authenticity, I have chosen to mainly include studies who discuss these notions. The context of most studies included is authentic EFL teaching and learning through international collaborations. The included studies are conducted within different countries. I found that there is little research conducted on primary school teachers and students, but several in higher education. I still believe that these studies have some transferable value for primary school. There is also little previous research to be found on this topic within the Norwegian context, but I have found and included a Norwegian study that presents the student perspective. In the following, I will present this chosen literature.

For the literature review, I have used the databases Oria, ProQuest and Google scholar to search for relevant studies and papers. When I started searching for literature, I used search terms such as *Communicative competence*, *Intercultural communicative competence*, *Authentic language learning*, *Authentic communication*, *Telecollaboration* and *International collaboration*. Through reading research articles on these topics, I found references to other relevant studies that I read and included in my research. This method, often referred to as "snowballing" (Lynggaard, 2012), was important in my search for relevant research.

Regarding communicative competence, ICC and authentic learning, there is a certain overlap in the included research. Instead of presenting the studies within these categories, I have chosen to structure this review as follows. Firstly, I will present recent reviews of ICC in online exchanges. Secondly, I will present studies focused explicitly on the teacher perspective on international collaboration. Lastly, I will present research concerning the student perspective on international collaboration, including the study that is situated within the Norwegian context.

2.5.1 ICC reviews

Avgousti (2018) conducted a systematic review of ICC and online exchanges. This review explores research on the impact of Web 2.0 and applications (blogs, wikis, and e-mail) on the ICC of learners of a foreign language. It also explores how online intercultural exchanges with Web 2.0 affect the development of ICC in foreign language learners. Numerous studies are included in this review (51 peer-reviewed journal articles and six book chapters), which states telecollaboration to be a catalyst for promoting ICC. This review also states that more research on ICC and foreign language learners in multimodal environments needs to be conducted, also in primary, secondary and even kindergarten contexts. Regarding ICC, this review shows that online intercultural

exchange may be a way of combatting stereotypical attitudes, a finding that is also described in the following by Camilleri (2016). However, it also identifies challenges regarding (among other) negative attitudes, lack of challenging others' views, lack of critical reflection and absence of cultural awareness or competence after the exchange. Despite these challenges, the review concludes that instead of avoiding potential miscommunication or reinforcement of stereotyping, teachers should see contradictions as sources for learning and discussion of cultural differences. Difficult topics should not be avoided or precluded. Through different projects, students had realised that their collaboration partners not necessarily displayed national characteristics, and they learned that culture generalisations cannot be formulated. Rather, they became aware of the complexity of both the others and themselves. This review offers insight into students' increased interest in their own culture, along with an ability to also take in others' perceptions. The author suggests that students should be given the opportunity to express their multiple identities in the exchanges, and not just their linguistic. Awareness and knowledge of both own identities and the identities of their interlocutors offers a more realistic basis for intercultural communication and may therefore enhance development of ICC to a larger degree.

A critical review on fostering ICC was also conducted by Heggernes (2021). This review evaluates 36 empirical ELT studies with focus on the role of different types of texts and activities in intercultural learning. International collaboration is not part of this context, but I still find this review relevant because of the aspect of intercultural learning. The review points to dialogue and student activity as important factors for developing ICC, and the value of this finding can be transferred to my study, where student communication also is part of the context for ICC learning. Other findings regarding ICC include a need to promote awareness of difference and diversity through social interaction. This review concludes by stating that a great variety of research is necessary to identify intercultural learning processes and calls for more research on intercultural learning in primary and secondary school English.

2.5.2 International collaboration – the teacher perspective

Camilleri (2016) conducted a study reviewing benefits and challenges with participating in eTwinning projects. The aim was to investigate global education and intercultural awareness among students, and the study was based on interviews with four European teachers. The age groups that these teachers taught varied; the youngest were 4-5 years old, while the eldest were 11-16 years old. A finding in this study was that through cross-cultural interaction, students' communication skills were radically improved. Through real time live situations, such as video conferences, students were motivated to talk to their collaboration partners, and this experience enhanced their confidence as English speakers. Students also became more aware of their own identities by comparing differences and similarities with others. Skills for global citizenship and fighting discrimination were also enhanced. The study found that the direct interaction with students from other countries and cultures both dismantled stereotypes and enhanced students' empathy for others. These findings are interesting regarding my research project. Most of the teachers I have interviewed have started their collaborations from the eTwinning platform. The age group of the students in Camilleri's (2016) study also correspond to Norwegian primary school to a larger degree than most other studies I have located on the topic. The challenges mentioned in this study are related to

technological challenges, lack of teacher training and lack of support in their schools. The latter is recognizable from the findings in my study.

A study of teachers' perspectives on telecollaboration in secondary school foreign language education conducted by Pennock-Speck and Clavel-Arroitia (2018) also presents the teacher perspective in international collaboration research. This is a large European study that includes 179 secondary schools. It offers a context similar to my study, although the students in this study are more advanced. In Pennock-Speck and Clavel-Arroitia's (2018) study, teachers' beliefs and conceptions regarding intercultural awareness were investigated. Also, teachers' beliefs regarding communicative competence in the context of authentic communication opportunities were included in the scope. An interesting finding in this study was that teachers considered communication competence to be the most relevant issue in telecollaboration, more than intercultural awareness, although this was also considered an important issue for the teachers. Further, the teachers who participated in this study believed that telecollaboration guarantees opportunities to practice communicative competence in meaningful authentic communication situations that are the nearest one could experience by travelling to a country and interacting with members of a community of the target language.

A recent study by Eren (2021) explored intercultural development in pre-service teachers from the perspective of both older students and supervisors, focusing especially on the raising of intercultural awareness. Although this context is different from the context of primary school, findings regarding prejudice and stereotypes are interesting in regards of my own study. Eren (2021) found that telecollaboration had a significant impact on learner's critical intercultural development. Interaction with people who had different cultural perspectives dismantled prejudices and stereotypes, and students became aware of diversities by de-centring their beliefs and reconstructing their opinions. The participants discussed how prejudice inhibited successful communication and how this was problematic, and they critically evaluated sexual practices and gender inequality. The study concluded that pre-service teachers' intercultural competence can be improved through telecollaboration. And further, that encountering cultural diversities may change presuppositions and increase knowledge about other cultures.

2.5.3 International collaboration - the student perspective

Lee and Markey (2014) conducted a study of learners' perceptions of online intercultural exchange. This study was conducted in a Spanish/American setting, and the participating students were advanced speakers of English. The aim of the exchange that was foundation for this study was to exchange cultural perspectives, raise intercultural awareness and promote linguistic awareness. Findings from this study were that students were satisfied with this practice, and they acknowledged that they learned from it. The study found that "Students viewed the online exchange as a superb venue for intercultural communication with native speakers" (Lee & Markey, 2014, p. 281), and there was a perception that they would not have gained the same in-depth cultural understanding through regular classroom teaching and learning. Students said that they became more aware of their own beliefs, their own culture, and their own background. The focus on intercultural competence is relevant for my own study, although the participants in Lee and Markey's (2014) study were both older and more advanced. The researchers state that the overall positive outcomes of their study would perhaps be

more in-depth and nuanced view would be presented if the study had included less advanced learners.

Kohn and Hoffstaedter (2017) gathered insights regarding learner agency and non-native speaker identity in intercultural telecollaboration. The context of their research was pedagogical lingua franca conversations in English and German carried out by 14–16-year-old students from four different European countries. They found the same challenges as those described by Camilleri (2016) regarding technological infrastructure and need for intercultural teacher training, but they also stated that “From a real-life perspective, the crucial gain lies in transcending the foreign language classroom and contributing to the ultimate objective of school education: ‘non scholae, sed vitae discimus’ (transl. ‘We do not learn for school, but for life’)” (Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017, p. 364), and thereby stating that it is worth investing in intercultural collaborations in foreign language education. Their findings included students’ perception on authenticity or the “realness” of the communication situation as helpful, and that they were satisfied with how this imposed on both their own and their interlocutors’ communicative performance. The study concluded that there were “emerging qualities of non-native speaker identity including a growing sense of speaker satisfaction and trust in one’s own creativity and strategic resourcefulness” (Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017, p. 351). During students’ conversations, it was not correctness that defined successful communication, but rather managing to maintain the conversation by empathically helping each other through. Further, the study concluded that “Fostering learner agency related to communicative participation is an obvious quality of any foreign language teaching and learning approach aiming to support communicative and intercultural competence development” (Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017, p. 357). The researchers found it worth noting that several students perceived telecollaborative lingua franca conversations as a great opportunity to overcome the communicative limitations of the face-to-face classroom. Instead of simulating foreign language conversations with classmates who shared the same mother tongue, they got to experience a real need for using their foreign language.

A recent study was conducted by Munezane (2021) who aimed to explore the structural relationships among different factors that affect ICC. In this study, a new perspective, *Willingness to communicate* (WTC), was introduced into the ICC model. This perspective is related to connecting the field of second-language acquisition to the field of intercultural communication. The study concluded that students’ WTC predicted motivation to engage in intercultural communication, and further, that this motivation to engage predicted motivation to introduce one’s own culture. A prediction of students’ WTC was concluded to be a sum of motivation to engage, confidence in own ability to interact interculturally and the ability to resolute conflicts constructively. Thereby, indirectly, the study concluded that students’ WTC indirectly predicted students’ ICC.

Another recent study was conducted by Vinagre (2022), who published an article describing a study of a project between Spanish and American undergraduate students. The aim of the project was to encourage cultural awareness and engagement with difference by comparing cultural topics via virtual exchange. This study found that the students involved were able to engage with difference at a deep level, and regarding my research project, findings relating to language representation and identity are particularly interesting. The students discovered how the foreign language (the Spanish language in New York, the English language in Madrid) was used in their own city, for example by analysing graffiti. They found that the foreign language was used to express

identity, and this insight led to conversations regarding social status and power balance between languages. One of the participating students expressed that “within the context of this project, students can rethink both their own culture and their linguistic ideology, question stereotypes in order to subsequently subvert them, develop curiosity, open-mindedness and a desire to learn about other cultures, and to be empathetic and caring towards the other” (Vinagre, 2022, p. 10). Based on reflections like this student’s, the study states that the participating students demonstrated a high level of self-reflexivity.

The last study included in this literature review is situated within the Norwegian context. It was conducted by Normann (2021), who explored how a small group of Norwegian upper secondary students experienced participating in short Erasmus+ project mobilities. This study found that the participants’ socio-linguistic competence had been developed in the sense that they adapted their language use to the demands of different contexts and situations. This was exemplified by situations where students of politeness chose not to use Norwegian when people from other countries were part of their conversations. The study also found several examples of students increasing their language awareness, or their ability to think and talk about language use. Further, students in this study experienced how the context for language use was important for their perception of communicative success. A clear context made it possible for them to lean on what was said immediately before/right after, to make use of their knowledge of transparent words and using the advantage of discussing familiar topics where they already knew the terms. Students often used these strategies instead of leaning on their mother tongue also when communicating directly with other Norwegian students in their group, due to the wish to be polite toward students with other first languages. Lastly, this study is a call for still working against “Native-speakerism” (Normann, 2021, p. 762), where native language use is perceived as ideal and superior to foreign language use. These students seemed to find encouragement and self-esteem from the fact that they did not need to focus on using a native-like accent. With the English language acting as *lingua franca*, they lowered the expectations that they had toward themselves trying to live up to a native standard. Normann (2021) suggests that more students should be allowed to take part in transnational mobilities, whether face-to-face or organized via online platforms.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, I will explain how this study was conducted. I will clarify the philosophical assumptions that underlie my choice of methodology and describe the process of gathering and analysing my data. Further, I will discuss the quality of my study and display ethical issues that rose through the process of my research.

3.1 Philosophical foundations

In scientific studies regarding people's social reality, the purpose is to gain insight into these perceived realities that in one way or another concerns interaction between people (Johannessen et al., 2016). This thesis is built on the ontological view that there are different ways that the nature of world's realities can be perceived. People seek to understand their surroundings, and by taking part in and observing the world around us, we develop subjective meanings of our experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Due to this ontological view, a social constructivist interpretative framework is chosen to investigate the phenomenon "international collaboration". A social constructivist view of reality can be described as seeing realities as multiple, depending on how they are perceived by different people. People construct their own reality through their own lived experiences and through their interactions with each other. When people learn and make assumptions about the world and its realities, there is no objective truth, no "one single answer" to the question about their perceptions being true or not (Creswell, 2013, p 36).

Viewing social reality as co-constructed between people makes it is logical to assume that by coming close to people, one can learn about their perceptions and beliefs. Epistemology is theory of how we gather knowledge about the world (Crotty, 1998), and to gather knowledge about the realities of the participants in this study, my belief is that I need to come close to the participants to get insight into their experiences and perceptions. In the meeting between researcher and participants in a study, both the researcher and the participants contribute in the process of defining and learning about reality (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) describes the importance, within this framework, of honouring the individual values of both the participants and the researcher as important contributions to the research. In this study, where in-depth interviews are conducted, this dynamic relationship between researcher and participant is essential to take into consideration.

3.2 Qualitative research

When choosing a social constructivist framework for a research study, the researcher has, consciously or unconsciously, laid directions for choices regarding what type of research that is about to be conducted. A constructivist view of reality opens up for the possibility that there are several subjective truths. An opposition to this view is having an objectivist or positivist view of the world: That there exists objective truth (Crotty, 1998). Although there are multiple varieties of these world views, this simplified distinction may be helpful when trying to make sense of research.

The world of research is separated into different methodological disciplines: Qualitative research, which typically strives to understand the humans from "inside" their lived lives, through their actions and their perceptions (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2012), and quantitative research, which is concerned with finding information and generate

knowledge through gathering larger amounts of data and statistically analysing them (Thrane, 2018). Mixed methods, where qualitative and quantitative methodology is combined, is sometimes presented as a third discipline (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It is possible to do quantitative research based on a constructivist view of reality, but the researcher must be aware that quantitative research with this background will look somewhat different from quantitative research based on an objectivist view of reality (Crotty, 1998). This study is a purely qualitative research study. Brinkmann and Tanggaard (2012) describe qualitative research as multifaceted and although they do not offer a precise definition, they emphasize how, in qualitative research, we are usually interested in *how* something appears. This, they state, is in opposition to quantitative research, which is interested in *how much* there is of something, or the quantity of numbers. Creswell (2013) offers a thorough description of what he considers to be the most important objectives of qualitative research. In my study, I have aimed to follow the steps of the research process as shortly described in the following.

Creswell (2013) describes how qualitative data should be collected in a natural setting where the researcher gathers up-close information by observing and talking to the participants – in opposition to, for example, doing the research in a laboratory. He also emphasises how the researcher is key instrument in this process of collecting the data. In the process of analysing research data, Creswell (2013) describes how patterns and themes are created from the “bottom up” to establish a comprehensive set of themes. In addition, the researcher also uses deductive thinking in building themes that are checked against the data. The data is analysed both inductively and deductively to establish patterns and themes. In this process, researcher reflexivity is crucial for validating the study. In this study, I have chosen to conduct a thematic data analysis which is based on these principles presented by Creswell (2013). The process of analysis is elaborated in section 3.10.

Further, a complex description and interpretation of the study’s focus needs to be established (Creswell, 2013). The perceptions of the participants, and not the perceptions that the researcher brings into the study, is meant to be the focus. The multiple perspectives of the participants should be reflected when finding categories and themes in the data material. The researcher must be open to change and adjust the research design as the study emerges. Lastly, Creswell (2013) addresses the need for the researcher to position oneself by conveying one’s background and how it may inform the interpretation of the data gathered. The aim of this qualitative study is to find out how different primary school teachers perceive the experiences they have had in their work with international student collaboration. I have focused on the participants’ perceptions and tried to be aware of researcher bias and handled this by trying to be as reflexive and as transparent as possible in the description of the research process. Transparency is also what I aim to establish when positioning myself as researcher in this study (see section 3.4).

3.3 A phenomenological study

The process of research is flowing from philosophical assumptions to an interpretative lens that helps the researcher choose suitable methodology and methods to conduct the research (Creswell, 2013). In this qualitative research study, I considered two different interpretative frameworks: a case study framework or a phenomenological framework. A phenomenological framework was chosen as an interpretative lens from two different reasons.

As I started talking to my informants, I wondered if building a case study, where I could follow teachers through a period of international collaboration project in the EFL classroom, could have led to deeper understandings of each teacher's perceptions and thereby offered a more faceted picture of their experiences with international collaboration. However, two factors had me prioritise differently. Firstly, the informants were busy teachers in a year of lockdown. Having them spend more time than necessary on this research project was a lot to ask. Also, most of the participating teachers had had their last projects interrupted by Covid-19, and there was a lot of uncertainty about whether carrying out projects this school year would be possible. In addition to this, I eventually had to realise that meeting face-to-face was not an option due to restrictions. This made it difficult planning to follow a teacher throughout an international classroom collaboration project. One single interview was easier to accomplish, and I was confident that I would gain a lot of insight on their experiences with international collaboration as a phenomenon during a thoroughly planned in-depth interview. Secondly, I experienced in my search for informants, that primary school teachers who have engaged their students in EFL international collaboration can be hard to come across. I was concerned that by going in-depth focusing more on the informants than on the phenomenon of international collaboration (as I would have done in a case study), I would have disclosed information that could reveal information about their identities. Based on these concerns, I chose a phenomenological approach over a case study approach.

In line with principles of phenomenological research, this study's data was collected from teachers who had experienced the phenomenon international student collaboration in their EFL classrooms. This is due to Creswell's (2013) description of a phenomenological study as a study which "describes the common meaning for several individuals of their *lived experiences* of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). The aim for the researcher is to develop a composite description of the essence of the experience for all the individuals who have taken part in the study. In other words, the researcher is interested in *what* they experienced, in addition to *how* they experienced it (Creswell, 2013). Kvarv (2014) also describes phenomenology as knowledge of what *appears*, or what *shows*, through the study of a person's experiences. He emphasizes the importance of seeing the phenomenon through the eyes of the informant, with as little prejudice and as little reservation as possible (Kvarv, 2014).

