Amanda Helle

# The relationship between teaching language and teaching culture. An empirical study of EFL-teachers understandings in a Norwegian context.

Master's thesis in MLSPRÅK

Supervisor: Hana Gustafsson and Anne Dahl

May 2020

**Master's thesis**

**NTNU**
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

Amanda Helle

# The relationship between teaching language and teaching culture. An empirical study of EFL-teachers understandings in a Norwegian context.

NTNU
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

# Abstract

In the Norwegian English subject curriculum, the intercultural components of language is highlighted, but how do teachers understand the role of culture in language teaching? This study explored EFL teachers in upper secondary school's understanding of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture. By conducting an exploratory case study with the data collection methods of observation, in-depth teacher interviews and focus group interviews with pupils, the study has answered the research questions:

RQ1: What is upper secondary English FL teachers' understanding of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture?

RQ2: How are these understandings reflected in the classroom practice?

The study is based on the findings from observation in three English classes and interviews with two EFL teachers. The findings revealed that the teachers' understanding of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture was diverse; the common subject English teacher understood the communicative components as most essential in language learning, while the International English teacher had a much larger focus on the intercultural aspects of language. The classroom practice did to a large extent correlate with what the teachers had reported in their interviews; however, the vocational class observed was an exception. The findings indicate that there might be a correlation between teachers' understanding of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture and the different English subjects taught.

# Samandrag

I læreplanen for engelskfaget er den interkulturelle delen av språket framheva, men kva tenkjer eigentleg lærarar om rolla kultur har i språkundervisninga? Denne masteroppgåva har undersøkt korleis lærarar i framandspråket engelsk i vidaregåande opplæring forstår forholdet mellom å undervise i språk og å undervise i kultur. Gjennom ein utforskande casusstudie og bruk av observasjon, djubdeintervju og fokusgrupper med elevar, har oppgåva svart på to forskningsspørsmål:

FS1: Kva er vidaregåande lærarar i engelsk si forståing av forholdet mellom å undervise i språk og å undervise i kultur?

FS2: Korleis reflekterar denne forståinga praksisen deira i klasserommet?

Denne artikkelen brukar funn frå obervasjonar gjort i tre engelskklassar, samt intervjuer med to lærarar i framandspråket engelsk. Funna indikerer at lærarane si forståing av samanhengen mellom å undervise i språk, og å undervise i kultur var ulike; læraren for fellesfaget engelsk rekna det kommunikative aspektet som mest viktig i språklæring, medan læraren i programfaget hadde eit mykje større fokus på den interkulturelle delen av språklæringa. Bortsett frå i ykesfagklassen, samsvarte praksisen i klasserommet i stor grad med det lærarane hadde rapportert i intervjua. Funna indikerar at det kan vere ein samanheng mellom dei ulike faga og korleis lærarar forstår samanhengen mellom språklæring og kultur.

# Acknowledgements

I want to thank my supervisor, Hana Gustafsson for always answering all of my questions and for giving me more of her time than I could ever ask for.

I also have to give a special thank you to the teachers and pupils who said yes to contribute to my masters thesis (you know who you are!), this would not be possible without your help <3

Additionally, I have to thank my mom for always listening, and for pushing me when needed.

Last, I want to thank Marius for always believing in me.

# Table of contents

# Tables and abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| CLT | Communicative Language Teaching |
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |
| ICC | Intercultural Communicative Competence |
| ILT | Intercultural language teaching |
| RQ | Research question |
| VG1-3 | Vidaregåande 1-3 (Upper secondary 1-3) |

# 1 Introduction

*«Especially now with the globalisation, it is especially vital to have an understanding of others and their viewpoints»* (E1-G, pupil group 2)

## 1.1 Research rationale

The quote above was the answer from one of the pupils participating in this study's focus group interviews when asked if he found it important to learn about culture in his English class. With this statement, he shows that he is on his way to becoming an interculturally competent person who sees himself as a world citizen and who feels a responsibility for challenges in the global community (Risager 2017). To educate intercultural competence in pupils is one of the goals for teaching English as a foreign language in Norway. Ministry of Education and Research (NOU 2019:25, p. 84) puts the English language as a world language which is required in order to communicate with others and argues that the English subject is central to the pupils' intercultural competence which should foster a greater understanding of others and different ways of living. However, the focus on an intercultural approach to language teaching is relatively new, and as the Ministry of Education and Research point out, not the only goal of English language learning in the Norwegian context.

Before the 1970s, the language teaching approach for foreign language teaching was based on the idea that students only needed linguistic competence when learning a new language. The aim was to enable ideal speaker-listeners with the competence to produce grammatically well-formed sentences (Fenner 2018, Skulstad 2018). With the communicative competence's arrival in language study in the '80s (see Canale and Swain 1980), the thought of a unified method based on a single learning theory to teach language was left behind; as a result, foreign language teaching is no longer based on methods, but on different approaches. Since this paradigm shift, different trends and approaches have been present in the pedagogical and didactical theory, the curriculums and hence the classroom context. Despite this, it is evident that the Norwegian curriculum has been based on central ideas from the Communicative Language Teaching approach since the 1980s (Skulstad 2018). Communicative competence is, put simply, to enhance the different parts of learners' communication skills. However, some argued that communication skills are not synonymous with learners being able to apply cultural norms of the target language/area when interacting and that the communicative competence approach to teaching foreign language did not sufficiently cover the *intercultural* part of communicative competence (Jedynak 2011). To meet this gap, amongst others, Byram (1997) explored essential aspects of the intercultural component in communicative competence. He developed the model of Intercultural Communicative Competence, and with the introduction of the critical cultural awareness component, his model can be seen as a natural extension of the current focus on language learners' communicative competence (Oranje & Smith 2018).