Creswell (2013) presents the phenomenological research procedures as a stepwise procedure. If the aim is to understand several individuals' experience to develop a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, this approach may be suited. First, the phenomenon needs to be identified. In this study, the phenomenon is identified as international EFL collaboration. Identifying philosophical assumptions is the next step, and what is particularly interesting in this step is the question about whether the researcher chooses to "bracket out" or not. Bracketing means that the researcher is keeping own experiences and perceptions out of the study, to be able to fully focus on the perceptions of the participants. How the researcher chooses to handle this issue depends on philosophical assumptions, or how phenomenology is perceived by the researcher (Creswell, 2013; Van Manen, 2016).

Broadly, phenomenology can be separated into two main paths: Hermeneutic phenomenology and transcendental phenomenology (Creswell, 2013). The main distinction between these two directions is how they view the role of the researcher. While transcendental phenomenology is concerned with withdrawing researcher experience from the study through "bracketing" (Creswell, 2013), hermeneutic

phenomenology is described as focused both on the experience of the participants and on the role of the interpreting researcher (Van Manen, 2016). The researcher is situated within the project as an engaged and interested participant who reflects on how different themes are perceived from own point of view. The view of the researcher is an active element in the researcher's interpretation of the participants' lived experiences (Van Manen, 2016). My approach in this study is a hermeneutical phenomenological approach. I have chosen to investigate a phenomenon that is of great interest to me, and I find the validity of my study safer maintained through positioning myself clearly and being aware that my own role and background in this study influences my interpretations. The participants' experiences will, however, always be the main centre of attention throughout this study.

My approach to gathering data in this study has been conducting individual, qualitative research interviews with teachers. In phenomenological research, the main objective of a qualitative interview is to understand themes of the lived everyday worlds, the life worlds, of the participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In this study, this means trying to gain insight into the participants' perceptions and experiences with international student collaboration in their primary EFL classrooms. In the meeting between the interviewer and the interviewees, the interviewer seeks to register and interpret the meaning of what the interviewees say and do. This means registering what they say directly and also what is said "between the lines". To ensure that the interpretations of what the interviewees say and do are as close to the interviewees' subjective meanings as possible, coming close to them is necessary to present a well-informed presentation of the interviewees' perceptions in the final written report (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The questions that were asked during the individual qualitative interviews in this study were focused both on the experiences of the teachers and on the context of the experiences, aiming to provide an understanding of their common experiences of international collaboration. A challenge with phenomenological research is that participants must be carefully chosen. If they are not familiar with the phenomenon being studied, their contributions will not be useful for the researcher, and the phenomenon will be left undescribed (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, spending time finding and selecting participants with relevant experience was a very important step in the process of planning this study (see section 3.5).

3.4 Positioning myself as a researcher

In qualitative research, researcher integrity is important because researchers themselves are the main instruments for obtaining knowledge (Creswell, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This can be seen as a call for researcher transparency, and positioning oneself is part of establishing this transparency.

As a primary school EFL teacher, I have long been interested in and fascinated by the possibility for collaborating internationally with other teachers and students. I have also, as mentioned initially, been part of a two projects some years back. The experience with engaging my students was that it was both rewarding and challenging. I have been teaching primary school English continuously since I participated in these projects, but I have neither started nor planned a new collaboration during these last years. I have not heard of any other primary school teachers in my school, or in neighbouring schools, who have engaged their students in international collaboration projects either. Although of course, there may have been without my knowing.

When choosing a topic for my MA thesis, the decision to investigate international collaboration felt obvious. I wondered; what have other primary school teachers experienced? Do they consider it worth the time spent? And if they do, what makes it worth bothering with finding collaboration partners and putting effort into this type of work? I have been conscious about my own background and motivation for choice of topic throughout the research process, but of course, there is a danger of researcher bias in all phases of a research process such as this. I found balancing my own experiences and perceptions especially challenging in meeting with my informants, who talked about experiences so similar to mine. Kvernbekk (2005) addresses this concern with being an "insider" in the research field. On the one hand, insiders have a special insight in the field and the topic being investigated, but on the other hand, they lack the objectivity of the "outsider". It is important to be aware that as insider, there is a larger chance for the researcher to agree with the informants when they present their views and perspectives. This agreement comes from the researchers recognizing the informants' experiences, perceptions, and feelings in themselves (Kvernbekk, 2005). Asking questions and responding to answers as professionally neutral as possible during the interviews costed me some effort, since I sensed how I recognised myself in the informants' experiences and perceptions. I decided I needed to trust that my own professionalism was maintained through this reflection process, and leaned on Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) advice of entering the research situation with an open mind and a deliberate naivety. This means that I was aware of my own theoretical knowledge, but that I tried keeping it in the background and listen genuinely to what the participants said. I focused on my own body language, facial expression, and comments during the interviews. I had a note reminding myself to be "interested and encouraging" and that "the informant talks – I listen".

In the interpretation of findings this was equally challenging, and I had to ask myself multiple times: What did I expect to find? What did I wish to find? To be conscious about these reflections made it easier being professional. Still, my job as a researcher is making an interpretation of what I find in my study, and since no researcher interacting in qualitative research enters the research situation as a blank state (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2012), these interpretations would inevitably be shaped by my background. Brinkmann and Tanggaard (2012) state that the best interviews are made by theoretically informed researchers who have extended knowledge about the topic investigated. My background as a teacher, combined with extended theoretical research on this topic, places me (at least partly) in this category. I need to trust that I am able to control my researcher bias and the most important factor in validating my research, in this matter, is being transparent about my own experiences and perceptions.

3.5 Designing interview guide and selecting informants

The interviews in this study were semi-structured. A semi-structured interview runs as an interaction between the researcher's questions and the informant's answers, and the interaction between the researcher and the informant is decisive for what knowledge the researcher can achieve from the interview (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2012). What researchers need to consider during semi-structured interviewing is *what* they want to gain knowledge about, and *how* they want to accomplish this (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2012). The interview guide (Appendix A) used in this study was thorough and thought to cover the main areas for gaining knowledge regarding my research question. I also wished to preserve the opportunity to follow up on the informants' chosen topics, and

questions that were added to the ones written down in the interview guide depended on the informant's answers and what raised my curiosity during the interview. When it felt natural, follow-up questions were used. I experienced that all the questions in my interview guide were asked during every interview, but that line of order varied, depending on directions taken in the conversation. I also experienced how my dynamics with the different informants varied, how some conversations floated effortlessly, while others demanded more effort from me in regards of adjusting and reformulating or adding questions.

Although I was curious to find out how the informants viewed certain notions, such as ICC, I did not use this terminology when formulating questions. I could not base my interviews on terminology that was possibly unfamiliar for the teachers that I interviewed. Rather, I chose to ask questions that were open, and let the informants interpret my questions from their own experiences and perceptions, and afterwards see how their statements aligned with theory and research. Examples of questions formed were *Can you tell about your experience with international classroom collaboration? What did you experience as challenging?* and *What, in your perception, can students learn from this type of work?* In this process, I needed to consciously balance my role as "insider" as described by Kvernbekk (2005). I decided to start with background questions about their teaching experience and workplace, before moving on to international classroom collaboration, which was the main topic. In addition to open questions about their experiences with international classroom collaborations, I included questions regarding their view of student learning to find indications for what they considered be students' outcome of these collaborations. I also included a question about international collaboration in primary school to find out how the teachers had experienced collaborating internationally with young students.

To refine interview questions and see if the planned procedures of the interview work as planned, Creswell (2013) recommends pilot testing before conducting the research interviews. In qualitative research, this may help refining data collection plans and developing relevant lines of questions. Pilot cases may be selected on basis of convenience, access, and geographical proximity (Creswell, 2013, p. 165). I piloted my interview guide with a neighbouring teacher who had experience with international collaboration in her language classroom, to ensure that my questions were relevant. This teacher works in secondary school and could therefore not be part of my informant group due to my selection criteria. Since most of my questions dealt with the concept of international collaboration, and only a few of them were regarding primary school in specific, her experience was very useful in this process. Through this piloting interview, I learned that the background questions worked well as warm-up. The questions were not especially challenging, the topics were safe and neutral, and I got the chance to get familiar with the informant and build a comfortable setting through these questions. When moving on to the main part of the interview, I learned that the term "international collaboration" needed to be more precisely defined than it initially was, because we soon discovered that we had different perceptions of what phenomenon we were talking about. At her secondary school, they had a school subject named "International Collaboration", and this subject was what she thought we were going to talk about during the interview. This misunderstanding led to a useful discussion about the term, and I decided to thoroughly define what international collaboration meant in this study, before asking questions about it to my informants. Another change I made after this pilot interview was the structure of the main questions. I noticed that changing the order

of questions improved the flow of the conversation. At the same time, I was aware that this would probably vary from interview to interview. Still, having a thought-through structure felt safe in regards of remembering all questions and maintaining conversational flow. The last thing I changed after this round of piloting, was my question about learning. When I asked the teacher how she perceived student learning through this work, she said she felt it hard to answer, because she considered learning through international collaborations to be so multifaceted and complex. We discussed this challenge, and I decided to ask the teachers in my study what they considered to be the most important possible learning outcome from international collaboration, but also to have written down more specific questions that I could use if the teachers found the question hard to grasp. These additional questions were formed based on the English subject's learning aims in LK20 (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

Because of the Covid-19 situation and the fact that my informants were situated within different parts of Norway, the interviews were conducted digitally (see section 3.6). The pilot interview, though, was conducted face-to-face. To be sure that technology worked well, I had a fellow student helping me try out the interview situation on the platform that I was going to use during the interviews. I needed to be sure that screen, sound, and sound recording worked as planned, and we had a quick session to make sure everything worked the way I had planned. We also went through a few of the questions in my interview guide to get a notion of what digital interviewing could be like. When I got to conducting the interviews with my informants, I was grateful for having had this try-out in advance.

While planning and piloting the interview guide, I started searching for informants. To find answers to my research question, I needed to do a purposive sampling of informants who met the necessary criteria (Johnson & Christensen, 2008), which meant recruiting primary EFL teachers who had engaged themselves and their students in EFL classroom collaborations. I did a quick round of asking in my local municipal but found that the few teachers who did have experience within this field, worked in secondary school. This check was not done systematically, so there might have been some primary school teachers with the experience needed without me locating them. In this process I learned that primary school teachers, working with international classroom collaboration, were not the easiest to find. I realised I had to look for informants through alternative channels. First, I used my own network and contacted two primary school teachers who I had met at an international collaboration-seminar some years ago. They both agreed to be interviewed in my study. Then, I went to social media (e.g., Facebook) and did a search within an open group where Norwegian English teachers¹⁵ shared teaching tips and advice. I searched for comments on "international collaboration" to see if I came across discussions about this topic, and I found several interesting discussions between teachers who had collaborated internationally. When reading these conversations, I noticed that many teachers mentioned "eTwinning" and "epals¹⁶", and then I included these as search words. I read teachers' comments about how they had worked internationally with their students, and I decided to contact some of the teachers that I assumed worked in primary school directly to ask them if they wanted to attend my project. I wrote a message with information about my project and how I had found

¹⁵The Norwegian EFL teacher group "Engelsklærere". <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1434343746839024>

¹⁶epals platform for finding collaboration partners worldwide. <https://www.epals.com/#/connections>

information about the teacher's work with international collaboration. Then I contacted six primary school teachers via Facebook Messenger¹⁷, asking them if they wanted to join my study. One of the teachers I first contacted had not yet had a chance to try out international collaboration, she was only wishing to try it out. One of the other teachers I contacted did not teach English. Therefore, these two teachers were outside my scope. The other four teachers were within the scope and agreed to be interviewed. My aim was to find six-eight informants, and I decided to conduct interviews with these six teachers and rather include more informants if I found it necessary due to data saturation at a later stage. This did, however, not become an issue.

After establishing contact through Messenger, I got the informants' emails, and we used email to correspond about how the interviews would be conducted and what participating in this study would mean for the teachers. I sent them information and consent forms (Appendix B) that were signed by the participants and returned to me. I decided to spend three weeks in November (2021) collecting data from my informants and set up two interviews per week. My plan was to transcribe continually between the interviews to get familiar with my data material in the process. This plan was carried out, except two weeks were added to the time schedule because some of the interviews needed to be rescheduled. This was because of teachers' work appointments being scheduled after the interview date was set, and teachers needing to substitute for colleagues in the scheduled interview time. These interviews were conducted during a period with strict Covid-19 restrictions and the teachers reported that they experienced a heavy workload during these weeks.

The participants that were recruited to this study are six primary school teachers who teach English and have experience with international collaboration the way it is defined in this study. They have all arranged international student collaborations that were situated in their classrooms and carried out by communicating digitally or by post, with their EFL students. These teachers all work at different schools and come from different parts of Norway, and they have all worked as a teacher for some years; their experience in the classroom spans from eight to 33 years. The projects they have participated in, and which they mentioned during their interviews, have been with teachers and students that they have found on the eTwinning or epal platform or within their own network. The collaboration activities and projects that these teachers have taken part in include students exchanging letters with pen pals from another country, web conferences where students meet up and talk to each other, and sending and receiving post cards or Christmas cards with their collaboration partners. Some teachers also describe how they have made and exchanged videos, some have shared an advent calendar that they opened together on Zoom¹⁸, and some have exchanged Kahoots¹⁹ with questions about the different countries involved in the collaboration. In addition, one of the teachers has arranged for an adult expert on a topic to meet up digitally and talk to the class and answer questions from the students. Another teacher has also engaged students in physical exchange in addition to classroom collaboration.

¹⁷ Facebook Messenger <https://www.messenger.com/>

¹⁸Zoom Digital platform for video conferencing. <https://zoom.us/>

¹⁹Kahoot! global learning platform. <https://kahoot.com/>

3.6 Interviewing

The global spread of the internet has had significant impact on our conditions for social interaction and changed the way in which individuals communicate with each other. The internet has also become a medium in social research, opening up for new ways for the researcher to examine human interactions and experiences (James & Busher, 2012). All interviews in this study were carried out by meeting up digitally with the participants, and therefore, considerations directed especially toward internet interviewing will be the main focus in this sub-chapter.

There were two reasons why these interviews were conducted digitally. Firstly, and mainly, I realised that Covid-19 restrictions could make it difficult for teachers to meet up physically. Secondly, since finding suitable informants nearby was also a bit challenging, I ended up with participants spread all over the country. This recruitment had not been possible without the opportunity to meet online, and this extended recruitment reach that I experienced has also been noticed as an advantage in other research studies where digital platforms have been used (Gray et al., 2020; Oliffe et al., 2021).

Since I was unfamiliar with the informants' digital competence prior to scheduling our meetings, meeting platforms was one of the first things I discussed with each participant after them having agreed to the interview. I had the opportunity to log on the Zoom platform with a licence from my local university which had a data management plan and agreement with the company. This way, the connection was protected through encryption, and all data were stored on the university's password protected network. And since all six teachers, to some degree, were familiar with Zoom, we ended up using Zoom as platform for each of the six interviews. One teacher commented that meeting digitally was not a problem: *We learned a lot during lockdown!*

The interviews were conducted synchronous, in real-time, which means that they were conducted in the same manner as a face-to-face interview would have been – except they were on screen. As with face-to-face interview settings, establishing research relationships in the online interview situation is important to ensure a safe and non-discriminating environment where the participants feel free to share their thoughts and opinions. A potential challenge when communicating online is that the parties become hidden from each other by the "veil" of the internet (James & Busher, 2012). I tried to get past this by using the camera function in Zoom. Before meeting up online, while informing about the use of sound recorder, I was clear about the use of camera. My camera would always be on, but the participants were free to choose themselves whether they wanted their camera on or off. No screen recording was done. All participants except for one chose to have their camera on. When interviewing the one participant who chose to leave the camera off, I noticed that since losing the impressions from her body language and facial expressions, I had to focus more intensively on the tone of her voice. I also noticed that I needed to be extra aware of my own body language and facial expressions, knowing that the interviewee could see me, despite me not seeing the interviewee. I believe giving these choices about camera and not recording the screen brought trust to the interview situation. I considered this trust to be more important than me seeing the faces of all the teachers that I interviewed.

When meeting online, the flow in conversation may sometimes be interrupted because the turn taking in the conversation is disturbed, and this may lead to brief responses or

disturbance of the participants (James & Busher, 2012). Although we had little problem with sound or other delay during these interviews, I experienced how turn taking was more difficult in this situation than it is when having a conversation face-to-face. There were some situations where both the interviewee and I spoke at the same time, followed by "I am sorry, please continue" and "Sorry, could you repeat that please?" Oliffe et al. (2021) describe how crosstalk because of lag times can be challenging, and how flow and spontaneity can become stilted because of this. They describe how it is important to pause and sync with the lag and the participants' speech pattern, and this was also my experience in the online interview situation. Pacing was challenging, and sometimes my lack of adjustment interrupted the flow of the conversation.

Another choice that was made to establish a safe environment, was to conduct the interviews using Norwegian as conversation language. I assumed that all the participants had adequate competence in English, but I did not know to which degree they were comfortable speaking English in a situation where they were going to talk about their own experiences and perceptions. I feared that using a language other than their first language would be disturbing and interfere with the content. James and Busher (2012) also describe how, in online research interviews, non-native speakers of English can find it threatening "expressing themselves on sensitive personal topics and feelings in a language that is not their own" (p. 14). This limits their power to express themselves and may even lead to participants withdrawing from the research project (James & Busher, 2012).

A benefit with this interview setting mentioned by the participants, was that they could have their interview where they wanted. Some chose to have the interview conducted between lessons in their work time, and some wanted to talk to me from their living room armchair or from their home office. The interview only took the time spent talking, they did not need to move to a new location to meet me, and I believe this flexibility was appreciated. A study by Archibald et al. (2019) also highlights this user perspective and describe finding that participants were generally positive to Zoom-interviews, among other because of time and cost effectiveness.

One challenge I came across was that when not meeting face to face, all communication, at all times, needed to be online. This included the reading, signing, and receiving of consent forms. This led to more work for my informants than would have been the case if we had met in person. On some occasions, it took some time before I got the forms in return, and I had to balance giving the participants time versus sending reminders. There is always a risk of losing informants underway, even in short-term studies like mine. This can be especially challenging in online research projects where participants and researcher are more distant from each other than when meeting face to face (James & Busher, 2012), and it was sometimes challenging to know whether the participants just needed time, or were about to withdraw from the study, when the correspondence slowed down.

3.7 Transcription and translation

After the interviews were conducted, the sound files were stored in my personal space in the NTNU browser for safe storage, and the process of transcribing started. The aim of this process was to transform the oral interviews into written text. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) emphasize the importance of being aware that transcription is not a straightforward clerical task, but an action that needs to be thoroughly handled. There

are differences between oral speech and written text, and this leads to practical and principal issues when translating the oral narrative into a written narrative.

When transcribing, my aim was to write the transcription in a manner that made it possible for me to visualise the conversations that I had had with each of the six teachers in my study. I chose to transcribe verbatim and word-for word, including when words were repeated. All transcripts were later used in the analysis part of this study, and the analytic tool used was Thematic Analysis, which will be described in section 3.10. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that "Thematic analysis, even constructionist thematic analysis, does not require the same level of detail in the transcript as conversation, discourse, or even narrative analysis" (p. 88). They also state, like Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), that there is no one way of doing transcription, and no set of guidelines to follow, but that the process of transcribing requires thoroughness and an account of both verbal and non-verbal utterances. The transcript must retain the information needed and be as true to the original nature of the conversation as possible. During transcribing, I consequently left out names of persons, places, schools, and names of countries they had collaborated with if they were too specific or rare to maintain the participants' confidentiality. This, along with secure storage of transcripts and sound recordings are ethical issues that need to be maintained in the transcription process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

After the transcriptions were done, they were sent to each of the teachers for member checking (see section 3.8). When sending the transcriptions to the interviewees, I included a note where I made them aware of how transcriptions of oral conversations can appear incoherent and confused and be a bit uncomfortable to read (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), and that the quotes would not be used the way they appeared in the transcripts in my written report.

Since the interviews were conducted in Norwegian, the transcriptions also were Norwegian. Later, when presenting the findings of the study, I wished to cite the teachers directly in my written text. I then had to translate the quotes that I wished to include, and translating utterances from Norwegian to English is not a straightforward clerical task either. Choosing words and sentence structure is, in fact, interpretative work, since translating word for word sometimes disturbs and changes the meanings of the utterances and cannot always be done. This challenge was solved by interpreting the *meaning* of the quotes by finding and applying the English phrase that best expressed the meaning of the utterance .

3.8 The quality of the study

When conducting a qualitative research study, researchers often ask themselves: Did I get it right, or have I published a "wrong" account? (Creswell, 2013, p. 243). Miles et al. (2014) state that researchers should ask themselves: "Is my study being conducted carefully, thoughtfully, and correctly in terms of some reasonable set of standards or established practices?" (p. 64). Depending on both the researcher's focus and attention, the participants' contributions and the reader's interpretations, there will always be different possible outcomes of a qualitative study. To ensure quality, transparency throughout the entire research process is key for validity and reliability (Creswell, 2013). When writing this report, being transparent about the entire research process has been an aim in order to make it possible for the reader to evaluate the quality of this study.

Creswell (2013) describes validation in qualitative research as an attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings as they are described by the researcher and the participants. He also argues that detailed thick descriptions and the closeness of the researcher to the participants add to the value or accuracy of the study. Johnson and Christensen (2008) suggest the term *trustworthiness* as an equivalent to validity, and state that validity in research demands it do be “plausible, credible, trustworthy, and therefore defensible” (p. 275). In this study, validation strategies have, in addition to aimed transparency, been thorough communication with the participants. I have tried to build trust by clarifying what the aim of the study is, how the results will be used, and giving them the opportunity to ask questions about things they were unsure about throughout the study. I have also spent time getting familiar with their background and their work situation to create an image of the context of their experience with the phenomenon being investigated.

After the interviews, I did two rounds of member checking. Member checking is an opportunity for participants to check particular aspects of the researcher’s interpretation of the data that they contributed with in the study (Carlson, 2010). First, the teachers in this study were offered an opportunity to read through their transcribed interview. They were asked to give me a note if they found that I had misinterpreted some of their utterances or felt that something should be left out of the study, or if something was unclear. This was done to secure the reliability of the transcriptions. Later, I took my interpretations of findings back to the participants to let them judge the accuracy and reliability of these interpretations (Appendix E). Allowing the participants to express their view of the credibility of both the findings and the researcher’s interpretations of them is a critical technique for establishing research credibility (Creswell, 2013). Carlson (2010) comments that interpreted pieces of data, like themes or patterns, are more suited for member checking than raw transcripts. This was also my experience in this process. Based on feedback from the participants, reading transcripts was a bit unnecessary. Some participants sent me a “thumbs up” after reading through, while others said “thanks, but I trust that this is ok”. No one had comments to the transcriptions. When sharing my findings from the study, however, I noticed that I got more response from the participants. They did not comment on needs for changes, but they sent messages saying, “this is interesting” and “I am looking forward to reading the finished report”.

It is also important to clarify researcher bias by stating the researcher’s position and possible biases and assumptions that may impact the study. Creswell (2013) states that “In this clarification, the researcher comments on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study” (p. 251). This is also addressed by Johnson and Christensen (2008), who explain how researcher bias often results from selective observations or allowing personal views and perspectives affect the research process. To avoid or minimize researcher bias, reflexivity throughout the research process is necessary. This means that the researcher “actively engages in critical self-reflection about his or her potential biases and predispositions” (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 275). This makes researchers more aware of themselves and their own perceptions, which again makes it easier to monitor and control biases throughout the research process (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). In this thesis, I have tried to fulfil this clarification by thoroughly positioning myself as teacher and researcher (section 3.4). Also, I have tried to describe every step in the process as clear and transparent as possible, leaving it to the reader to evaluate the validity of this research.

In qualitative research, the notion of reliability is challenging. While validity refers to the accuracy of in research process and interpretations, reliability refers to consistency and stability in the findings. If you conduct the same test several times, and each time get the same result, the procedure and result is reliable (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Each step in this qualitative study is highly interpretative and both could have been done and would have been done differently if this same study was conducted again. Accuracy and thoroughness in each step of the investigation and transparency in all steps may be the main factors for maintaining the study's reliability. In this study, the quality of the tape recordings, the accuracy of the transcriptions which were controlled by member checking, the thoroughness in the analysis and descriptions and the transparency through the whole process are the most important factors for reliability.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations have been present throughout the whole process of this study, both prior to interviewing, during the interviews and when writing and publishing the final report. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe how the researcher must handle the ethical fields of informed consent, confidentiality, consequences and the role of the researcher with care. And most importantly, they state that the researcher must be open to ethical dilemmas or conflicts that might arise throughout the research process and handle them when or if they occur in order to be an ethically responsible qualitative interview researcher.

When applying to have this project approved by my supervisor and the Department of Teacher Education at NTNU, I had to consider the worthiness of the project. I was planning to interview teachers, and when including people in my study, I had to consider what this part-taking would mean to those who were kind enough to share their experiences and perceptions with me, and whether the project was worth the potential disadvantages they could experience in this part-taking. My judgement of the project was that it may contribute with interesting, and possible new, information about international collaboration in the primary EFL classroom. And if I maintained the participants' anonymity in a responsible way, their disadvantages by taking part in the study would be minimal. They offered time communicating with me before the interviews, they gave me an hour of their time and their insight in the interview situation, and I was grateful for this. It was hard knowing what I could do in return, but feedback from my participants had me trust they found it worth the while contributing. Some participants said they were looking forward to seeing what I found out in my study, since this was a field of interest for them too. Also, one of the participants expressed that it was a luxury being allowed to talk about this topic to someone who was interested in listening to their experiences and perceptions on the topic. According to Miles et al. (2014), this balance between the participants' investment and gain must be equitable. In sum, there is a possibility that the participants invested more than what they could gain, but that it is at an acceptable level. And I trust that the participants understood how I appreciated their contributions.

When recruiting informants, offering enough information about the project to allow them to make an informed consent was the highest priority. This meant informing about the overall purpose of the study, the preliminary research design, and potential risks and benefits the participants could experience in the research project. In addition, informed consent involved obtaining that participation was voluntary, and that they had the right

to withdraw from the project at any time they would wish to (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). All these issues were clarified in the consent form that the participants signed and returned to me prior to the interviews (Appendix B). I tried to follow the advice of being an “open book” about my project (Miles et al., 2014) to leave no doubt to my participants about what study they were part of and how it would be conducted. The participants were also given information about expected use of time and what kind of data I would collect from them. They were also given information about sound recording and how the interviews would be conducted, and date for deletion of the recordings. Prior to participants’ consent forms were signed, the master project was approved by the department of teacher education at NTNU (Appendix C). Then the NSD (Norwegian centre for research data) (Appendix D) was applied on order to be allowed to conduct the planned interviews.

Keeping information about the participants has been a major concern throughout the study, since participation is confidential and information that can identify participants not must be disclosed (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Confidentiality was an obvious concern even before recruiting informants, and when I talked to the teachers, they all were clear about anonymity being important to them. Miles et al. (2014) raise the question: “What is good anonymity if people and their colleagues can easily recognize themselves in my report?” (p. 56). This responsibility for securing participants’ anonymity relies on researcher’s integrity and ethical standards in regards of sensitivity and commitment to moral issues and action (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). One ethical consideration to make when researching online, is the question about internet interviews being more ethically risky than face-to-face interviewing (James & Busher, 2012). My main concern in this matter was using e-mail to correspond with the participants outside the interview situation. Correspondence was necessary to inform about the project, answer questions from the participants, make appointments, and schedule meetings and to do member-checking (section 3.8). Since e-mail has a potential risk of being breached (James & Busher, 2012), the use of e-correspondence is a weakness in this project. The researchers’ responsibility for maintaining participants’ confidentiality and privacy and not collecting and storing personal or intimate information when there is not a clearly stated reason for doing so, is clearly expressed in both the NSD²² (NSD-Norwegian centre for research data, 2022) and the NESH²³ guidelines (The National committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH), 2022). As little personal information as possible was shared, and during the interviews there were no questions about sensitive personal information. Therefore, I considered that although not optimal, using email for correspondence balanced personal integrity and communication needs in this situation.

In a phenomenological study such as this, providing in-depth information about each participant is not necessary, and therefore not according to ethical guidelines (NSD-Norwegian centre for research data, 2022; The National committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH), 2022). When presenting the participants in section 3.5, I limited the information about each participant down to what is important to know, namely their experience with the phenomenon and the contexts of

²⁰Norsk senter for forskningsdata. <https://www.nsd.no/>

²¹NESH The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities. <https://www.forskningsetikk.no/en/about-us/our-committees-and-commission/nesh/>

these experiences. I chose not to display an overview of what projects or activities the different teachers have participated in, because I found it unnecessarily revealing regarding their identities. In the transcriptions and analysis of the interviews, all teachers have been given pseudonyms. This is done due to the principle of anonymity, but also to make the presentation of the findings more reader friendly. An alternative could have been naming them "Teacher 1", "Teacher 2" and so on, or simply not referring to who said what at all. I find it important though, to offer some context to parts of the findings, and therefore I have chosen to name the teachers. When context is necessary to understand quotes and statements in the presentation of findings (Chapter 4), it is provided.

3.10 Procedure of analysis

When analysing data, the researcher needs to remember that the interview is a story, or a set of stories. A concern for the researcher is choosing an analytic tool that helps reconstructing the original stories into the story that the researcher wants to tell the audience (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This has also been the aim of this analysis. During their interviews, the participants shared their perceptions and experiences with me. The perceptions of the participants were not collected (like apples from a tree), but they arose in the meeting between me, and the questions I chose to ask, and the participant. This dynamic relationship demands researcher reflexivity in the process of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019), as in the process of interviewing. These concerns were important to me when choosing a method of analysis.

The data gathered through these six qualitative, semi-structured interviews was analysed using a six-step Thematic Analysis (TA) tool (Braun & Clarke (2006); Braun et al. (2014); Johannessen & Rafoss (2018)). TA is a method set to identify, analyse, and report patterns, or themes, within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analytic tool was chosen because of its flexibility, and how it treats the role of the researcher. TA is not tied to a particular theoretical position or framework, it is a method and not a methodology, and can therefore be used within a range of paradigms (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The stepwise analysis of this method has similarities with those described by Miles et al., (2014), where qualitative data analysis is described to be, among other alternatives, a variable-oriented approach. This means that the researcher looks for themes that appear across cases, where these themes are found through inductive coding which is both descriptive and interpretative.

The role of the researcher in TA has been thoroughly elaborated since the method was discussed by Braun and Clarke in 2006, (Braun & Clarke (2006); Braun et al. (2014); Braun et al. 2019) How this role is viewed by the researcher, affects the choice of direction within TA. Braun et al. (2019) describe TA as an umbrella term more than a single analytic approach. It is described as spanning from a school of coding reliability approaches to a school of reflexive TA approaches. Coding reliability is built on a post-positivist logic and are by some characterised as an attempt to "bridging the divide" between qualitative and quantitative methods" (Braun et al, 2019, p. 847). Reflexive TA approaches are conceptualised as fully qualitative and focus on how reality is multiple and contextual. They also address the importance of researcher reflexivity and state that researcher subjectivity must not be treated as an obstacle, but as a resource in the process of producing knowledge. The researcher has an active role of being aware of seeing through own lens and making active choices about how data is handled. In this

study, TA is treated as a reflective approach to a larger degree than as a coding reliability approach due to the philosophical underlyings of the study. Since TA is not part of a specific interpretative framework, Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasize the importance for the researcher to be conscious about these choices, and be aware that nothing comes from nowhere: "What is important is that the theoretical framework and methods match what the researcher wants to know, and that they acknowledge these decisions, and recognize them as decisions" (p. 80).

The six-step procedure of TA (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is shortly presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Six Step Thematic Analysis

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with your data
Phase 2: Generating initial codes
Phase 3: Searching for themes
Phase 4: Reviewing themes
Phase 5: Defining and naming themes
Phase 6: Producing the report

The procedure of analysis begins with the researcher familiarizing with the data in phase 1, before generating initial codes from the data in phase 2. Phase 3 is searching for themes in the data material, before reviewing these themes in phase 4. In phase 5 the themes are defined and named, before they are presented as findings in the report in phase 6.

In the following, I will present a step-by-step description of the analysis of the interview data in this study.

The first phase, where the aim is to become familiarised with the data, started already during the process of transcribing the data. Transcribing requires close attention to the data, and this process itself may facilitate the interpretative skills needed when conducting the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After transcribing the interviews, I read the transcriptions several times, searching for meanings and patterns. Rather unconsciously, I was also doing this during the interviews as I noticed that the teachers often mentioned similar thoughts on different topics. Becoming more aware of these similarities, also made me aware of differences in their utterances. I started my analysis from the data set, rather than with existing theories and concepts. However, even though my orientation was predominantly inductive, I am aware that as a researcher, I am, with my background and theoretical perceptions, constantly present, making analytic choices (Byrne, 2021). During the first readings of the transcriptions, I wrote down potential codes when I found material that was interesting in regard to my research question.

Next, I started generating initial codes from my data set (phase 2). The first round of coding was semantical, meaning I was searching for words or sentences that could be written as codes (examples of such codes were *fun*, *engagement*, *language learning*). However, I noticed that the codes said little about my material, and, rather unconsciously in the beginning, I shifted to latent coding, which means that I searched

for underlying assumptions or ideas in the data material (Byrne, 2021). Figure 4 shows an example from this process of coding.

Code	Raw data – found through semantic and latent coding
<p>language awareness</p> <p>(possibly theme)</p>	<p>I: You also get to show them that it is nice to know English because we can talk to, or communicate, with more in... many different countries, then.</p> <p>I: But it may <u>open up</u> for the awareness that it is smart knowing more languages...</p> <p>I: They are sort of, they become aware of language in a completely different way, because they are much more interested when it is based on something authentic. It is the fact that it is real communication, that offers a completely different level of motivation for working to learn the language and get it correct. That, I <u>think..</u> that is the most important part. As I see it.</p> <p>I: ..so that... those are also things we notice in the letters. It can <u>be..</u> based on the French language system there occur, there may occur, typical... typical mistakes in English, that the Norwegian students notice. And that they point out, and then we can discuss it.</p> <p>I: And then we <u>did..</u> all the emails they received then, they exchanged letters. On email. And then we had them up and looked at – we have done this in <u>English, and</u> looked a bit at “that is correct”. <u>“What</u> did they do correctly, what have they done...”. “Is this <u>wrong..</u>” and so on. Right. Not to make fun of them, or be impolite, but to learn that “They could have done this” and “they could have done that”.</p> <p>I: And then I also did this thing that... well, for the American kids, on could think that they <i>knew</i> how to write, but it was a bit fun for mine – ...mine were admittedly one year older than them, but it was a bit fun for them to see <u>that actually..they</u> wrote quite a bit of wrong the other students too. They did not know everything in English they either! Right, so they found this quite all <u>right</u> I think. That they did not need to be so afraid to make mistakes, <u>because..</u> the American kids did too.</p>

Figure 4 Example of Code with raw data collected through semantic and latent coding. The different colours represent different informants.