The concept of intercultural competence was introduced in the Norwegian national curriculum context in the 1994 curriculum (Heggernes 2018). Since then, the interest for cultural challenges that the foreign languages give rise to have been gradually given more interest in the curriculums (Lund 2012). Even so, many identify the main aim of any foreign language course in English to become able to communicate successfully (Skulstad 2018), and research shows that even though language teachers are «favourably disposed» to teach the intercultural approach, the communicative approach is still practised over the intercultural (Oranje & Smith

2018). Although this may be true, it can be argued that also the intercultural part of language learning and teaching should be included in the term *communicate successfully.* In the Norwegian English curriculum, it is specified that «(…) when using the language for communication we must also be able to take cultural norms and conventions into consideration» (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2013a)*.* The route to provide that learners are able to communicate successfully may vary from teacher to teacher: The individual teachers' cognition about language, language teaching and learning, as well as their thoughts about what communicative competence is and entails, decides whether and to what degree the emphasis is put on linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects in teachings (Skulstad 2018). Hence, the individual teachers' cognition on intercultural aspects also decides if and how it is emphasised in teachings.

Even though culture is an essential part of language teaching in the theoretical field and is evident in the English subject curriculums, research from the Norwegian context indicates that the cultural and intercultural parts of language in foreign language teacher training is lacking. Dypedahl (2007) argues that intercultural learning traditionally has been absent in what is included in foreign language learning in higher education in Norway. He hence categorises it as outside what is traditionally seen as a natural component in language studies and therefore, the language teacher's competence in the Norwegian context. In light of this, he fears that elements in the curriculum regarding the intercultural perspective is overlooked in total, or treated as general or good intentions and hence challenging to implement systematically in the language teacher's teachings. Ragnhild Lund (2012) argues that the textbook plays a central role in most Norwegian classrooms, and hence the textbooks' interpretation of the curriculum plays an essential role in the teachers' practice. In turn, this raises the question of whether language teachers address culture in their teachings if the textbook is old, outdated or lacks vital cultural components? It can also be questioned if the teachers rely on the textbook on topics such as cultural content and intercultural competence on the basis that they do not have enough knowledge about it from their teacher training. Likewise to Dypedahl (2007), Vold (2017) argues that the Norwegian curriculum is ambitious and requires a high level of teacher competence about, among other things, language and culture-related areas and intercultural competence. She found in her study about preparedness in novice foreign language teachers that knowledge about everyday culture was partially left to the private sphere and argues that it is hence uncertain if all areas of the teacher competence sought for, is sufficiently covered in language teacher education programmes.

It is hence evident that the research field and the English subject curriculums in Norway highlights the vital role of culture in language learning and tells the teacher that the intercultural perspective can be an approach to teach language. Research shows that it is the individual teachers' cognitions on language and culture learning, that to a large degree, decides how different aspects are approached in the day to day teachings. At the same time, according to Dypedahl (2007) and Vold's (2017) research in the Norwegian context, higher education does not have a significant focus on culture and teaching the intercultural perspective. Questions about the role of teaching culture in language teaching in the Norwegian context is hence raised. What role do the cultural and intercultural aspects of language have in the EFL-teachings if teachers are not exposed to it in their teacher training? Do the teachers believe that culture and intercultural aspects of language have a place in language teaching at all? If so, how do the teachers understand the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture? This thesis will, through a small scale case study, explore upper secondary English teachers' understandings of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture.

### 1.1.1 Structure of the thesis

In the next chapter, the thesis will provide a theoretical background for the study. It will first address how the field argues that the teaching of culture can be practised in language teaching before it looks into culture and the intercultural approach in the Norwegian context. Next, there will be a focus on previous studies that have looked into foreign language teachers' understandings and perceptions on the intercultural perspective. This part will have a particular focus on Sercu et al. (2005) and Oranje and Smith (2018).

Next, the methodology chapter will address the research questions, design and participants before it will describe the data collection methods: observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups.

In chapter *4 Findings and Discussion*, findings are discussed in light of previous research and theory. This chapter is divided into two. The first part will discuss the teachers' understandings of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture, whereas the second part discusses how these understandings are present in the teachers' practice.

Last, a conclusion chapter will present an evaluation of the study, suggestions for further research and the implications this study has for me as a teacher.

# 2 Teaching language and teaching culture

How language and culture should be taught in the Norwegian context takes its point of departure in international research and frameworks, and the same frameworks and international research have influenced the Norwegian curriculums for English. Looking into how research and frameworks explain the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture suggests that cultural learning is an essential part of language learning and that the pupils should develop intercultural competence to become successful communicators in a globalised world. This chapter is hence going to provide an overview of how teaching culture from an intercultural approach is described in the field. It will then look into how the intercultural objective is present in the English subject curriculums and research conducted in the Norwegian context. Since there has been little to no research into English teachers' perceptions, beliefs and understandings of teaching culture in the Norwegian context, the chapter will include two relevant international studies as an addition.

## 2.1 Teaching language as culture

Solé (2003) compares the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture as «two sides of the same coin» and argues that awareness of the target culture should be addressed already at the start of the language learning process. Kramsch and Byram (2008) takes it a bit further and argues that teachers «are challenged not to teach language *and* [emphasis added] culture, but language *as* [emphasis added] culture».

The focus on intercultural knowledge in language learning has since the 1990s with Byram's (1997) theoretical framework about Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) been widely accepted as an approach to teach language and culture in the field. It is implemented in

national curriculums across the world, as well as in international guiding documents such as CEFR (2001) and OECD (2016). The intercultural communicative competence model focuses on making the students successful intercultural communicators. In order to gain intercultural communicative competence, Byram (1997) argues that the students should have specific knowledge, skills and attitudes. He formulated these into five principles he calls *Savoirs.* These *Savoirs* are presented below and divided into the three areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Additional research on the intercultural perspective concerning these three aspects is also presented.