When my data set was coded, there was a mix of latent coding where meaningful latent information was constructed, and semantic coding that was kept where it added meaning to the material. After coding my data set, I started sorting the codes, seeing if they had something in common. Codes that were relatable to each other, were gathered into larger themes (phase 3). This process was repeated several times, also during the writing of findings, as I became more aware of interconnections and my perceptions of the data evolved and changed. There were patterns in the material that were left out of the analysis because they were not relevant to my research question, or they presented background information that rather was included in the presentation of my informants.

Figure 5 shows an early stage of finding themes from a set of codes as lined out in phase 3. I used colour markings to sort codes into possible themes.

“What are Norwegian EFL primary school teachers’ perceptions and experiences with students’ participation in international collaboration?”

Colour markings: **Green=authenticity**
Turquoise=identity
Violet=lonesome
 Grey=Intercultural citizens
Yellow=language learning

<p>List of codes</p> <p>Learning through experience students’ perceptions of own language competence comparing self with others authenticity lonely language learning language awareness world citizens ICC Curiosity Identity English as lingua franca Motivation Meaningfulness School leadership</p> <p>Potential themes:</p> <p>Learning through authentic communication: Learning through experience, authenticity, English as lingua franca, language awareness... Identity and self perception: students perception of own language competence, identity and self awareness Becoming culturally competent world citizens: comparing self with others, world citizens, curiosity Lonesome satellites</p>

Figure 5 Example from the process of developing themes from codes using colour markings.

During the analysis, and further during writing the report, I came back to revise these themes on several occasions as I became more familiar with the data and noticed how themes were overlapping or missing.

The next phase was reviewing and refining the themes (phase 4). I had to take a closer look at my themes and codes to see if they were coherent, and also, I needed to consider the validity if each individual theme in relation to my data set to see if the themes reflected the meanings evident in the data set as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). What I found challenging in this phase, was trusting that the themes offered a balanced view of the perceptions of the study’s participants. There were six teachers interviewed, and some of the subthemes were commented by all teachers, while other subthemes were based on quotes from just some of the teachers. Despite my awareness of the danger of letting what was the most interesting for me coming forth as more evident in my data set, this part was challenging.

When comparing my codes with my data set in this phase, I did not add any codes to the ones I already had found, but I found some quotes that I had not labelled during the earlier phases and that fitted some of my existing codes. I also found some overlapping in themes, and after revising I ended up with five main themes with different subthemes (Figure 6). These themes will be elaborated in Chapter 4.

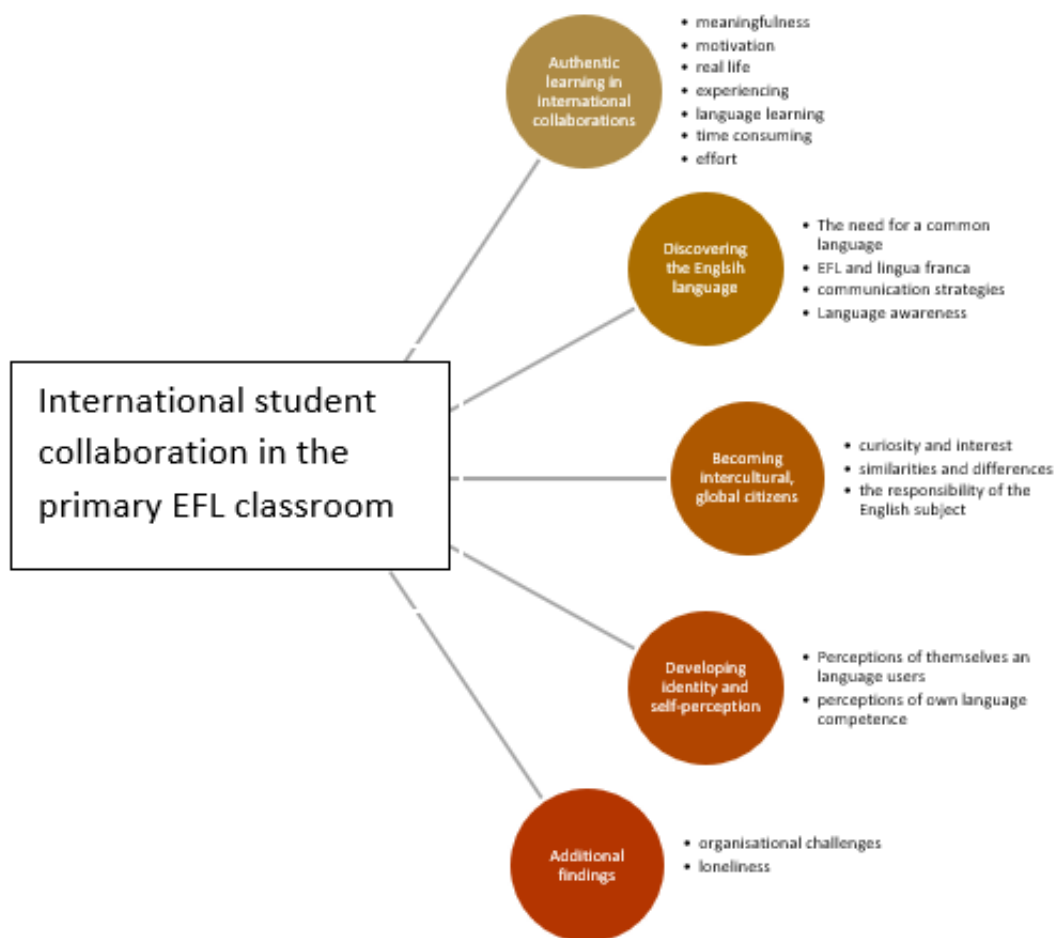


Figure 6 Themes and sub-themes from data analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2006) state that the researcher now should have a fairly good idea about themes, how they fit together, and “the overall story they tell about the data.” (p. 92). Revising in phase 4 and naming themes in phase 5 was an overlapping process. The fifth phase is, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), about identifying the essence of what the themes are about. What is interesting about each theme, and why? How do they fit into the overall story that is told about your data? When naming the themes, they advise the researcher to choose concise and punchy theme names that give the reader a clear sense what each theme is about. This, I had in mind when choosing theme names. Due to going back and forth between the phases of the analysis, theme names were changed and adjusted several times.

Lastly, the report with my final analysis was produced. The aim of this sixth phase is to “tell the complicated story of your data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). When writing this report, I have aimed to make it concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting, as advised by Braun and Clarke (2006). They also state that this analytic narrative must make an argument in relation to the study’s research question, and this is a focus I have tried to maintain throughout the writing process.

4. Results

In this chapter, I will present findings from my process of analysing the data that was gathered during interviews. After carefully studying my data material, I have constructed four main themes that are particularly interesting in relation to my research question: *“What are Norwegian EFL primary school teachers’ perceptions and experiences with students’ learning through participation in international collaboration?”*

The first main theme, I have chosen to name “Authentic learning in international collaborations” and the second theme is labelled “Discovering the English language”. The third theme I have named “Becoming intercultural, global citizens” and the fourth theme is called “Developing identity”. I have also chosen to include a theme termed “Additional findings”. These additional findings do not concretely display teachers’ view of intercultural collaboration, but they offer important background information about organisational challenges for teachers who are engaging themselves in international classroom collaborations.

After presenting the findings in detail in chapter 4, I will discuss these themes in the frame of the theoretical foundations presented earlier in this thesis in chapter 5.

4.1 Authentic learning in international collaborations

This first theme sheds light on how the participating teachers perceive the role of authenticity in this learning situation. Through the analysis, I found that there were some aspects of authenticity that seemed to be of particular importance to these teachers. In the following, I will provide information about teachers’ perceptions of meaningful communication and motivation, and the importance of students experiencing through authentic learning situations.

During their interviews the teachers talked about international collaboration as an arena of learning through “real” communication. They often referred to the term “authentic” when talking about how the students got to experience genuine language use in opposition to learning in a constructed classroom situation. When discussing authenticity, they often mentioned the words “meaningful” and “motivation”. The interviewed teachers expressed that they aimed for their students to experience meaningfulness. This was an important reason why they engaged their students in authentic communication through international collaboration. They expressed a perception that when students experience their work as meaningful, it increases the students’ motivation for learning. This is one of the areas where all informants seemed to agree the most on – they all talked about meaningfulness and motivation as two factors being tied together. Berit expressed this motivation from meaningful communication when describing a situation where her students wrote and received letters from their collaboration partners:

...but in regards of the students, then it is.. the very most important is motivation. Because I can see that they, when they are writing a letter to a completely real human being who is going to hold that letter in its hand, and read what they themselves have written, they are motivated on a COMPLETELY different level, to get their language correct, to get it.. yes, correct English, written, a clear formulation. Those who usually are happy to do left-handed work and are in a rush to finish other tasks, they really sit down and put in an effort in order to

finish a good letter, and they are so incredibly excited when they get a letter back.

So it is.. I see great value in this, and it has turned out to be greater than I first believed it to be.

These meaningful, authentic communication situations were also being compared to traditional classroom-English, and some of the teachers stated that no matter how well-formulated book tasks are, students will not experience the same degree of meaningfulness and be as motivated to put in the extra effort the way they are in authentic communication situations. Berit expressed how she perceived this extra effort to influence students' learning:

Yes, it does. Because they themselves demand from themselves that they must deliver a correct product. So the learning outcome of writing a letter to another person is larger than when they write a fictive task, a work book-based task. It can be a setting as fun as it just may, but it is not the same.

The unique factor is the motivation. As I see it. That it is an authentic, it is real communication using the language they are learning, with other students who are also learning it as a foreign language.

Nina talked about the authenticity in the situation and how it may motivate the student to put in an extra effort:

There were also some good conversations around the fact that we are different, and.. I feel that maybe this pushed those who usually write very little to.. put in a little more effort. Because it was, "think about the one sitting at the other end looking forward to receiving a letter from you". "Try to feel the sensation, that you get the letter. What can you do to offer them that same feeling.." Having an authentic recipient to what you write, I believe it to be extremely important because it feels a bit like.. it feels more important, what they are doing. It adds another value than when having just mum or dad or the teacher read it.

Johanne also expressed her perception of the authenticity of the learning situation with native English students by comparing it to authentic-like learning material in the English classroom:

We sort of get access to authentic language through sound files or text books too, but that is a school book text. In situations such as these there are kids telling about their everyday lives, in their language, as daily speech, and perhaps with a bit of.. youth, child- and youth language, we get some of that. And then they get to experience, they get it a bit closer to themselves, and discover that actually other kids do not know Norwegian, for example. I was a bit surprised, when some 5th graders sat here and did not know that. That these kids do not understand Norwegian. For some of them it was obvious, of course, but for some of the others it was not.

They can learn form all of these things too, but there are actors sitting, they are adults, right. They are not kids, and it is not a.. but this becomes a dialogue, where you sort of participate to a much larger degree than when just taking it all

in.. yes, you do not just take it in via a screen, you get it in.. you must, it is a dialogue.

When talking about authenticity, Nina stated that although authentic learning is beneficial for learning, international collaboration cannot replace all other learning activities. She expressed that facilitating and carrying through these activities are time consuming and demands a lot of effort from both students and teachers.

It all became very authentic, because there was actually a person who was sitting there answering the questions that you asked. ..so I would say that the learning outcome is much bigger with this kind of collaboration than regular classroom teaching. But at the same time.. this kind of collaboration cannot replace a lot of what we usually do, because it is quite time consuming, both for the students and for us teachers. So it is all about finding a balance regarding how much, how extensive it is going to be.

Another point made by Nina was that of course, not all students were equally enthusiastic about writing letters. She said that sometimes she got feedback like *Argh, do we have to write another letter??*, and therefore it was important to consider the time frame. An authentic collaboration project should rather be short, than too long, to be beneficial to the majority within a group of students.

The essence of student *experiencing* in their learning process, in opposition to just “being told”, seemed to be of importance to the teachers that were interviewed. Håvard and Lise expressed this view of student experience in the following:

I guess I can.. I can stand there and tell them, but I feel that they, to a much larger degree, experience these things themselves – rather than me to stand there telling them that “this is how it is” (Håvard).

That it becomes... not just a news story, that there are many people in the USA that do not have internet, for example, but, that they in fact saw it. That this was how it was (Lise).

In sum, these quotes indicate that the situation itself, the experience of communicating with real-life students from another country or another part of the world, adds meaning for the students. Real communication is appreciated over authentic text tasks, and experiencing instead of being told seems to be valued by teachers of this study in terms of creating interest in the “real” world through experienced orientation about reality. It is also clear that engaging in authentic tasks demands extra effort from teachers and students.

4.2 Discovering the English language

This second theme presents findings that concern students experiencing the need for a common language when communicating with students from different countries. Perceptions of collaborating with both other EFL learners and native English users will be described, and lastly, perceptions of students’ development of language awareness are included in this theme.

During these collaborations, students interacted in a situation where English was the only common language they shared with their collaboration partners. When students

were “forced” to communicate solely in English, all six teachers had noticed that many students increased both the length and the quality of their written texts when writing to a student from a different country. This was observed with both high achieving students and with students who were reluctant writers. Johanne talked about reluctant writers and students with low perceptions of their own English competence:

... it has inspired those kids who.. who would rather not write anything at all, and who feel that they know nothing in English. It inspires them a bit more because they see that "this is in fact useful" ... these kids that we are contacting here, they do not know Norwegian, so, right, it was kind of a moment of realisation for them when they were 5th graders ...

Also, regarding oral activity, the teachers had observed that there were differences in the level of activity. On the one hand, students could become shy when interacting orally with students from the other country, as expressed by Nina: *It became a bit artificial when we got everyone up on that big screen and were supposed to talk class to class. Then it ended up with us teachers talking.* At the same time, the fact that there were no other alternatives also encouraged the students to make an extra effort. Håvard had experienced this in his EFL classroom:

Just this thing about making my students speak English. There are many who find it embarrassing and awkward to do. But in the moment you have it done with someone sitting in a different classroom in a different country, then there is only one possibility. Then you can only speak English to communicate with them, and it becomes easier for them...

Not having the opportunity to find support by switching to or using words from their mother tongue, made this situation different from the regular English lesson where leaning on other common languages is a possibility when communication breaks down. *In the classroom, you speak with those who know Norwegian, and you can lean on your mother tongue when English gets difficult (Trine).* The same observation had been made by Lise, who presented an example of how leaning on mother tongue was not an option when communicating with non-Norwegians:

And that it is a real... situation, where they need the language. So they actually need to learn, what is this and that named, to be able to tell it. Like, they wanted to tell that they have a dog, and that they loved that dog very much.. and then they suddenly needed, right, «What is that in English then?», so, they felt a real, a real need to learn the language, because they were going to use it then and there.

When teachers talked about realistic learning situations where English was practiced, they described projects where they communicated with native English students. They also described collaborations with students who were learners of English as a foreign language like their own students. In this last situation, English worked as the *lingua franca*, as described in the introduction of this thesis. The interviewed teachers had different experiences and beliefs about communicating with native speakers versus other EFL learners.

Håvard, Trine and Berit had only had English language collaborations with other EFL students and teachers, and they all perceived collaborating with other EFL learners as advantageous over collaborating with natives. Håvard had the impressions that collaborating with other EFL learners could help students see that their English competence was higher than they initially thought:

... and then my students experience that "Wow! I am not that bad in English after all!", "My accent is actually quite good". "I can make myself understood".

Berit also perceived collaborating with other EFL learners to be more positive:

I actually believe others who have English as a second language or foreign language is an advantage, yes ... I think that communication is easier when they both are in a learning process regarding the language. I think the gap could be.. but this is just the way I have been thinking. That the gap could be quite large if they were writing with a class in England at the same age. Because... my students' competence would be so much lower.

Trine saw the possibility of becoming familiar with many different languages and countries through collaborating with other EFL learners as advantageous.

So it was very nice geographically and linguistically too. There, the others had written «Merry Christmas» in.. most of them had used English, ..and some had only used their mother tongue". ... "You also get to show them that knowing English is nice, because then you can talk to, or communicate with, people in... many different countries.

Johanne and Nina had had collaborated with both EFL students and teachers from different European countries *and* with native English speakers. Johanne explained that she was positively surprised of the lack of gap between her own EFL students and the native English speakers they were collaborating with:

But then it turns out, at least with these American kids, that this turned out just fine. They were, admittedly, a year younger than mine. But.. it was not a problem. Because they were not super good at writing themselves, either.

Further, Johanne explained how she thought collaborating with native English speakers could be an advantage for language learning, while collaborations with other EFL learners could be beneficial if the aim is to learn about other countries and cultures:

I think that if the main goal is to become better in English, I probably would choose to try to come in contact with a British, or American, or Australian class. Right, or from another English speaking country. But if the main focus is to practice writing English, and reading English that is not necessarily perfect, and learning about other countries and other cultures, and just use the English like that, then you can write with anybody.

Nina was not too preoccupied with age or nationality of their collaboration partners:

I do not know if those who we collaborated with, whether they were.. the same age or one year younger. But I never reflected on them being much more skilled

that our students. Now, I had a group of high achieving students. That is to be said. But, I.. never thought about the fact that they were British.

Hearing how similar all teachers experienced the communication situations regardless of having collaborated with just natives or just other EFL learners is interesting. Those who had only collaborated with other EFL learners perceived this to be the best alternative, while Lise, who had only collaborated with native learners, perceived that to be the best alternative. The teachers who had tried collaborating with both native English speakers and other EFL learners added some nuance to the view of what might be the most beneficial for students' learning, but there is no clear view of whether your collaboration partners are natives or EFL learners is the most important factor when creating an arena for student learning.

The teachers pointed out that when communicating with language learners from another country, both natives and EFL learners, the students became aware of typical mistakes and patterns in the language spoken and written by their collaboration students. This led to interesting conversations about language and the influence of different mother tongues. It also gave the students a perspective of the usefulness of knowing more than one language.

Berit expressed how she thought that the authenticity in the learning situation increased the students' interest and awareness:

They are sort of, they become aware of language in a completely different way, because they are much more interested when it is based on something authentic.

... these are also things they notice in the letters. It can be.. based on the French language system there occur, there may pop up, typical.. typical mistakes in their English, that the Norwegian students notice. And that they can point out, and then we can discuss it.

Johanne described how this could be similar also when the collaboration partners were native English language users:

... mine were admittedly one year older than them, but it was a bit fun for them to see that actually, they wrote quite a bit of wrong the other students too. They did not know everything in English they either! Right, so they found this quite all right I think. That they did not need to be so afraid to make mistakes, because.. the American kids did too.

From the perspectives of these teachers, students are motivated into putting an extra effort into both their writing, their oral activity, and their correctness when they are engaged with international collaboration, but also that shyness or reluctance to speak can be a challenge when communicating orally. They describe the notion of experiencing that knowing English is *useful* as an important factor in this. The situation where teachers and students collaborate internationally is not constructed and pedagogically adjusted to the situation in the same way that textbooks and classroom activities are. It is real, raw, and unpolished, and contains a certain degree of insecurity and unpredictability for both students and teachers. These teachers explain how this leads to an increased need for putting in an extra effort to be able to carry out the communication tasks, and although rewarding, this is challenging for both students and

teacher. They also explain how their student experience that learning English is necessary to be able to communicate with other non-Norwegian students. Whether these non-Norwegian collaboration partners are EFL learners or native English speakers seems not to be of great importance. Lastly, there is a perception that students are showing raised language awareness through experiencing communication with non-Norwegian English language users.

4.3 Becoming intercultural, global citizens

Norwegian students learning English as a foreign language are, eventually, becoming part of a society where people live, travel and work in a multifaceted world. One way of getting familiar with other parts and other people of the world is to travel. That is not always an option, and both Trine and Lise expressed how they hope students can achieve some of these impressions that are usually gotten through travelling, through international classroom collaboration:

Yes, and then their world becomes a bit wider, that is what I hope. ... some of them may be well-travelled too ...while others have not been outside Norway and then there is.. even if one does not travel, it is, at least, an opportunity to become familiar with other countries (Trine).

... and then there is this.. the second is getting insight into how other people are doing. Around the world, to see.. to get it straight into your face how other people, how other people's lives are (Lise).

This third theme was included because the analysis indicated that students' intercultural development was a major concern for these teachers. This theme addresses teachers' experience with students' curiosity and interest and their observations and thoughts about how students compared themselves to their interlocutors searching for similarities and differences. Lastly, it offers insight into their perceptions about the responsibility of the English subject.

When becoming engaged in international collaboration projects, the teachers experienced that their students were curious about their collaboration partners and wanted to know as much as possible about them. The teachers described how the students asked about the others' country, language, and that they were curious about their collaboration partners' way of life. This curiosity and interest can be illustrated through two quotes from Berit and Trine. Berit had observed how her students got engaged when they looked at a picture to see where their collaboration partners were located:

For them, it is kind of magic too. And then they wonder about the students' everyday lives. I have shown them a picture of the area with the village we are exchanging letters with, and where their school is located, and the ocean that is nearby and such things. Then you see them creating images, and then they have questions that they ask in the first letter. So they are very curious about things.

Trine described a similar situation when her students received Christmas cards from all over Europe: *We also got a little geography at the same time.. "Where does this card come from?" "Where do they live", and.. "What is it like there?"*

All teachers described situations where their students had been fascinated by discovering differences between themselves and the collaborating students. They all also described how students often are surprised by the many similarities that they discover between themselves and “the others”. When collaborating with students and teachers from other countries and cultures, the interviewed teachers had noticed how their students discovered that there were both similarities and differences between themselves and the students they got in touch with during their collaboration projects. In addition to noticing this, some of the teachers also emphasized that this is an aim they have for their students during these collaborations – they want them to reflect on these similarities and differences in order to learn something about themselves and the people they are collaborating with.

For Håvard, it was important to help the students see that despite differences, there are more similarities with students from other countries. He said this to be one of the most important aims in this work.

I always try to make them see than even though we live in Norway, and they live in another country, we are much alike. We are many who enjoy the same things, we have the same interests, and perhaps the same worries too. For both.. now and the future.

An example of a collaborative writing projects where students shared wrote about subjects that were of importance to them is displayed in Figure 7. In this project, Norwegian students collaborated with southern European students. The task was to write a chapter of the story, and then send the book by post to the collaboration partners who wrote the next chapter of the book.



Figure 7 Examples of collaboratively written books²⁶.

These two books are about bullying and making a new start, topics that presumably have relevance for many young people regardless of country or culture of origin.

²²These pictures were sent to me by one of this study’s participants, who offered me to include them in this thesis. They were received after the inquiry was finished and are not part of the collected data. The pictures serve an illustrative purpose in this setting.

Trine also stated the importance of discovering similarities by aiming her students to see *that the same things are actually happening too, in different parts of the world*. Berit expressed the same view:

... and how big a difference is there, really.. but what they experience when they get a letter is that the difference is smaller than what they think. And for many of them, they have an expectation that being a 7th grader in France is very different. But it is not. And that is a main point to get through too, I think. And I want them to experience this themselves, and not that I tell it to them.

In addition to focusing on how the students can learn that people in different countries are not so different from each other, and have a lot in common, these teachers also described how noticing and comparing differences was interesting and engaging for their students. They mentioned how the students' names were different from each other, how their writing was different, how different names and other words were pronounced and different things they did during a day at school. Lise talked about how seeing these differences was engaging for her students and made them reflect on their own lives:

And they still ask, "Where did they go?" So it.. it was really exciting sitting home in Norway and watch that film from the USA, where you.. their lives were completely different from ours, they.. it was probably quite.. I assume that those students were not very.. they did not have much.. their standards of living were lower than what was the case for my students, who come from families who have a lot of resources.

... and to sit and watch, and talk to them, communicating with them and look into their rooms, to see how they were and such.. well, it was.. it was very good.

To see that the world is different from their own children's room.

These reflections and observations of differences and similarities came from the comparisons that students and teachers did in the meeting with students and teachers from another country and another culture. All the interviewed teachers mentioned these comparisons, whether it was in relation to equality or likeness, spotting differences, or just in their reflections from students meeting a new culture. Johanne explained how meeting a new culture could be both amusing and challenging for both teachers and students:

They got to experience that they are never on time, for example, and that we had to wait and wait and wait and wait and wait – infinitely..

Nina talked about how her students got a chance to find out what they appreciated with their own culture through learning about other culture and traditions:

Oh, it has been.. mostly positive. Most that they find it very exciting, that they have learned a lot of new things about a country.. that they have got the insight that the every day life is.. quite the same in other countries, while, at the same time, there are things that are very different. Perhaps especially regarding that there are some cultural differences. That.. I think they learned to appreciate what they had.. and, they grew very fond of their own traditions around Christmas, and May 17th, and like.. it was not that they.. there were things that they did down

there, that they envied, but then they sat there with the feeling that "I am actually doing quite fine". That they had a long summer break, well, there were all these small things that they.. were left with, that were positive.

During the interviews, some of the teachers talked about the specific role of the English subject for developing intercultural competence. Berit expressed her view of the specific responsibility of the English subject by stating:

I believe that the English subject has a certain special, a very special responsibility, and a very special opportunity, because it is, after all, this language that is going to open up the world for most of my students. It is going to enable them to communicate with people across cultural and geographical borders. We have an extra responsibility today, to try to grow tolerance, empathy and respect for a human being that is different from ourselves, and the English subject and the English language that is going to help them communicate out in the world, it is... a very strong remedy in that situation".

Further, she also stated that this responsibility does not relate only to older or more advanced English learner by saying *So I think that connecting them, that is a great part of the purpose. Early. That this in itself has value.*

Other interviewees mentioned that in some collaborations, the language learning outcome had not been the only focus and outcome. Rather, the students had used the English language as a tool to familiarize themselves with their collaboration partners and to develop cultural understanding across borders. Johanne said that *They learned about the country's culture... and of course they learned a bit English too. But that did not become the main focus, no. And perhaps that was not the intention, either.*

Nina stated that for her, the most important point was that her students *understand that English is so much more than just a school subject.* She talked about the importance of realising that few people around the world speak Norwegian, and understanding that the English language is important in so many ways:

It is not just about succeeding in primary school, you bring it with you through the rest of your life... I think there is a lot that is given for free, regarding the understanding of the subject in this matter, that we get for free through such a collaboration.

From the perspectives of these teachers, students are curious about their collaboration partners and wish to learn as much about them as possible. Comparing similarities and differences between themselves and "the others" helps students see that although differences, we are much alike. Also, expressed explicitly or implicitly, the English subject seemingly is perceived to have a certain responsibility for teaching students to become intercultural, global citizens.

4.4 Developing identity

This fourth theme is related to perceptions about identity development. Through the analysis I found that identity often was mentioned in association with students' perceptions of themselves as English language users. These findings will be presented in the following.

In meeting with students who came from a different culture and that had a different language background, the interviewed teachers talked about how their Norwegian students became aware of themselves in the process. The teachers expressed how these international collaboration projects could affect the students' identity development. Berit had noticed:

And they look at themselves and their reality in a little different light. This can be because they get an overview of how daily life is there, how the school system works, but it can also be details that they learn about the life of one of their pen pals. That.. influences them more.

Nina had made similar observations, and she also mentioned how students needed to reflect on their own setting of boundaries in the process:

And also, I believe that they are learning to know themselves better by answering and asking questions, and... that whole process. They need to choose, what they wish to share about "me and mine".

The interviewed teachers talked about how students perceived themselves as language users. They also reflected on what students can learn about themselves through an international collaboration with other EFL learners or native English speakers.

Håvard described how his students became aware of their own language competence when communicating with other EFL learners:

And when they work with a partner school in France, or maybe Italy, Southern Europe in the least, my students find out that «Wow! I am not that bad in English after all». «My accent is actually quite good». «I can make myself understood».

Johanne had also observed how communicating with students with less developed English competence influenced her students' perception of themselves as English users:

I remember very well that Skype-conversation for our students in English, not that they were especially good In English, but compared to those kids it was... milewide difference. Their teachers did not even know English, right. So I still remember... we were Skyping, and the kids were asking "What's your hobbyeeee?" (my comment: spoken in broken English). "...and my kids were like "Hm? What does that mean?" "No, they are talking about hobbies!" – "Oh, yes!" "Yes, they probably felt... I think many of them felt kind of skilled, because they discovered that these other kids had much poorer English skills. Even though they were the same age.

Lise, who had experience with collaborating with native English speaker, also mentioned how students were proud after carrying through a conversation with an adult native speaker during a skype meeting.

It becomes obvious, what you are able, through your communication form, to carry out. How do you talk to different types of people? When they talked to her, they had to be an own edition of themselves. And they were very proud, they managed it. They became, in a way, more adult-ish, too, in that situation. So I

think that then, they will know what they are able to do, more than in just their classroom, and... in their daily lives.

Identity in language learning, as perceived by these teachers, is affected when students learn about themselves through interaction with students from other countries and cultures. Experiencing that they manage to use the English language for communication purposes also affects how students view themselves as English users.

4.5 Additional findings

When describing their perceptions and experiences with international collaboration, the teachers mentioned different challenges that they had come across during these projects. They described how planning and conducting these collaborations was time-consuming, and that it sometimes was hard to find collaboration partners. Sometimes a project could be planned and ready to be conducted, and their collaboration partner suddenly disappeared. Also, five of the six teachers in this study describe a situation of loneliness in this type of work, being the only teachers at their school engaging in international collaboration. When asking them how their schools organized or enhanced international collaboration, I got responses such as *... a bit difficult, and.. like, no, this is more like "my" thing.* It was hard to find colleagues to share the experiences with, and the school leaders were most often not involved in the projects: *Someone said "Oh, this was fun!"... but the principle ... I do not think he ever came inside and had a look at it. I do not think so. And that is sort of disappointing.*

One of the other teachers expressed a similar experience:

To be 100 percent honest, I actually meet quite a lot of reluctance against this thing at the school where I work. We had a principle that was very negative ...no one has asked me about.. anything. But of course, they do not.. they do not know what I am in to.. Perhaps I do not tell much about it, either. So they.. are not very interested... and that is a bit sad. Because I think this is a goldmine for many of our students.

The one teacher that had not experienced this loneliness through working with international student collaboration, was the only one working at a school where these international projects were an integrated part of school's work practice. This teacher had the impression, despite challenges with time and finding collaboration partners, that *Everyone who has English agree that this is very positive, and wish to succeed in it.*

Despite the challenges mentioned above, these teachers perceived international collaboration to be worth the effort, and all teachers expressed that they were either planning new collaborations now or wanting to participate again in the future. Håvard expressed that *those are just things you need to deal with. You still come out on the other side with more pluses than minuses.*

These additional findings will be treated as background information about organizational challenges in this thesis. Although extremely important to address when discussing international classroom collaboration, they fall outside the scope of this thesis and will therefore not be part of the discussion. Rather, this information will serve as backdrop when concluding the thesis.

5. Discussion

As presented in the introduction, the aim of this thesis is to explore EFL primary school teachers' experience and perception on student learning through participation in international collaboration projects. In the analysis of this study, there were four main themes that were singled out: *Authentic learning in international collaborations*, *Discovering the English language*, *Becoming intercultural*, *global citizens* and *Developing identity*. In the following, I will discuss these four main findings. Due to the scope of this thesis, where ICC is the main chosen theoretical perspective, I will focus especially on this concept in the discussion of my themes. By discussing these main findings, I hope to both display and to problematize their role in primary student EFL learning through international collaboration projects.

5.1 Authentic learning in international collaborations

Authenticity was a term frequently used by the teachers in this study. Since this term was also mentioned in the initial working title and description of this thesis, which was "Authentic communication in the primary EFL classroom", this may have influenced the informants' use of this specific term. However, when hearing their thoughts about students' learning from international collaboration, I got the impression that their thoughts and perceptions were profound and thought-through, and that authenticity was of obvious importance to them, either expressed explicit or implicit. Therefore, I do not fear biasing to a very large degree. But due to the principle of transparency throughout the research process, I find it worth mentioning that the term "authenticity" initially was brought up from my part.

There is no doubt that the rise of the Internet and the establishing of multiple digital learning platforms has increased students' opportunities to communicate with representatives of other languages and cultures around the world. This means that authentic communication is no longer limited to texts and the people who are physically present in the EFL classroom (Fenner & Skulstad, 2018). In this study, the authenticity of the learning situation within international collaborations was appreciated by the teachers. They experienced that engaging in authentic communication, using "real" language when speaking with other students from various countries and with various cultural backgrounds, was motivating and engaging for their students.

I found that one of the main reasons why these teachers chose to engage their students in authentic learning activities, was because they perceived their students to be experiencing the communication as meaningful to a larger degree than when participating in what they perceived to be staged pedagogical activities. They expressed that this meaningfulness was very motivating for the students, and thereby, in their perception, contributed to their learning. This expressed view aligns with the task principle of CLT, which claims that language used for carrying out meaningful tasks promotes learning (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). In this situation, the meaning-aspect lies in the aim of successfully carrying out a communication task with EFL or native English students from another country; someone who lives in a different culture and who does not know the Norwegian language. Since my study has investigated the teacher perspective on international student collaboration, it is interesting to compare with the findings of Kohn and Hoffstaedter (2017), who have investigated the *student* perspective in a similar context. They describe in their study how students were satisfied about

“being able to use their foreign language for communicative participation in authentic interactions with real speakers: “I think it is good because it puts us in a real situation” (p. 361) and “We do not learn for school, but for life” (p. 364). These student perceptions align with the perceptions of the teachers in my study, as illustrated by Nina: *Having an authentic recipient to what you write, I believe it to be extremely important because it feels a bit like.. it feels more important, what they are doing.*

This meaningful, authentic communication aspect is particularly relevant when looking into the development of students’ ICC through the English subject. Munezane’s (2021) proposition of including the notion of students’ willingness to communicate (WTC) into Byram’s (2021) model of ICC is closely linked to meaningfulness and motivation. Munezane’s study indicated that students’ WTC depended on factors such as the students’ motivation to engage and the confidence in own ability to interact interculturally. Further, the study found that WTC could be an indicator of the student’s motivation to engage in intercultural interaction, or more simply put, an indicator of a student’s ICC. Kohn and Hoffstaedter (2017) also found that the authenticity of the telecollaborative conversations raised the students’ WTC. In my study, there seemed to be a perception that students most often were motivated and willing to communicate, and that the main obstacle for WTC was having confidence in their own English competence.

When these teachers talked about authenticity in relation to international collaboration, they were often referring to the authentic experience with using the English language as a tool for communicating with students from other countries. There was a clear opinion that when students experienced real communication and got insight into the real worlds of others, it added meaning to their learning situation. This sense of meaning motivated the students into putting extra effort into their work, as pointed out by Berit:

.... they themselves demand from themselves that they must deliver a correct product. So the learning outcome of writing a letter to another person is larger than when they write a fictive task, a work book-based task. It can be a setting as fun as it just may, but it is not the same.

This finding aligns with the theoretical underlying of CLT saying that real and meaningful communication promotes learning. In the context of international collaboration as explored in this thesis, students got the opportunity to use the English language much as they would have done in a real-life situation when communicating with students from different countries and cultures. If the students were willing to communicate, to put effort into their work due to motivation and belief in their abilities, it is possible to believe that their learning was supported through this type of communication practice.