### 2.1.1 Knowledge

*Savoirs* is knowledge about social groups and how they see themselves and the products and practices in the target language or country, these should be compared to those of one's own culture (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey 2001). Such cultural knowledge is often divided into big C and little c culture. The former refers to the aspects of literature, history and arts while the little c culture refers to the everyday culture such as norms and behaviours (Lázár 2007). Historically in the field of culture in language and language teaching, culture has been seen as homogeneous to national communities where the simplified one language=one culture has been the point of departure (Kramsch 2013). Culture is hence seen as something static and cultural practices are often related to the entire national entity. This view on culture is often tied to the modernist perspectives of culture. The focus in teachings has in this tradition been on the «high culture» or big C culture where teacher transmission of knowledge has been the traditional approach. When the communicative approach became dominant in the '80s, the field saw a shift. The most relevant concept was then changed from big C culture to concentrate on little c. The focus should now be on the native speakers' ways of behaving, eating, talking, customs, beliefs and values instead of on literature, arts and the big institutions. Despite this shift, the thought of one language=one culture is still unmistakable, and even though these little c practices are various, the focus is on the typical or stereotypical of the dominant or more salient group of native speakers (Kramsch 2013).

It is hence evident that such an approach to culture does not promote intercultural knowledge but is contrastively likely to support culturally-based generalisations or stereotypes (Liddicoat & Scarino 2013). The language teacher must hence address this challenge in her teachings and provide nuance. Additionally, Risager (2007) argues that the language learner must learn about the pressing challenges of the world. In her research, Lund (2012) found that the textbooks still have a focus on «high culture» where history and cultural legacy has a significant place and found a lesser focus on current and controversial topics. The teachers must hence be willing to provide additional classroom material to address current and controversial topics.

### 2.1.2 Skills

*Savoir comprendre* is about being able to explain and interpret events or documents from their own and target culture and relate it to their own culture. *Savoir apprendre/faire* is the ability to acquire knowledge about the target culture during interaction with people of other cultures (Byram et al. 2001). In interaction with others, pupils must be able to know what is appropriate, both in behaviours and linguistic use (Lund 2012).

4

Looking into discursive practices can be an alternative to learn the skill of S*avoir apprendre/ faire* successfully. With the globalisation and the increase of new technologies opening more arenas for intercultural meetings, as well as the moving of people across borders and expanding multicultural societies, the need to broaden the modernist view on culture has been crucial. With the point of departure that homogeneous national cultures no longer exist, the postmodernist perspectives argue that culture has become a discourse: because culture is no longer bound to a nation-state and its history, it must be seen as a dynamic process of social semiotic constructions (Kramsch 2013). Instead of looking at culture as belonging to national entities, we can talk about culture as different discourse groups (Scollon & Scollon 2001), and describe culture as something that can belong to any group that is linked by common interests or history. Discourse is composed of ways of thinking, listening, reading, writing, acting, interacting, believing, valuing and using tools and objects in particular settings and times to display or recognise a given social identity (Gee, Hull and Lankshear 1996 in Kramsch 2013). All of us are a part of multiple discursive groups which each have own ways of interacting and which consists of different norms and rules. An essential part of becoming an intercultural competent person and realise that culture can be tied to discourse is to reflect on and understand our own discursive practices (Kramsch 2013, Lund 2012). If the language learner can identify their own discourse groups and understand that these have their specific norms and rules, the language learner might see that persons from the target language/culture might also be a part of different discourse groups and even discover that they may have discourse groups in common (for example being teenagers or online gamers).

When one sees the necessity to tread carefully in intercultural meetings and understands that cultural differences are a part of the language dimension we must always be willing to learn about while at the same time realises that it is something that one can never learn to the fullest, Fennes and Hapgood (1997) argues that one is far along in the learning process of becoming an intercultural competent person. In this also lies the importance of understanding own discursive practices, culture and ways of behaving.


### 2.1.3 Attitudes

*Savoir être* is based on attitudes towards the target culture and includes to have curiosity and openness towards it and to take a relativistic point of view on one's own and target culture. The students should be able to "decenter" themselves to reflect upon own and other's values, beliefs and behaviours, and be ready to suspend disbelief and beliefs on other's and one's own culture (Byram et al. 2001). *Savoir s'engager* is the critical cultural awareness component of intercultural competence and is about becoming aware of one's values and how these values influence the view of other culture's values. It includes to have consciousness towards own and other's cultural perspectives, values and products and be able to evaluate these critically (Byram et al. 2001). Although most pupils are eager to learn a new language and the culture that follows, Kramsch (2013) argues that language learners often find it difficult to understand foreign cultures on own terms because they have grown up with other values than that of the target culture. As a result, language learners find refuge in stereotypes or literary fiction. In their research, Kentra Byram and Claire Kramsch (2008), also found that students were not able to recognise that historical and ideological circumstances in their lives influenced their perspective. However, the ability to relate different aspects of the target language/area to own culture is underlined in almost all of the *Savoirs.*

In order for the language learners to understand who they are, their Self, they must encounter «the Other». The Other cannot be understood unless the learners understand the historical and subjective experiences that have made them who they are. In order to understand these experiences, the learners must view themselves from the outside through the eyes of the Other. The challenge for the language teacher is hence to provide a place where the pupils can investigate their discursive practices, culture, values and ways of behaving in the eyes of the other. If they do this, they will understand that their historical and ideological circumstances have influenced their perspective.