Other studies concerning international (tele)collaboration projects have also pointed out that one of the greatest assets of this type of work is the authentic context offered to the students. Pennock-Speck and Clavel-Arriota’s study (2018) stated that all the teachers who participated in their study believed that telecollaboration guaranteed the students an opportunity to practice communicative competence “in meaningful authentic communicative situations that would be the nearest a student would get to travelling to the target language country and interacting with members of that community” (p. 499). Camilleri (2016) found that teachers perceived their students’ communication skills to improve radically after participating in eTwinning projects where they were motivated to talk to their partners “live”, and such enhancing their confidence and practicing language

skills. In addition to Kohn and Hoffstaedter (2017), Lee and Markey (2014) also offer insight into the student perspective. They found that students were satisfied with participating in international collaboration projects, and that they acknowledged that they learned from it. From their perception, regular classroom teaching would not have offered the same in-depth cultural understanding. The findings of these studies largely align with what was found through the interviews with the teachers who participated in my study.

5.2 Discovering the English language

The teachers who participated in my study expressed the opinion that when communicating for “real”, their students experienced the necessity of having a common language with their collaboration partners. In the regular classroom situation, they stated, students could always lean on their mother tongue when their lingual proficiency was not sufficient to carry out a communication task: *In the classroom, you speak with those who know Norwegian, and you can lean on your mother tongue when English gets difficult* (Trine). When collaborating internationally with students who do not know the Norwegian language, there are situations where this is not always a possibility. Real-time spontaneous communication gives little time to think, and therefore it is possible to assume synchronous oral collaborations to be more demanding in regards of keeping a conversation going than in the case when communicating asynchronously. Not finding the words that you wish to communicate can be stressful when your interlocutor is waiting for you to get to the point. Lise’s description of the need of knowing words can be seen as an example of how oral and written communication is different from each other:

So they actually need to learn, what is this and that named, to be able to tell it. Like, they wanted to tell that they have a dog, and that they loved that dog very much.. and then they suddenly needed, right, «What is that in English then?», so, they felt a real, a real need to learn the language, because they were going to use it then and there.

If “then and there” is in an asynchronous situation where students for example are writing a letter, they have time to search or look up words they need to learn. They have the time to ask their teacher how to write phrases, what a word is in English or to get help with forming a sentence. If “then and there” means in the middle of a real-time oral conversation (or even a real-time writing conversation such as in a chat), time limits the possibilities to use these resources. In these situations, the students need to rely on other strategic competencies, as addressed by Canale and Swain (1980) and van Ek (1986), to prevent the communication from breaking down.

The use of strategic competence when communicating with non-Norwegian language users can also be seen as a step towards what Byram (2021) describes as *skills of discovery and interaction*. During their international collaboration projects, students get to practice their ability to use an appropriate combination of knowledge, skills, and attitude in the interaction with others, both synchronously in real-time and through the process of collaborating asynchronously. The teachers in my study had experienced that both high achieving students and reluctant learners would stretch to higher achievements in order to be able to carry out the wanted communication. In written

communication, they could see that students increased both the length and quality of their written texts:

Those who usually are happy to do left-handed work and are in a rush to finish other tasks, they really sit down and put in an effort in order to finish a good letter, and they are so incredibly excited when they get a letter back (Berit).

In oral communication, they observed both shyness and an attitude of “well, we have no other alternative here – let’s get to it”, as Håvard described this experience:

...just this thing about making my students speak English. There are many who find it embarrassing and awkward to do. But in the moment you have it done with someone sitting in a different classroom in a different country, then there is only one possibility. Then you can only speak English to communicate with them, and it becomes easier for them...

In both these situations, students practice their lingual and cultural skills within the context of international collaboration. But there are differences between writing letters and having an oral conversation. When Byram (2021) describes *skills of discovery and interaction* as an element of ICC, this includes being able to perform under the constraints of real-time interaction. The teachers in this study would probably value oral communication in international collaboration as an opportunity to practice this skill of discovery and interaction, but “constraints of real-time” has been treated somehow differently. In most collaboration projects, writing asynchronously or making videos for sharing had been prioritised over synchronous communication. The latter had not even been tried out by all teachers, and those who had, often described how this was done at the end of their projects, or after they had communicated asynchronously for some time. Although not having tried engaging their students in synchronously oral communication, there were several examples where the teachers said that this had been interesting to try out, although potentially difficult to organize and to monitor. I find it probable to think that this predominance of prioritising asynchronous communication in international collaborations is related to the young age of the students. Young students probably do need more guidance due to lesser proficiencies in EFL writing and communication skills (such as strategic competence), and the teachers have more time to guide each student when working asynchronously. I did *not* get the impression that oral communication was downgraded because the teachers were lacking digital competence, which was found in previous studies (Camilleri, 2016). It is more probable to think that written collaboration may be considered as more including and possible to succeed with for all students regardless of level of competence. Some of the interviewed teachers mentioned that students who struggled with the English subject *probably need even more support and guidance and help* (Håvard) than is the case in the regular classroom situation, but also, that this type of written communication *has inspired those kids who.. who would rather not write anything at all, and who feel that they know nothing in English. It inspires them a bit more because they see that “this is in fact useful”* (Johanne). This is understandable, but perhaps there is a potential here for taking the opportunity to practice and develop strategic competence from a younger age, if also young students are engaged more actively in oral interactions.

Students’ use of strategic competence was also investigated in Normann’s (2021) study. Regarding strategic competence, this study found that students leaned on linguistic support provided by the context. They could for example lean on what was said

immediately before or right after their own utterances, or they could catch transparent words (who were similar in Norwegian and English). Discovering words that are common for English and other languages that the student is familiar with is a competence aim which is included in LK20 already after 2. grade (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). They also pointed to the advantage of discussing familiar topics where they were already familiar with typical terms, a consideration which was also made by the teachers in my study when they described how their student wrote and talked about themselves, their family, pets, hobbies, and other topics that were familiar to their students. As with the example where Lise explained how they were talking about pets: *Like, they wanted to tell that they have a dog, and that they loved that dog very much...* Due to the age of the students, this focus on familiar topics is probably even more important with primary school students than with older and more advanced learners. This may be a special concern to take into consideration when helping young learners practice their strategic competence make, along with teaching students to discover and make use of transparent words.

Further, Normann (2021) found that students perceived themselves more as language *users* than language *learners* when participating in mobility programs, and that they became more autonomous language learners. This was also found in the previous study by Kohn and Hoffstaedter (2017), who pointed out that several students also emphasised telecollaboration conversations as a way of overcoming the limitations of the simulated face-to-face classroom communication activities. Students of their study described how contact with peers from another country could help them to learn English because they used it in real situations: "Speaking the foreign language was experienced as relevant and no longer just part of a simulation with classmates who share the same native language: 'Warum soll ich da auf Englisch mit denen reden?' (DE3) (transl. Why should I speak English with them?)" (p. 357). These findings correspond clearly with findings from my study. According to the interviewed teachers, the students experienced that it was necessary to find and use a common language and strived to succeed with communicating with the other EFL or native English students.

One insight that surprised me during the interviews in my study, was how similar all teachers experienced the communication situations regardless of having collaborated with just natives or just other EFL learners. I assumed, in advance, that when communicating with natives, the Norwegian EFL learners would experience that the natives were a bit more advanced English speakers and writers, like Berit believed: *I think that communication is easier when they both are in a learning process regarding the language.* But here I found that those who had only collaborated with natives perceived that as the best alternative, while those who had only collaborated with other EFL learners perceived that to be the best alternative. When not focusing on nativity, these teachers may have proceeded from the view that nativity is of superior value in language learning, and rather focused on the value of English as Lingua Franca in the learning situation. This view aligns with Byram's (2021) arguments for leaving the view of native superiority and rather value the transcultural ideal in language learning. Also Kramsch's (1993) and Breen's (1985) statement that students should be allowed to act and reflect as the language learners that they in fact are and not imitate native speakers, reflects this same view.

Advantages of moving away from "native-speakerism" (Normann, 2021, p. 762) was found to be positive for students' encouragement and self-esteem in the study of Norwegian mobility students. They found that their language identity did not rely on

them using native-like accent, and this made them less reluctant to using oral English (Normann, 2021).

The teachers in my study also mentioned how their students, whether they communicated with other EFL learners or native English speakers, became aware of typical mistakes or patterns that were made by their collaboration partners. This led to reflections about how the others' native language could influence their use of the English language, and the teachers had observed how these discoveries of mistakes and patterns were engaging for their students. I find these observations interesting because they say something about a dimension of language learning which is both equal to and different from what happens in a traditional language classroom. In addition to comparing Norwegian and English, students get a chance to compare another language with the English language and, further, with their own native language in the search for patterns and typical mistakes. This gives them an opportunity to become aware of how their own language(s) influence and are influenced by their English language. This opportunity is of course also offered in multilingual classrooms, but not all Norwegian EFL students have this diversity to benefit from in their language classroom. Primary school students are also not engaged in international mobility programs as is the case with older Norwegian EFL students today, but Normann (2021) suggests that more students should get a chance to take part in transnational collaborations also through online platforms such as eTwinning. For primary school students this type of international collaboration may be an opportunity to practice and experience the English language as lingua franca and to learn that nativity is not superior to their own use of the English language, and thereby become more autonomous EFL users.

Comparing similarities and differences without focusing on a native ideal can be seen as a way of practicing and developing ICC as described by Byram (2021). The teachers in my study described several situations with openness, curiosity, and interest in their interlocutors' language use, but also situations where the students were a bit amused by the others' lack of pronunciation competence or non-native-like intonation, as in the example where the Norwegian students were asked *What's your hobbyeeee?* (my comment: spoken in broken English), as Johanne had experienced. The Norwegian students wondered *Hm? What does that mean? No, they are talking about hobbies! – Oh, yes!* Situations like this one offer an opportunity to discuss and interpret what is communicated. This calls for openness, good-will, and a wish to understand what the interlocutors are trying to say. In this concrete situation, the teacher was present and could act as mediator between the interlocutors. But in other situations, when communicating without the teacher's supervision or out in the real world, students must manage on their own. In situations like these, students can feel both superior and inferior to their interlocutors. In the example above, it is possible to assume that the Norwegian students felt a bit superior to their collaboration partners due to their level of EFL competence. Such situations raise an opportunity to investigate the concepts of stereotype and prejudice and how they impact the interaction between the interlocutors. Although conducted with advanced learners, Eren's (2021) finding that collaborating with people from different cultural perspectives dismantled prejudices and stereotypes support this stand. Byram (2021) states that knowledge about the process of interaction is not acquired automatically and needs to be taught. If students learn that their own truth is not universal, and learn the mechanisms of stereotyping and prejudice, they will develop their awareness and understanding for others. Instead of avoiding a potential conflict, for example by moving quickly away from the challenging situation, using it for

learning can be an opportunity for deeper cultural understanding. This was also suggested by Avgousti (2018). This concrete example with Johanne's students is perhaps of superficial nature, but it offers an opportunity to discuss the role and history of English language use in different countries. And further provide the students with knowledge about why there are differences in the ways that we use and practice the English language.

5.3 Becoming intercultural, global citizens

Preparing their students for a life as a global citizen was of obvious importance to the teachers who were interviewed in this study. This is also important to the European Education Area, who state that to function and thrive, people need to be given the opportunity to learn different languages and to develop their interpersonal skills and their cultural awareness (The Council of the European Union, 2018). Not many of the interviewed teachers mentioned the term ICC or cultural awareness, but they all spoke of the importance of "opening up the world" to their students. They described their students as "developing world citizens" and talked about the importance of helping them learn how to communicate and function in a global society. The findings discussed in this section are to a large degree linked to ICC, and I have chosen to use Byram's model of ICC (2021) in the discussion of several aspects of students' development towards becoming intercultural, global citizens also in this section. In her systematic review of ICC and online exchanges, Avgousti (2018) stated telecollaboration to be a catalyst for ICC. Camilleri (2016) discussed how teachers believed that global education, in that case through eTwinning, could prepare students for reality outside the classroom walls by giving them the opportunity to view the world with multiple perspectives and to learn both about themselves and about others. These findings create an interesting backdrop for discussing the findings of my study in light of the concept of ICC in the following.

Throughout this study, I have got the impression that the interviewed teachers believe that the English subject has a specific responsibility for fostering students into global citizens. It is also stated in LK20 that English is a central subject for cultural understanding, and that it should contribute to developing intercultural understanding of different ways of life. This includes cross-curricular activities since the aspect of culture is also tied to the other school subjects (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Describing the English language as *the language that is going to open up the world* to students, as Berit did, is quite a strong statement. From international projects, the teachers described how their students got to experience the importance of having a common language to be able to get to know each other across borders. In this situation, there was more focus on English as a tool for reaching an aim of communication and learning, rather than on the language as learning object. Perhaps, in the setting of international collaborations, a main aim of EFL learning should be to *understand that English is so much more than just a school subject*, as expressed by Nina. She stated during her interview that international collaboration projects neither can nor should replace all regular classroom activity due to both time consumption and student motivation. She had the opinion that collaborating internationally demands a lot of effort from both teacher and students, and that there are several learning aims that can and should be practiced in the frame of regular classroom activity. This argument can be seen as a call for choosing to focus on the competencies that are harder to learn from "regular" classroom education when engaging in international collaborations, such ICC. This point of view was also stated by Johanne during her interview: *They learned*

about the country's culture... and of course they learned a bit English too. But that did not become the main focus, no. And perhaps that was not the intention, either.

The teachers in my study described their students' sincere curiosity in their collaboration partners, and how this curiosity had them wondering and asking questions about their culture and ways of life. Berit described how meeting the others was *kind of magic*, and from the descriptions of these teachers, I got the impression that most of their students went into the collaborations with an open attitude. The teachers described how their students wanted to know as much about their collaboration partners as possible, and that they were engaged and interested in the project. Considering *attitude of curiosity and openness* in Byram's (2021) model of ICC, I find it interesting to relate these observations to the earlier discussed concepts of prejudice and stereotyping. Avgousti's review (2018) of telecollaborations with older students concluded that international collaboration could be an entrance to dismantling stereotypes and misconceptions that students had formed throughout their lives. It might be possible to think that the findings in my study show less of stereotyping and prejudice because of the young age of the students. It is interesting to consider whether there can be advantages of starting international collaborations in primary school to prevent future stereotyping and prejudice. Byram (2021) clearly states that to avoid stereotyping and prejudice, students need to learn how to engage with others in relationships of equality. This means that they need to be willing to discover other perspectives than their own, and to question the values and beliefs of both their own and other's culture. While Avgousti (2018) describes prejudice and stereotypes presented to older learners by media, Byram (2021) describes how children are able to shift focus away from themselves from an early age, but that they must reach a certain stage of maturity before managing to see from others' point of view. Although the youngest students have not been influenced by the global society to the same degree as older learners, they early start categorizing people, including themselves, into different groups. As self-identification develops, children develop a preference for their own group, their "in-group". What a child perceives as its "in-group" is culture specific and built on stereotypical, and these stereotypes can be dismantled when students experience that there are different ways of viewing the world (Byram, 2021).

When students were interacting with their collaboration partners, teachers in my study had noticed how the students' curiosity and interest in the others led to them wanting to know as much about their collaboration partners as possible. And when they learned about the lives of these students living in different countries, the Norwegian students often compared their own lives to the others' and were often surprised that there were so many similarities. Trine described how her students observed *that the same things are actually happening too, in different parts of the world*, while Berit had noticed that *what they experience when they get a letter is that the difference is smaller than what they think*. This curiosity and willingness to adjust their existing views and opinions about their interlocutors when comparing themselves to the others is an attitude crucial for developing new knowledge (Byram, 2021). By decentring from their own culture, students may learn about the interlocutor's culture from a more open point of view and also learn something about their own culture as it is perceived by someone from the outside. Primary school students have developed knowledge about their own culture primarily through their family and secondarily through education. Developing their cultural knowledge to a new level by socializing with students from a different country of culture can be a useful way of developing new knowledge about their own culture and to

adjust their perceptions of the others' culture (Byram, 2021). Byram (2021) further describes how previous research on the matter indicates that children's competence develops from lower stages to higher stages, from "observing" and "comparing" to "recommending" and "planning", and this can indicate that when focusing on ICC in primary education, it may be beneficial to focus on skills such as "comparing" and "being curious and open" before moving on to more advanced concepts.

Avgousti (2018) also found that learning to see both themselves and their collaboration partners through a different lens by engaging in international interactions led to increased interest in their own culture. In my study, this was seen when students managed to compare their own daily lives and their own culture with the lives of their interlocutors. Teachers in my study described how their students became more conscious about what they appreciated with their own culture and their own traditions, when they compared themselves with the others. Nina said that:

I think they learned to appreciate what they had.. and, they grew very fond of their own traditions around Christmas, and May 17th, and like.. it was not that they.. there were things that they did down there, that they envied, but then they sat there with the feeling that "I am actually doing quite fine.

This was also seen in the intercultural online exchange study by Lee and Markey (2014) where students had become more aware of their own beliefs and their own culture and background through collaborating with students from other countries and cultures.

Developing knowledge about oneself and others is, in addition to being open-minded, crucial to be able to overcome stereotypical assumptions about others and to fight prejudice (Byram, 2021). International collaborations can be an arena for developing such knowledge. This perspective is highlighted in the studies conducted by Avgousti (2018), Camilleri (2016) and Eren (2021), who all found that online intercultural interaction was an effective way of dismantling stereotypical attitudes. By becoming familiar with an individual from another culture, Avgousti (2018) found that students noticed how their collaboration partners not necessarily displayed what was thought of as typical nationalistic characteristics, and thereby learned that culture cannot be generalised. Camilleri (2016) found that the students' awareness of and empathy for others was strengthened. In the context of teaching EFL primary school students, these findings are interesting. LK20 states that one of the core values of the English subject is to contribute to develop students' understanding of their own views of the world as culture-dependent, and further open for new ways for them to interpret the world, promote their curiosity and engagement and, lastly, help prevent prejudice (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). This highlights the relevance of these concepts also in primary school EFL teaching.

Byram (2021) further states the importance of helping students develop their critical cultural awareness by teaching them the value of being curious and open-minded and being interested in learning about both their own and others' culture. To learn and manage to evaluate the values of themselves and others, he suggests interacting and mediating in intercultural exchanges where students need to draw upon their intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes as a basis for developing this critical cultural awareness. It is possible to believe that for primary school EFL students, cultural meetings such as these may help them understand that there are nuances and that there are multiple ways of living a full life already from a young age. And that they may

benefit from this knowledge both as young people navigating in their local physical and global online society and, later, as adults living their lives as global citizens.

5.4 Developing identity

During the interviews, I noticed how the teachers early in the conversation often mentioned how international collaborations offered an opportunity for practicing and learning language and culture. When we dwelled at the topic of learning in our conversations, however, other thoughts also came to the surface as the teachers started talking about what experiencing interacting with students from other countries could mean to their students' development as individuals. How the students looked at themselves and their reality *in a little different light*, and how they learned about own boundaries when they had to decide what they wished to share about *me and mine*. Setting boundaries and allowing oneself to have privacy is a way of displaying critical judgment, which is related to developing critical culture awareness as described by Byram (2021).

LK20 states that English is an important subject also when it comes to identity development. There is emphasis on opening perspectives also on the students themselves, and there is stated that mastering English communication can help students develop a positive self-image and a secure identity (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). In the context of internationalisation, the teachers in this study believed that their students were learning about themselves by learning about and comparing with others. They saw themselves in a new light because they got an understanding that the realities of others can be different from their own. This influence on identity is in line with Lee and Markey (2014), Camilleri (2016) and Avgousti (2018). Lise presented an example of a situation where students compared themselves to others and reflected on their own lives:

... it was really exciting sitting home in Norway and watch that film from the USA, where you.. their lives were completely different from ours.. and to sit and watch, and talk to them, communicating with them and look into their rooms, to see how they were and such.. well, it was.. it was very good. To see that the world is different from their own children's room.

Kohn and Hoffstaedter (2017) and Vinagre (2022) found that non-native speaker identity evolved, and that self-reflection was a result of international collaborations. These findings are in line with what was described by Berit:

And they look at themselves and their reality in a little different light. This can be because they get an overview of how daily life is there, how the school system works, but it can also be details that they learn about the life of one of their pen pals. That...influences them more.

It is probable to think that the Norwegian EFL students in some way related to their interlocutors since they were of about the same age, and that this relatedness enhanced this understanding. If they had collaborated with much younger old older learners, or only with teachers, the level of self-reflection or comparisons with themselves could have been lower. When talking to children of the same age and learning about their lives, it may be easier for a young student to think "this could be my daily life – this could be me". Lise added contrast to this view in a description of a project where her students got to communicate with an adult person during a live, digital conversation. She then

observed how her students in this situation became *an own edition of themselves*, that they adjusted their communication form to the situation and the age of their interlocutor by acting "*more adult-ish*". She was impressed of how her students managed to mediate between different modes, and she noticed that they were proud after managing this communication situation. The success in this situation was probably not because students related to this person as in the above example, but this experience may have influenced their self-perception and identity in a different matter. Managing to adjust to a new situation and carry out communication in a completely new setting may be contributing to students' positive perception of their own communication competence. This can be a sign of maturity and is in line with Kohn and Hoffstaedter (2017) who found that older students became more satisfied with their own oral communication and that they to a larger degree trusted their own ability to use strategies that helped them carrying out communication successfully after participating in telecollaboration projects.

Teachers in my study also described how their students often, before engaging themselves in international collaboration projects, were shy or reluctant to talk and lacked confidence in their own English competence. As discussed earlier, there is a history of comparing EFL learners with "natives" and thinking that the practice of English must be "native-like" to be at an adequate level. These teachers explained how students were surprised when they discovered that their English competence was functional when testing it out "in real life"; *Wow! I am not that bad in English after all*. This experience probably boosted the students' self-esteem, and thereby contributed positively to their identity or self-image as language users and learners. Kohn and Hoffstaedter (2017) also found that the "realness" of the communication situation was perceived as helpful by students, as they experienced that they were able to be English *users*, and not just English learners. They also describe how there was a growing sense of trust in students' own emerging qualities of "non-native speaker identity" (p. 351), as was also a finding in Normann's (2021) study.

Kohn and Hoffstaedter (2017) also found that students did not define lingual *correctness* as success. Rather, maintaining a conversation by helping each other through was defined as success. They discovered that there were several challenges and misunderstandings that needed to be solved, the communication process did not go smoothly, but still it was regarded as successful by the students themselves. This was also the case with the experiences of the teachers in my study. They noticed how their students experienced that their interlocutors made mistakes too, also those who were native English speakers, and this allowed them to focus more on the meaningfulness of the tasks rather than on expressing themselves in perfect English. It is probable to think that their willingness to succeed and their understanding and empathy for their interlocutors was helpful in this matter. These findings may be a call for valuing English as lingua franca, and to continue the development of not viewing nativity as superior. Students can learn that their use of the English language is their own, and that it is fully worthy for carrying out communication with other English-speaking people from all over the world. This is an important experience regarding students' self-perception and identity as language users, in the process of developing a confidence which is a valuable asset in their becoming of intercultural global citizens.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this research project has been to investigate how Norwegian EFL teachers perceive students' learning outcome from participation in international collaboration. Six Norwegian primary school teachers have been interviewed in individual, qualitative semi-structured interviews in the process. Before presenting what the findings from this research may imply for the teaching and learning of English in the Norwegian primary classroom, I will revisit my research question and suggest answers derived from the discussion of findings that was conducted in chapter 5.

6.1 Summary of findings

The aim of this study has been to find answers to the research question "*What are Norwegian EFL primary school teachers' perceptions and experiences with students' participation in international collaboration?*"

The findings of the study imply that teachers who have engaged themselves and their students in international classroom collaboration find this work to be challenging, but also that it is worth the effort. It is of obvious importance to teachers that their students experience meaningful and motivation language practice, and that the authentic aspect of communicating with non-Norwegian language users is one of their main reasons for engaging their students in this type of work. There seems to be a perception that students' communicative competence is enhanced. Students put extra effort into their work, and since English acts as lingua Franca, they cannot lean on their mother tongue in this setting. Thereby, students are offered an opportunity to practice their strategic competence. The English language, as lingua franca, functions as "tool" more than an objective in this setting. Whether the interlocutors also are EFL learners or native English speakers is of less importance, since the "native ideal" seems to be of decreasing importance to EFL teachers and students.

Developing ICC seems to be perceived as key for students to eventually function as intercultural, global citizens. Although not referring to this terminology, there are findings that indicate how ICC is treated within international classroom collaborations. Learning the objectives of the English language is emphasised, but developing in-depth cultural understanding seems to be of even greater importance in these international classroom collaborations. This is where the specific responsibility of the English subject to teach students how to function out in the world comes in. Collaborating with students from different countries and cultures raise students' curiosity and interest, which is an attitude necessary for developing ICC. By comparing themselves to "the others", students discover that similarities and differences may not be as they believed it to be. This dismantling of stereotypes may affect and change students' perceptions about both themselves and others and help prevent future prejudice against people from different countries and cultures. Regarding students' WTC, their main obstacle seemed to be their confidence in themselves as English speakers. Experiencing that they are able to communicate in English seems to enhance this self-confidence, and thereby help develop their ICC.

Experiencing succeeding communication with non-Norwegian interlocutors is also perceived to influence students' perceptions of themselves. By communicating with someone representing "otherness", students gain multiple perspectives on both themselves and others. They learn about their own culture and beliefs and can reflect on

what they like and do not like. They also get an opportunity to reflect on what they are comfortable sharing and can practice setting boundaries. As language learners, a non-native speaker identity is evolving, and this identity can be enhanced and developed by getting a chance to practice using the English language in a “real” situation.

6.2 Implications for the Norwegian primary EFL classroom

If primary EFL teachers wish to engage their students in authentic learning situations, international classroom collaboration should be considered. International collaborations are doubtlessly a venue for developing intercultural competencies. Findings from this study imply that students both make use of the skills of acting interculturally from a young age, and that they are able and ready to learn. It is however important, that teachers take the students’ young age into consideration when choosing what competencies to focus on in these collaborations. Teachers should not worry about students’ interlocutors being non-Norwegian EFL learners or native English speakers, because despite possibly slight differences, students will be offered a chance to experience both valuable language practice and an opportunity for cultural reflections in both types of collaborations.

The findings from this study imply that although several learning objectives can be practiced through primary international collaborations, it would be wise to focus especially on those that are the most challenging to practice in a “regular” classroom setting, such as communication strategies when English acts as *lingua franca*, development of intercultural competencies and the development of language user identity. This means grasping the unique aspect of authenticity and focusing on ICC, or “the ability to understand cultures, including your own, and use this understanding to communicate with people from other cultures successfully” (British Council, retrieved May 14, 2022).

ICC is complex, and as indicated above, it is necessary to take into consideration students’ age and maturity. Concrete suggestions for teaching based on Byram’s model of ICC is visually presented in Figure 8.

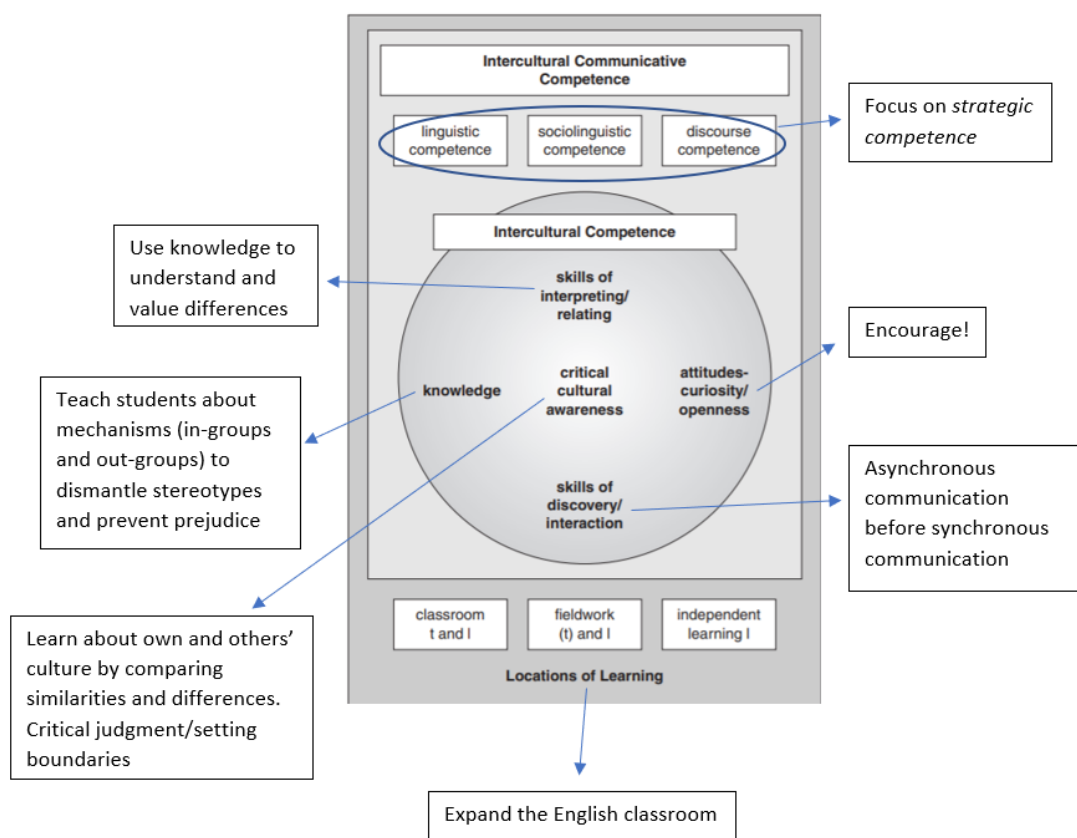


Figure 8 Suggestions for focus when teaching to develop primary EFL learners' ICC based on Byram's (2021) description of ICC

This visualisation suggests that to develop students' ICC, teachers should facilitate students' practise and development of communicative competence, especially focusing on *strategic competence* as communication with non-Norwegian English users offer an opportunity to develop other strategies than leaning on mother tongue. Further, in order to develop students' intercultural competence, I will in the following present implications for how primary school teachers can facilitate learning within the different intercultural competencies as presented in Byram's (2021) model.

Regarding *Attitudes of curiosity and openness*, teachers should start with its basic concepts and encourage their students to be open and curious and show interest in their interlocutors. The teacher can model how this is done, and emphasize how people, although different, come with the same value. This attitude of openness and curiosity may enhance students' development of *knowledge* about themselves and others. Even young children can be taught about mechanisms of in-group and out-groups, and this knowledge can contribute to dismantling stereotypes and prevent future prejudice. *Skills of interpreting and relating* is perhaps not the competency that is the most obvious to focus on with young students, but an objective of this competence may be using their knowledge about their own and others' culture as a foundation for understanding actions and expressed values from the others. This, again, is related to learning that there are multiple ways of viewing the world and that students, within their "in-group", have their way of viewing reality.

To develop *Critical cultural awareness*, students can learn about both their own and others' culture in the meeting between them. In this process, there should be a focus on reflecting how they perceive their own culture and beliefs. What do they appreciate? Setting boundaries for themselves and respecting others' boundaries is also a part of developing critical cultural awareness, and this can also be of focus when teaching younger learners. Lastly, regarding *Skills of discovery and interaction*, the notion of "time restraint" is particularly interesting when working with young students. There seems to be an advantage of focusing on asynchronous communication such as writing letters or making videos, before engaging young students in synchronic communication such as oral conversations online or online writing in chats. This is due to young students' need for guidance and differentiation, due to their linguistic competence being less developed than is the case with older learners, and younger learners being even more dependent on leaning on context and needing even more preparation than older learners.

Regarding locations of learning, international classroom collaboration may, as also suggested by Belz (2007), and be a way of bridging the "regular" classroom to arenas with more student autonomy and slightly less teacher control. It can offer a dimension that otherwise is hard to experience within the walls of the language classroom.

Lastly, although outside the scope of these thesis, it is of obvious importance to state that if international classroom collaborations are to become integrated into a school's practice, support and responsibility from principle and school owner is necessary to establish a practice that is functioning over time. In the long run, one cannot rely on the engagement from single teachers.

6.3 Study limitations and critical reflections.

As a novice researcher, I am aware that there are several aspects of any master's degree that could have been changed and handled differently. Reviewing the process of writing this thesis, has made me aware of several flaws which will probably also be noticed by the reader.

When looking back at the process of interviewing, I wish I had asked for more elaborations from the teachers. I was very concerned with acting professionally and I was afraid of biasing the interviews with asking leading questions, and this possibly led to me holding back where I could have asked for more information. After analysing the data material, perceptions regarding identity is one aspect that I wish I had dug deeper into. I wish I had asked all teachers directly about their perceptions of identity and self-perception related to international collaboration. As it was, this topic was discussed when the teachers brought it up. I do believe some very interesting thoughts and perceptions would have come up if I had taken the chance to ask the teachers to elaborate on their views on the matter.

Although the situation was as it was with Covid-19 restrictions in the period of gathering data for this research, I do believe that this study would have benefited from having data gathered also with use of other methods than, or in addition to, individual qualitative interviews. At one point, early in the process, I considered engaging the informants in qualitative group interviews, but as mentioned in section 3.3, I did not wish to take up more of the teachers' time. I admit that I also was unsecure about how such an interview would unfold when forced to use a digital platform and not having the

opportunity to meet in person. Still, if group interviews had been conducted after the individual interviews, I could have used them as an opportunity to gather in-depth perceptions on certain topics that either were lacking, or that arose through the first round of interviewing. Such as *identity*. It is probable to assume that if the informants were given an opportunity to talk to each other, even more thoughts, experiences, and perceptions could have been expressed.

Observing the teachers' classroom practice, although not a possibility in this project, could also have added important information in addition to the interviews. This could have provided information about teachers' actual practice in addition to their perceptions, and would possibly have added some more nuance to my findings in regard of answering my research question.

6.4 Further research

The aim of this study has been to investigate the teacher perspective on international classroom collaborations. This is a narrow scope in the context of internationality in EFL education, and there are several angles and perspectives that deserve attention in the aim of gathering knowledge about international classroom collaborations in Norwegian primary school. The literature review (section 2.5) shows that there is both room and need for extended research within this context. The perspective of young students who have participated in international classroom collaborations is one aspect that would be interesting to learn more about to see if they correlate with the perceptions of older learners, or if there are differences to be displayed.

An interesting observation I made during the interviews in this study was that the interviewed teachers also displayed a certain level of intercultural competence and represented much of what is described within the concept of ICC. These teachers, who have engaged themselves and their students in international collaborations, all expressed how they really wanted these projects to work out. They described how they needed to enter these collaborations with an attitude of flexibility and open-mindedness, and they seemed willing to adjust both their expectations and their aims to what was possible to achieve through the different collaborations. It would be interesting to see how teachers' intercultural competence affects students' opportunities to learn.

The last perspective that I will mention regarding further research, in addition to the student perspective and teachers' intercultural competence, is the perspective of the "others". Although the views of both parties in international collaborations have been investigated in several research projects, I cannot recall coming across perceptions from teachers or learners who have collaborated with Norwegian interlocutors. Learning about this perspective could also say something about how Norwegian students' and teachers' ICC is experienced from the "outside".