Hoff (2014) argues that because intercultural competence is inherently concerned with the personal and cultural development of individuals, she regards it as an inseparable aspect of *Bildung.* Hoff (2018) writes that the *Bildung* traditions highlight the development of personal identity, moral values, critical thinking and democratic citizenship (Hoff 2014) and that the basic premise of the *Bildung* theories is that in the process of self-development, encounters with otherness is essential. Hoff (2014) has used *Bildung* theories to examine Byram's model of ICC. She argues that even though some central aspects of *Bildung* is evident in the ICC-model, it is downplayed by his focus on harmony and agreement. Instead of only focusing on harmony and agreement, Hoff (2014) underlines that conflict, ambiguity and difference should also be addressed in the intercultural approach, as they provide «fruitful conditions for profound dialogue between Self and Other». It is in this dialogue between the Self and the Other that intercultural attitudes can be developed.

## 2.2 Norwegian context

The organisation of the English subject curriculums in upper secondary school in Norway is complex. This sub-chapter will thus provide an overview of the English curriculums and explain the difference between the common English subject and the programme subject. These are terms that will be used frequently in the study. To provide how the intercultural perspective is present in the Norwegian context, the section *2.2.2 Curriculums* will present examples of its presence in the different curriculums. Last, section *2.2.3 Intercultural research in Norway* will present previous studies on the intercultural perspective in a Norwegian context.

### 2.2.1 The English subject in upper secondary

In upper secondary school in Norway, 140 hours of English is mandatory for all students. While in general studies all 140 hours are scheduled for VG1 (=year 11), in vocational studies, the hours are divided in two. This equals 84 hours in VG1 and the remaining 56 in VG2 (=year 12). This English subject is often referred to as the common subject, as it is mandatory for all pupils. The curriculum is the same in both general and vocational studies; however, in *Fagfornyelsen* (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2020), the new curriculum, vocational studies are getting their own.

In general studies, the pupils are also able to choose English as a programme for specialisation in VG2 and VG3, these English programme subjects are also 140 hours, and has a separate English subject curriculum. The curriculum is divided into three, where the different programmes have separate competence aims. The English subjects that are self-chosen by the pupils are often referred to as programme subjects.

An overview of how the English subject is organised in upper secondary school in Norway can be seen below:

| The English subjects in upper secondary school in Norway | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Mandatory/ self-chosen** | **Curriculum** | **Hours and year** |
| **English for general studies** | Mandatory | English subject curriculum | 140 hours in VG1 |
| **English for vocational studies** | Mandatory | English subject curriculum | 84 hours in VG1 56 hours in VG2 |
| **International English** | Self-chosen | Programme subject curriculum for International English | 140 hours in VG2 |
| **Social studies English** | Self-chosen | Programme subject curriculum for Social studies English | 140 hours in VG3 |
| **English literature and culture** | Self-chosen | Programme subject curriculum for English literature and culture | 140 hours in VG3 |

**Table 1.0 Overview over the English subject in upper secondary in Norway**


## 2.2.2 Curriculums

The English subject curriculum divides into four: *Language learning, oral communication, written communication* and *culture, society and literature.* However, the term intercultural is not explicitly mentioned anywhere in the English subject curriculum, including the *Purpose* section*.* Nonetheless, it is stated here that: «proficiency in English provides access to sources of information and to international culture and social life» (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2013a). In the rest of the *Purpose* section, some key objectives from the intercultural approach to language are evident; for instance, the importance of literature, insight into the history of English-speaking countries and of adapting the language. These are examples that the Norwegian curriculum for the English subject has a focus on big C and small c culture (Vold 2017). Examples of this can also be seen in the competence aims after VG1 general studies and VG2 vocational studies related to the c*ulture, society and literature* part of the curriculum. This part has seven competence aims for upper secondary, and one of these is to: «discuss and elaborate on culture and social conditions in several English-speaking countries». Here «culture» is tied to «English-speaking countries» which might indicate a modernist view on culture where one culture belongs to a national entity. The term «social conditions» mentioned in the competence aim can be seen as small c culture. Literature is also mentioned in the competence aims and can be an example of big C culture.

In summary, even though the curriculum is based on parts of the intercultural perspective, it is very vaguely put and as Dypedahl (2007) argues, it is likely that the language teachers who are not familiar with the intercultural approach will overlook these formulations. In this connection, I am afraid that the c*ulture, society and literature* part of the competence aims will be treated as content knowledge only. Such a view might result in the other parts of ICC (skills and attitudes) to be excluded in teachings.

In contrast to the English subject curriculum, Dypedahl (2007) argues that the programme subjects for specialisation have a higher demand for intercultural competence. These demands are reflected in multiple examples from the English as a programme subject curriculum. For instance, in the *Purpose* section for International English where intercultural competence is mentioned explicitly:

> «(…) intercultural competence is a natural and necessary aspect of language skills. The programme subject can help increase one's insight into other people's living conditions, outlook on life and cultural expression, thus opening doors to the many countries and cultures that use English» (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2013b).

That intercultural competence is explicitly mentioned and identified as a «necessary aspect of language skills» sends a clear message to the language teacher that intercultural competence is an aspect that is important in the programme for specialisation. Under the sub-category *Communication* in the International English curriculum, it is also stated that the pupils should be able to «use language appropriate to the situation in social, professional and intercultural contexts». This competence aim can be tied to little c practices of culture and to the skill of adapting the language to situation. In the section *Culture, society and literature,* the competence aim: «reflect on how cultural differences and dissimilar value systems can affect communication» requires the language learner to reflect. Reflection is essential to develop the attitudes of the intercultural competent language learner. It is through exploration and reflections the learners can compare their cultural views with those of the target language (Oranje & Smith 2018). This can be tied to the critical cultural awareness component of ICC and can be regarded as one of the most important aspects to achieve intercultural competence.

In sum, it is clear that the objectives related to the intercultural approach to language learning are vaguely put in the English subject curriculum, and it might be argued that only the knowledge perspective can be regarded present. Hoff (2018) argues that «if an intercultural approach is to be included in the teaching and learning of English, teachers must be conscious of moving beyond the competence aims to take into account the overarching aims of the subject». This is an apt description of how to approach the English subject curriculum, however, in the English programme for specialisation—especially International English where the curriculum explicitly mentions intercultural competence—the language teacher must be expected to approach the subject with a partly intercultural approach.

### 2.2.3 Intercultural research in Norway

In the Norwegian context, a lot of the research on the intercultural aspect and approach has been on either how the use of literature and literary reading can develop intercultural competence in learners (e.g. Hoff 2013, 2016, 2019), how Byram's ICC model can be seen in the light of *Bildung* theories (e.g. Hoff 2014) or how the intercultural aspect is promoted in textbooks (e.g. Lund 2007, Lund 2012). Anne-Brit Fenner (2012) has also studied how intercultural competence and *Bildung* can be promoted through foreign language textbooks. None of these studies has explored how teachers understand the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture; however, Hoff (2019) has investigated how intercultural teaching happened in the classroom context. Even though her research narrows to «intercultural readers» her findings might be relevant for the findings of this study. Both Lund's

(2012) and Hoff's (2014) contributions on intercultural aspects in the Norwegian educational context have been presented in the introduction of previously in this chapter.

Through an empirical qualitative study, Hoff (2019) investigated how to foster the «intercultural reader». The study's overarching goal is to explore how the intercultural dimension is implicated in the participants' engagement with English literature. In this study, Hoff (2019) used two of the aspects from the Model for the Intercultural Reader(MIR) (Hoff 2016) to analyse teaching materials and classroom discourse in a first-year upper secondary EFL class, these two aspects were intertextuality and emotional reader response. She observed four English classes and had focus-group interviews with pupils in each class. The data was collected in 2015.

The findings from her analysis indicate that most of the task sets could be used to develop «intercultural readers»; however, when the task sets involved categories found in the MIR, the peer discussions stimulated a more thorough process of text interpretation than when the task sets did not involve these categories. Additionally, learners both moved beyond the potentials of the tasks or overlooked or struggled to fulfil them. Social interaction in both plenary and peer discussion, in addition to teacher input had both enhancing and undermining effect in such respects. Hoff (2019) argues that the teacher has a crucial role in recognising tasks and texts as potentials to develop the pupils' intercultural competence when working with literature, unless, «missed potentials» for intercultural learning can occur. To prevent this, the teacher must provide the required background knowledge for interpretation and additionally acknowledge and challenge the learners' utterances for further exploration in order to develop their intercultural competence.

## 2.3 Teachers' understandings and perceptions in previous research

Since there is little to no research in the Norwegian context exploring teachers' beliefs, attitudes and perceptions on the cultural components of language or the intercultural language teaching approach, studies from an international context are provided.

### 2.3.1 Sercu et al. (2005) — a seven-nation comparative study

A lot of the previous research in the field of culture in language and language learning have explored teachers cognitions, attitudes and beliefs about the intercultural perspective. The majority of these have been based on quantitative data from questionnaires. One of the most influential research studies in the field is the seven-nation comparative study: *Foreign language teachers and intercultural competence: An international investigation* (Sercu et al. 2005). The nations this project involved was Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Mexico, Poland, Spain and Sweden, and the project was developed to explore the cultural dimension in terms of intercultural communicative competence in language teachers. Most of the participants were teachers of English as a foreign language, but also other foreign language teachers were represented. In their study, Sercu et al. (2005) compared questionnaires from 424 upper secondary school teachers and found that most of the teachers had a focus on developing the learners' communicative competence and not their intercultural communicative competence. The teachers participating found knowledge of facts and events as the most vital when teaching culture, and teacher-transmission of knowledge was identified as the best approach. However, many of the participants were «favourably disposed» to intercultural language

teaching (agreed with central objectives), but at the same time answered that they did not practice the intercultural approach in the day to day teachings. Many teachers argued that lack of time, the pupils' lack of interest in cultural aspects in the teachings and the backwash effect were reasons why the intercultural approach was not used in practice.

As Sercu et al.'s (2005) research includes teachers from Sweden and given that the Scandinavian countries are very similar, the results regarding the Swedish teachers can be seen as especially vital for the Norwegian context. However, Sercu et al. (2005) argue that the results are more similar than dissimilar between the countries. At the same time, it can be interesting to include that the Swedish teachers: «(…) appear to give more importance to the promotion of open minds and tolerant attitudes than to the passing on information regarding daily life and routines». This finding is fascinating because such a view can perhaps be linked to the *Bildung* theories which highlight personal identity, moral values and critical thinking (Hoff 2014). From a Norwegian context, this is interesting because our curriculum has roots from the *Bildung* theories.

### 2.3.2 Oranje and Smith (2018) —the New Zealand perspective

Building on Sercu et al.'s (2005) study, Oranje and Smith (2018) has investigated the language teacher cognitions and intercultural teaching in the New Zealand context. They have used a similar questionnaire as Sercu et al. (2005) to measure foreign language teachers' understanding and practice of intercultural teaching. However, they have extended Sercu et al.'s (2005) study by including questionnaire items based on other literature and research, as well as asking directly about awareness of ILT (intercultural language teaching). Different from Sercu et al. (2005), Oranje and Smith (2018) have used teacher cognition research to provide a possible explanation as to why teachers' beliefs and practices do not align. As English is the first language in New Zealand, the teacher participants were teachers of other foreign languages, both natives and non-natives.