6.5 Final remarks

My motivation for writing this thesis has been to gain insight into what I perceive to be the exciting field of international student collaborations. I do not expect this research study to revolution the field in any sense, but I hope that it can contribute with some nuances regarding classroom based international collaborations. As described in this study, it is much easier to locate research that is conducted with advanced learners than with primary school students within this field, but I hope this will change, and that

internationality in primary school also can become a greater focus. Not just through use of authentic cultural literature in the EFL classroom, but through engaging also young students in international collaborations where they get a chance to practice their English and learn about culture by communicating with children in other parts of the world. Perhaps getting a sense of what it means to be a global citizen, can affect how young students view themselves and help them perceive and approach others with openness.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Interview guide

Intervjuguide

Introduksjon

- Takk for at du stiller til intervju. Jeg setter pris på at du vil dele tankene dine rundt internasjonalt samarbeid med meg.
- Formålet med intervjuet er å få innblikk i dine tanker om og erfaringer med internasjonalt samarbeid i engelskklasserommet

Informasjon om intervjuet

- Intervjuet vil ta cirka en time, antagelig litt kortere tid. Jeg tar lydopptak med diktafon underveis.
- Etter intervjuet transkriberer jeg samtalen vår, og du vil bli fullstendig anonymisert.
- Underveis i intervjuet kan du ta deg god tid til å tenke og svare på spørsmålene mine. Hvis noe er uklart, må du bare spørre meg om å forklare hva jeg mener med spørsmålet mitt. Det er ingen svar som er riktige eller feil, det er refleksjonene, tankene og meningene dine jeg er ute etter å få innblikk i.

Påminnelser til meg selv før intervjuet:

- *Vær kort, konsis. Informanten skal snakke mest mulig, jeg minst mulig.*
- *Gi tid – tål at det oppstår pauser.*
- *Hold spørsmålene enkle og «rene», ikke overless.*
- *LYTT – og still oppfølgingsspørsmål der hvor det er naturlig.*

Spørsmål før vi starter? SLÅ PÅ DIKTAFON

Bakgrunnsspørsmål

1. Hvor lenge har du jobbet som engelsklærer?
2. Hvilken utdanningsbakgrunn har du?
3. Hvilken aldersgruppe har du jobbet mest med i engelskundervisningen?
4. Hvordan planlegger dere undervisningen i engelskfaget ved skolen din - foregår planleggingen individuelt eller i Team?
5. Anvender dere et læreverk i engelsk, og i så fall: Hvilke(t)?
6. Hvilke digitale ressurser anvender du i engelskundervisningen din?

Hovedspørsmål

Begrepsavklaring:

- samarbeid med elever og lærere fra et annet land, som enten har engelsk som andrespråk eller som førstespråk.

- digitalt samarbeid og/eller brevveksling o.l. (ikke utveksling)

1. Du har erfaring med internasjonalt samarbeid i klasserommet. Kan du fortelle om disse erfaringene?
2. Hvilke verktøy har du anvendt?
3. Hva motiverte deg til å ta i bruk denne undervisningsformen/metoden, hvordan kom du i gang?
4. Hvilken respons/tilbakemelding får du fra elevene når dere driver med slikt arbeid? Hva synes de?
5. Hvordan ganger dette arbeidet elevene, tenker du?
6. Hva krever det av elevene?
7. Jeg er interessert i å høre litt mer om hva du tenker om elevenes læringsutbytte i engelsk gjennom dette arbeidet. Læring omfatter jo så mangt, men kanskje du kan si hva du umiddelbart tenker på?

(kommunikasjon, Språklæring, Kulturforståelse, Danning, Identitetsutvikling, Digitale ferdigheter - stikkord til hjelp om det trengs)

8. Hva opplevde du som utfordrende?
9. Hva kan de lære (i engelskfaget) gjennom internasjonalt samarbeid som de ikke lærer i en vanlig klasseromssetting?
10. Hvis vi ser på elevenes alder – barneskole. Ser du noen fordeler/ulempes med å starte med internasjonalt samarbeid i barneskolen? Hvilke?
11. Ville du/kommer du til å gjøre dette igjen tror du? Hvorfor/ Hvorfor ikke.
12. Hva har dette arbeidet hatt å si for *din* utvikling som engelsklærer/lærer?
13. Hva tenker kollegene om det du gjør - deltar de? Spør de? Er det interesse i kollegiet?
14. Har du noen tips til den som sitter på gjerdet og vurderer å kaste seg uti? *Hvordan og Hvorfor.*
15. Har du noen mer du ønsker å tilføye?

SLÅ AV DIKTAFON

Tusen takk for at jeg fikk intervju deg!

Ønsker du å gi noen kommentarer til selve intervjuet?

Info:

1. Forklar prosessen med Member-checking: «Det som skjer nå»
2. Spør om lov til å ta kontakt for oppfølgingsspørsmål om det skulle være behov for det.

Egne refleksjoner etter intervjuet:

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet ” Autentisk språkbruk i engelskklasserommet”?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å *få innsikt i hvordan og hvorfor autentisk språkbruk gjennom internasjonalt samarbeid praktiseres i det norske engelskklasserommet*. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Formålet med prosjektet er å undersøke hva engelsklærere i norsk skole tenker om autentisk kommunikasjon og hvordan de eventuelt praktiserer dette i sitt eget klasserom. Jeg vil analysere og sammenligne svar fra 4-8 respondenter fra barnetrinnet (1. – 7. klasse) fordelt på ulike skoler. Forskningsspørsmålene handler om hva elevene kan lære gjennom autentisk kommunikasjon og internasjonalt samarbeid i engelskklasserommet, og hva lærerne tenker om denne formen for undervisning.

Dette forskningsprosjektet utføres i forbindelse med en masteroppgave i fagdidaktikk fremmedspråk.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Norges Teknisk-Naturvitenskapelige Universitet (NTNU) er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du blir spurt om å delta på bakgrunn av din utdanning og praksis som språklærer. Jeg skal intervjuer 4-8 engelsklærere fra ulike barneskoler i denne prosessen.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at du blir intervjuet av meg. Intervjuet vil ta cirka en time. Intervjuet inneholder spørsmål om hva du tenker om autentisk kommunikasjon og internasjonalt samarbeid i språklæringen. Jeg tar lydopptak og notater fra intervjuet. Hvis intervjuet gjennomføres digitalt, tar jeg opptak av intervjuet. Du bestemmer da selv om du vil at opptaket gjøres med eller uten kamera.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Student og veileder vil ha tilgang ved behandlingsansvarlig institusjon
- Navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine vil jeg erstatte med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data. Skole og arbeidskommune vil også erstattes med anonyme navn.
- Når jeg tar opptak av intervjuet, bruker jeg NTNU Zoom. Det vil si at uansett om intervjuet gjennomføres digitalt eller ved et fysisk møte, så tar jeg opptak og lagrer i NTNUs sikre nettverk. Du bestemmer selv om du vil ha kamera på eller av under intervjuet.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er 25. mai 2022. Personopplysninger anonymiseres og intervjuoptak slettes ved prosjektslutt.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra *Norges Teknisk-Naturvitenskapelige Universitet* har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- *Norges Teknisk-Naturvitenskapelige Universitet* ved *Fredrik Mørk-Røkenes* (veileder/prosjektansvarlig) e-post: fredrik.rokenes@ntnu.no, telefon: 735 98 148
- *Marianne Valstad Hallager* (student), e-post: mrva@verdai.kommune.no, telefon: 918 59 408
- Vårt personvernombud: *Thomas Helgesen*, e-post: thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no, telefon: 930 79 038

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Marianne Valstad Hallager
Student i Master Fremmedspråksdidaktikk
ved Norges Teknisk-Naturvitenskapelige Universitet

Fredrik Mørk Røkenes
Førsteamanuensis i engelsk fagdidaktikk
ved Norges Teknisk-Naturvitenskapelige Universitet
(Forsker/veileder)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «Autentisk kommunikasjon i engelskklasserommet», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet 31. mai 2022

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Masteravtale/hovedoppgaveavtale

Sist oppdatert 11. november 2020

Fakultet	Fakultet for samfunns- og utdanningsvitenskap
Institutt	Institutt for lærerutdanning
Studieprogram	MDID
Emnekode	MDID3930

Studenten	
Etternavn, fornavn	Hallager, Marianne Valstad
Fødselsdato	02.04.1981
E-postadresse ved NTNU	mariavha@stud.ntnu.no

Tilknyttede ressurser	
Veileder	Fredrik Mørk Røkenes
Eventuelle medveiledere	
Eventuelle medstudenter	

Oppgaven	
Oppstartsdato	01.09.2021
Leveringsfrist	25.05.2022
Oppgavens arbeidstittel	Authentic communication in the EFL classroom
Problembeskrivelse	I wish to find out how EFL teachers in the Norwegian classroom perceive authentic communication in terms of developing students' communicative competence.

Risikovurdering og datahåndtering	
Skal det gjennomføres risikovurdering?	Ja
Dersom «ja», har det blitt gjennomført?	Ja
Skal det søkes om godkjenninger? (REK*, NSD**)	Ja
Skal det skrives en konfidensialitetsavtale i forbindelse med oppgaven?	Ja
Hvis «ja», har det blitt gjort?	Nei

* Regionale komiteer for medisinsk og helsefaglig forskningsetikk (<https://rekportalen.no>)

** Norsk senter for forskningsdata (<https://nsd.no/>)

Eventuelle emner som skal inngå i mastergraden

Retningslinjer - rettigheter og plikter

Formål

Avtale om veiledning av masteroppgaven/hovedoppgaven er en samarbeidsavtale mellom student, veileder og institutt. Avtalen regulerer veiledningsforholdet, omfang, art og ansvarsfordeling.

Studieprogrammet og arbeidet med oppgaven er regulert av Universitets- og høyskoleloven, NTNUs studieforskrift og gjeldende studieplan. Informasjon om emnet, som oppgaven inngår i, finner du i emnebeskrivelsen.

Veiledning

Studenten har ansvar for å

- Avtale veiledningstimer med veileder innenfor rammene master-/hovedoppgaveavtalen gir.
- Utarbeide framdriftsplan for arbeidet i samråd med veileder, inkludert veiledningsplan.
- Holde oversikt over antall brukte veiledningstimer sammen med veileder.
- Gi veileder nødvendig skriftlig materiale i rimelig tid før veiledning.
- Holde instituttet og veileder orientert om eventuelle forsinkelser.
- Inkludere eventuell(e) medstudent(er) i avtalen.

Veileder har ansvar for å

- Avklare forventninger om veiledningsforholdet.
- Sørgе for at det søkes om eventuelle nødvendige godkjenninger (etikk, personvern hensyn).
- Gi råd om formulering og avgrensning av tema og problemstilling, slik at arbeidet er gjennomførbart innenfor normert eller avtalt studietid.
- Drøfte og vurdere hypoteser og metoder.
- Gi råd vedrørende faglitteratur, kildemateriale, datagrunnlag, dokumentasjon og eventuelt ressursbehov.
- Drøfte framstillingsform (eksempelvis disposisjon og språklig form).
- Drøfte resultater og tolkninger.
- Holde seg orientert om progresjonen i studentens arbeid i henhold til avtalt tids- og arbeidsplan, og følge opp studenten ved behov.
- Sammen med studenten holde oversikt over antall brukte veiledningstimer.

Instituttet har ansvar for å

- Sørgе for at avtalen blir inngått.
- Finne og oppnevne veileder(e).
- Inngå avtale med annet institutt/ fakultet/institusjon dersom det er oppnevnt eksterne medveileder.
- I samarbeid med veileder holde oversikt over studentens framdrift, antall brukte veiledningstimer, og følge opp dersom studenten er forsinket i henhold til avtalen.
- Oppnevne ny veileder og sørgе for inngåelse av ny avtale dersom:
 - Veileder blir fraværende på grunn av eksempelvis forskningstermin, sykdom, eller reiser.
 - Student eller veileder ber om å få avslutte avtalen fordi en av partene ikke følger den.
 - Andre forhold gjør at partene finner det hensiktsmessig med ny veileder.
- Gi studenten beskjed når veiledningsforholdet opphører.
- Informere veileder(e) om ansvaret for å ivareta forskningsetiske forhold, personvern hensyn og veiledningsetiske forhold.
- Ønsker student, eller veileder, å bli løst fra avtalen må det søkes til instituttet. Instituttet må i et slikt tilfelle oppnevne ny veileder.

Avtaleskjemaet skal godkjennes når retningslinjene er gjennomgått.

Godkjent av

Marianne Valstad Hallager
Student

13.09.2021
Digitalt godkjent

Fredrik Mørk Røkenes
Veileder

13.09.2021
Digitalt godkjent

Mari Linna Mosebekk Aglen
Institutt

29.09.2021
Digitalt godkjent

Master`s Agreement / Main Thesis Agreement

Faculty	Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences
Institute	Department of Teacher Education
Programme Code	MDID
Course Code	MDID3930

Personal Information	
Surname, First Name	Hallager, Marianne Valstad
Date of Birth	02.04.1981
Email	mariavha@stud.ntnu.no

Supervision and Co-authors	
Supervisor	Fredrik Mørk Røkenes
Co-supervisors (if applicable)	
Co-authors (if applicable)	

The Master`s thesis	
Starting Date	01.09.2021
Submission Deadline	25.05.2022
Thesis Working Title	Authentic communication in the EFL classroom
Problem Description	I wish to find out how EFL teachers in the Norwegian classroom perceive authentic communication in terms of developing students' communicative competence.

Risk Assessment and Data Management	
Will you conduct a Risk Assessment?	Yes
If "Yes", Is the Risk Assessment Conducted?	Yes
Will you Apply for Data Management? (REK*, NSD**)	Yes
Will You Write a Confidentiality Agreement?	Yes
If "Yes", Is the Confidentiality Agreement Conducted?	No

* REK -- <https://rekportalen.no/>

** Norwegian Centre for Research Data (<https://nsd.no/nsd/english/index.html>)

Topics to be included in the Master`s Degree (if applicable)

Guidelines – Rights and Obligations

Purpose

The Master's Agreement/ Main Thesis Agreement is an agreement between the student, supervisor, and department. The agreement regulates supervision conditions, scope, nature, and responsibilities concerning the thesis.

The study programme and the thesis are regulated by the Universities and University Colleges Act, NTNU's study regulations, and the current curriculum for the study programme.

Supervision

The student is responsible for

- Arranging the supervision within the framework provided by the agreement.
- Preparing a plan of progress in cooperation with the supervisor, including a supervision schedule.
- Keeping track of the counselling hours.
- Providing the supervisor with the necessary written material in a timely manner before the supervision.
- Keeping the institute and supervisor informed of any delays.
- Adding fellow student(s) to the agreement, if the thesis has more than one author.

The supervisor is responsible for

- Clarifying expectations and how the supervision should take place.
- Ensuring that any necessary approvals are acquired (REC, ethics, privacy).
- Advising on the demarcation of the topic and the thesis statement to ensure that the work is feasible within agreed upon time frame.
- Discussing and evaluating hypotheses and methods.
- Advising on literature, source material, data, documentation, and resource requirements.
- Discussing the layout of the thesis with the student (disposition, linguistic form, etcetera).
- Discussing the results and the interpretation of them.
- Staying informed about the work progress and assist the student if necessary.
- Together with the student, keeping track of supervision hours spent.

The institute is responsible for

- Ensuring that the agreement is entered into.
- Find and appoint supervisor(s).
- Enter into an agreement with another department / faculty / institution if there is an external co-supervisor.
- In cooperation with the supervisor, keep an overview of the student's progress, the number of supervision hours spent, and assist if the student is delayed by appointment.
- Appoint a new supervisor and arrange for a new agreement if:
 - The supervisor will be absent due to research term, illness, travel, etcetera.
 - The student or supervisor requests to terminate the agreement due to lack of adherence from either party.
 - Other circumstances where it is appropriate with a new supervisor.
- Notify the student when the agreement terminates.
- Inform supervisors about the responsibility for safeguarding ethical issues, privacy and guidance ethics
- Should the cooperation between student and supervisor become problematic, either party may apply to the department to be freed from the agreement. In such occurrence, the department must appoint a new supervisor

This Master's agreement must be signed when the guidelines have been reviewed.

Signatures

Marianne Valstad Hallager
Student

13.09.2021
Digitally approved

Fredrik Mørk Røkenes
Supervisor

13.09.2021
Digitally approved

Mari Linna Mosebekk Aglen
Department

29.09.2021
Digitally approved

NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

Vurdering

Referansenummer

201198

Prosjekttittel

Autentisk kommunikasjon i engelskklasserommet

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet / Fakultet for samfunns- og utdanningsvitenskap (SU) /
Institutt for lærerutdanning

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Fredrik Mørk-Røkenes, fredrik.rokenes@ntnu.no, tlf: 73598148

Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student

Marianne Valstad Hallager, mariavha@stud.ntnu.no, tlf: 91859408

Prosjektperiode

12.08.2021 - 31.05.2022

Vurdering (1)

20.08.2021 - Vurdert

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg den 20.08.2021. Behandlingen kan starte.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 31.05.2022.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen
- formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål
- dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
- lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

NSD vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18) og dataportabilitet (art. 20).

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

Zoom er databehandler i prosjektet. NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29.

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og eventuelt rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: <https://www.nsd.no/personverntjenester/fylle-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema> Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Markus Celiussen

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Appendix E - Member checking

Research Question: *“What are Norwegian EFL primary school teachers’ perceptions and experiences with students’ learning through participation in international collaboration?”*

I have located three main themes that may contribute to answering my RQ. The first two are quite extensive, the third a little narrower. These themes may of course be revised during the last two months of work with my thesis.

Here is a short overview of main themes and additional sub-themes as the stand at the moment:

1. “Learning through authentic communication”

- the importance of experiencing
- the experienced need for a common language
- lingua franca vs. native English speakers
- Meaningful communication and motivation
- language awareness

2. “Teaching and developing intercultural communicative competence”

- Curiosity and openness
- Discovering similarities and differences
- The responsibility of the English subject

3. “Developing identity and self-perception”

- themselves vs. the “others”
- Students’ perceptions of own language competence

Additional findings: There are also some findings that are interesting regarding finding collaboration partners/use of platforms, how the projects are organised, whether your work is lonely or whether you work with international collaboration in teams at your school etc. These findings will be mentioned in the discussion of the findings that are the most relevant for my RQ.