Oranje and Smith (2018) found that the teacher participants scored high on intercultural language teaching scale scores, but there was low support for some key objections and practices. For example, the participants scored high on the belief that reflection is important in language teaching, but fewer reported that they provided opportunities for reflection in their practice. Also, the teachers reported that cultural knowledge should be gained accidentally or through teacher transmission, which is also in direct conflict with fundamental principles of intercultural language teaching. Oranje and Smith (2018 p. 324) hence argue that there is an apparent «mismatch» between their «seemingly sophisticated cognitions and their more traditional practices». Only 26,3% of the teachers reported that they fully integrated language and culture, whereas 70% reported that they found language teaching as the most important.

As a conclusion, Oranje and Smith (2018) argue that awareness of the intercultural language teaching was low with a large group that had almost no knowledge of the approach at all. However, they argue that the New Zealand teachers were «favourably disposed», and if greater exposure to the approach, they believe the teachers will reconcile their culture teaching beliefs and their practices or also incorporate the intercultural language teaching approach. This conclusion was based on teacher cognition research.

As a summary, these studies have looked into teachers' perceptions and cognitions on the intercultural perspective, however, they rely on self-report instruments and thus only report the teachers' beliefs about their own practices. Research into teachers' beliefs do not

necessarily correspond with what they are actually doing in the classroom context (Hoff 2019) and teacher's perceptions and personal—often implicit theories of learning— can directly affect the way teachers organise their classroom practice (Sercu et al. 2005). Instead of using the quantitative method where teachers self-report on their practices, I want to use the qualitative data of in-depth interviews to access the teachers' beliefs and perceptions and observation of English classes to explore how their understandings are present in practice.

# 3 Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the method and research design used to explore teachers' understanding of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture. The chapter will first present the research questions before it will explain and justify the use of the qualitative method and the choice of using the exploratory case study. It will then put forward the participants of the study. Last, it will justify the three types of qualitative data collection methods used and how these were carried out.

## 3.1 Research questions

The study wants to explore the language teachers' understandings on the role of culture in language teaching; what place do the teachers believe culture has in language teaching and language learning and how is their understandings reflected in their practice? In order to answer these questions, the thesis will look into the research questions:

**RQ1:** **What is upper secondary English FL teachers' understanding of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture?**

**RQ2:** **How are these understandings reflected in the classroom practice?**

In order to answer the research questions, the qualitative methods of observation, interviews and focus group interviews were chosen. The question of how the teacher participants in this study understand the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture and how these are evident in the classroom context can come to expression in all of these three types of data collection methods. The teachers' interviews provide their understanding of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture while the observations show how these understandings are transferred to their teaching practice in the classroom context. Likewise, the pupil focus groups will provide additional data on how the teachers' understandings become evident in their practice.

Below is an overview of the research questions and the data collection methods used to answer the RQs:

| | RQ | Method |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | What is upper secondary English FL teachers' understanding of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture? | Teacher interviews. |
| **2** | How are these understandings reflected in the classroom practice? | Observation, teacher interviews and focus group-interviews with pupils. |

**Table 2.0. Overview of RQs and methods.**

## 3.2 Research method and design

A research method is a tool to help investigate a phenomenon. The method chosen is supposed to help the researcher find relevant and appropriate data for the phenomenon researched. While the quantitative methods produce data that give measurable results with a focus on explaining, the qualitative methods are designed to capture meaning and experiences that cannot be measured. Also, the qualitative methods have a focus on the overall, understanding and the special. The data generated should hence highlight connections, the overall and communicate understanding and the special (Dalland 2017). When exploring upper secondary English teachers' understanding of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture and how these understandings are present in practice, a qualitative approach was found fitting. Although the quantitative method could explore teachers' understandings on a broad notion, making it more generalisable, this study, on the other hand, wanted to explore teachers' perceptions and experiences with teaching language and culture in the classroom context with a focus on the relationship between their beliefs and attitudes and their practice. Hence, in this thesis, the qualitative method's ability to explore a phenomenon in-depth was preferred over the quantitative's broad and explanatory qualities.

### 3.2.1 Exploratory case study

Like the other types of case studies, the exploratory case study aims to investigate a phenomenon within its context to acquire new insights. Whereas descriptive case studies aim to describe and confirm theories while the explanatory case study aim to explain results, the exploratory case study is used to explore a phenomenon. It is often used when there is no pre-determined outcome (Streb, 2012). Although there is a broad acceptance of the communicative and the intercultural perspectives as approaches to teach language and culture, and that these perspectives are used in the formulations of the Norwegian curriculum (Vold 2017, Heggernes 2018), there has been little to no research into how EFL teachers understand the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture in the Norwegian classroom context. As there is little to no research on the phenomenon explored in this thesis, outcomes can be presumed or hypothesised in light of previous international research, but they cannot be pre-determined. The exploratory case study was hence the best choice.

Yin (2009) in Streb (2012) argues that the use of case study as research design includes three conditions: (1) the goal is to answer the «hows», «whats», «whys» and «whos» (2) the

researcher must have no control over the events investigated and (3) the focus is a contemporary phenomenon that is within a real-life context. The exploratory case study is narrowed by Yin to mainly focus on the «hows» and «whats» of the phenomenon. This thesis' «hows» and «whats» are two upper secondary English teachers, how they understand the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture and how these understandings are reflected in practice. The real-life context for the phenomena is in the classroom—in which the researcher has no control over the events taking place.

A valuable quality with the use of a case study design is that it opens for a mix of multiple data collection methods, and the data in this thesis will triangulate in order to gain a full and rich description of the phenomena explored (Streb 2012). The thesis will use data from both teacher interviews, observations and focus-group interviews with pupils; these data methods will be presented in sub-chapter *3.4. Data collection,* first, the participants of the study will be introduced.

## 3.3 Participants

The data for this thesis was collected in three English classes in a small rural upper secondary school on the west coast of Norway. The school has about 200 students, is offering both vocational and general studies and the student composition is mostly ethnic Norwegian. The first step in deciding a case was to contact the school to find out if they wanted to contribute to this study. In May 2018, I hence sent an email to the principal of the school where I wanted to conduct my research. He forwarded the question of participation to the English section. The English section gave a positive response and wanted to participate in the study. In the following fall, the department manager for general studies and I, arranged so that I could join one of the English section's weekly meetings to inform the teachers and the school about the study.

Before this meeting I knew which English subjects the school offered, and had an idea of which English classes I wanted to observe. Because the school offered both vocational and general studies, I found it interesting for the study to observe English classes from various studies to find out if the approach to language and culture was different in the distinctive studies. Additionally, I wanted different types of pupils and their experiences for the focus group interviews.

We found that I was able to observe three of the school's English classes:

1. English for vocational studies for a group of pupils in VG1 (year 11),

2. English for general studies for pupils in VG1 (year 11),

3. An International English programme for pupils in VG2 (year 12).

The participants for the in-depth interviews was hence the teachers in charge of these three classes, and since the same teacher was in charge of two of these, the in-depth interviews only had two participants. Throughout this study, the teachers will be called Teacher A and Teacher B. In *Table 3.0* is an overview of the three different classes in which the data was collected. The classes are called pupil-group 1, 2 and 3 and are also what the different focus groups will be called later in the thesis.

| Pupils | **Pupil-group 1** | **Pupil-group 2** | **Pupil-group 3** |
|---|---|---|---|
| English | English for vocational studies | English for general studies | International English |
| Teacher | Teacher B | Teacher A | Teacher B |
| Year | VG1 | VG1 | VG2 |
| Study | Vocational studies | General studies | General studies |

**Table 3.0. Overview of observation**


The requirements for the selection of participants for the focus-groups were for the pupils to be a part of the English class in question, and that it should be voluntary. At the end of the observation-period, the teachers asked the in their classes if someone wanted to participate in my study. While pupil-group 1 and 3 had three volunteers each, pupil-group 2 had perhaps 6-7 volunteers. It was beforehand decided that the focus groups should not consist of more than 3-4 informants for practical reasons —this will be given a more thorough justification for in section *3.4.3 Focus groups*. Teacher A was therefore asked to pick 4 of the volunteers to join the focus group in pupil-group 2. Under is an overview of the volunteers from the different pupil-groups and its composition. The boy/girl composition in each focus group roughly mirrors the student composition in the different pupil groups.

| | **Pupil-group 1** | **Pupil-group 2** | **Pupil-group 3** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Boys | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Girls | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Sum volunteers | 3 | 4 | 3 |

**Table 4.0. Overview of participants in the focus groups**


## 3.4 Data collection

All of the data collection took place at the school previously presented. Except for the in-depth interviews with the teachers, the data was collected between September and December 2018. The teacher interviews were conducted in March and April 2019. It was decided that both the school, teachers, pupils and other identifying elements should remain anonymous as this knowledge was not relevant for the objective of this study. The confidentiality is maintained by not naming any identifying elements in the transcripts or findings, as well as deleting audio recordings of the interviews at the earliest point possible.

Justification for the choice of method, and how the data collection was carried out is presented in separate sub-chapters below.

### 3.4.1 Observation

According to Tjora (2017), observation-studies study what people do, while in-depth interviews study what people (say they) do. Observation is hereafter the most suitable method when studying what people do. When exploring teachers' understanding of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture, teachers' practice in the classroom context becomes relevant, and RQ2 directly wants to answer what teachers do in their practice. Observation was accordingly chosen as one of the primary methods for two reasons (1) because observation of classroom teachings can best explore how language and culture are present in the classroom context and hence give additional data to say something about how teachers understand or approach it and (2) to find out whether there is a contrast between how the teachers have expressed their understanding of teaching language and culture in the interviews and how they approach it in the classroom context. The observational data was also used when formulating talking points in the interview guide for the in-depth interviews with the teachers.

Before the observation took place, based on thoughts, the background for the study and the initial research questions, a table was made where things from these three areas should be noted:

1.  A summary of the contents of each class.

2.  The teacher's approach to culture/if the teacher mentioned anything about culture (this could also be in written material ex. handouts from the teacher and so forth).

3.  Content, or any other element that links directly to the theory found in ICC.

The observation table is found in **appendix 1**.

My role as an observer was an interactive one (Tjora 2017), as both the teachers and the pupils knew of my presence and because some interaction was bound to happen. This interaction could either be through the introduction in the classroom, or the pupils and teachers asking me questions when I was there. Also, I sometimes had a few questions for the teachers before or after class. On behalf of the pupils, it was vital to underline that I was not there to observe them or their performance, but their teachers —this was hence clearly stated the first time observing in each class. For the rest of the observation, I mainly sat in the back of the classroom to note things of interest in the observation table.

The observation took place over eight weeks. Due to autumn break and crash in schedules, in that time, five or six sessions of observation was conducted in each class. In Vocational English, this resulted in five double (school) hours; this equals 5x90 minutes which is seven and a half-hours in observation time. In English for general studies, two of the five times observing were 45-minute classes while the rest were 90-minute classes. The observation hence equals 4x90 minutes, equal to 6 hours. In International English, an extra class was observed on the day of the focus group interview with pupil-group 3. The observation time in the International English class thus equals 9 hours. An overview of this can be seen below, where the dates in bold are the days with 45-minute classes.

| Method | Date | Subject | Participants | Length |
|--------|------|---------|--------------|--------|
| Observation | 21.09, 28.09, 05.10, 19.10, 02.11. 07.12 | International English | Teacher B | 6x90 min =9 hours |
| | 21.09, 03.10, **05.10**, **02.11**, 14.11. | General studies English | Teacher A | **2x45 min** 3x90 min = 6 hours |
| | 21.09, 28.09, 05.10, 17.10, 07.12 | Vocational English | Teacher B | 5x90 min= 7.5 hours |

**Table 5.0. Overview of observation.**

### 3.4.2 Focus groups

The use of focus groups was primarily chosen to get a comprehensive insight to the pupils' perspective on the presence of culture into their teachings and how it was approached. The data from these focus-groups should provide additional data to the teachers' interviews and observation on how the teachers' cognitions was present in their classroom practice. Before deciding to use focus groups, the initial plan was to interview the pupils individually. However, my evaluation was that it would be more comfortable and less scary for the pupils to volunteer and provide information if they were asked to do it in a group with their peers as opposed to individually. Tjora (2017, p.123) also argues that it is beneficial to establish a safe atmosphere by including multiple informants in a group, as such a kind of situation might feel less threatening which in turn will make it easier for the informants to talk, share ideas and opinions. Another reason for deciding against individual interviews was due to practical reasons and quality concern—it would be too time-consuming, and there was a worry about getting enough data: there might not have been as many volunteers for individual interviews. Quantitative data like questionnaires or surveys might have generated more data than the focus groups concerning the student perspective, but for fear of low response rate—some groups would answer while others would not, I could not rely on the pupils completing the surveys, in time and in full. When using focus groups and not questionnaires/surveys, questions that explored the pupils' intercultural communicative competence could also be formulated in the interview-guide.

Usually, a focus group should have 6-12 participants. My focus groups, with 3-4 informants can be regarded as a bit small, but they qualify as mini-focus groups (Krueger 1994 in Tjora 2017, p. 124) where the informants are specialists in their field. As the only ones who could answer questions from a pupil's perspective in the classroom context were pupils, the pupils can be regarded as specialists in their field. Another reason to use small groups for this study was practicality. Because there was no access to any audio-recording technology to distinguish between the informants' voices, when listening to the audio-recordings, this had to be done manually. If there were more than four informants at the same time, the belief was it would be too difficult to distinguish between the participants' voices with regular audio-recordings only.

Before the focus groups were carried out, an interview-guide with the most critical questions was constructed. The guide is found in **appendix 3.** The interview-guide consists of introductory questions about the pupils' relationship to English before it focuses on the pupils'

experiences with the role of culture in their classes. The three focus group interviews took place in closed-off rooms: Pupil-group 2 and 3 were seated in a group-room next to their usual classroom while the pupils in focus group 1 were seated in the library. Beforehand the groups were asked if they would give consent to the interviews being audio-recorded but deleted right away. They were also informed that they would remain anonymous as the data presented in the finished thesis could not be traced back to them. An «Observation and consent form» can be found in **appendix 4.** For fear of technical difficulties with the recordings, I also took notes of the most important aspects discussed in each question. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian, as this gives the most authentic data.

After the focus group interviews were conducted, the data from the recordings were transcribed and then deleted. In the written material, no names or any other identifying elements were included. When transcribing the focus group interview with pupil-group 2, the experience was that it was hard to distinguish who said what when all of the informants talked at the same time. In the two other focus group interviews, there was no trouble distinguishing the informants' voices and the decision to stick to 3-4 informants in the focus groups was hence a good one. The transcripts were written in Norwegian. The direct quotes and excerpts from the transcripts are hence translated into English when included in the introduction and the findings and discussion chapters.

In the transcripts, the different pupils were for their privacy only given a number and gender. In the transcripts G= gutt, which is *boy* in English, whereas J=jente and translates to *girl*. In the transcribed data, colour-codes were also taken to use as this made it easier to read. The dates and participants for the focus groups are presented in *Table 6.0* below—E=elev (Norwegian) which is *pupil* in English.

| Method | Date | Subject | Participants | Length |
|--------|------|---------|--------------|--------|
| Focus groups | 07.12.18 | International English | E1-J<br>E2-G<br>E3-J | 20.50 min |
| | 07.12.18 | Vocational English | E1-G<br>E2-G<br>E3-G | 12.17 min |
| | 14.12.18 | General studies English | E1-G<br>E2-G<br>E3-J<br>E4-J | 16.54 min |

**Table 6.0. Overview of focus group interviews**

### 3.4.3 Interviews

The in-depth interview is often used when studying opinions, attitudes and experiences and where the researcher wants to access the world from the informant's perspective (Tjora 2017). To explore teachers' understanding of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture by asking in-depth questions and follow-up questions can invite the researcher into the teachers' world where their opinions, beliefs and comprehensions are displayed. The teachers' understandings on language teaching and teaching culture must be accessed by the researcher

to answer research question 1. The decision was that the in-depth interview was the best choice for this purpose. A quantitative or a semi-qualitative survey could have provided enough data material to answer the research question and at the same time, save the researcher time. Nevertheless, it would not have given the researcher opportunity to ask follow-up questions if something was unclear or if the researcher required elaboration. Focus group interviews with more teachers could also have been chosen as a data collection method; however, it was decided against due to the objective of the study. If the study should be based on data from focus groups interviews with a large number of teachers and include teachers from different schools, a triangulation would be very extensive.

As mentioned in *3.4.1 Observation,* the data from the observation and the teacher interviews will be used to compare if the teachers' understanding and cognitions about teaching language and teaching culture generated in the interviews are similarly expressed in their classroom teachings or not.

Before the interviews were conducted, an interview-guide was made. The guide was divided into five areas covering background information and motivation, teacher's resources and two parts about culture. The guide for the teacher interviews can be found translated into English in **appendix 2.** After the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed and then the audio-recordings were deleted. Even though Teacher B was in charge of both the Vocational and the International English class, only one interview was conducted. Instead of dividing it into two separate interviews, Teacher B was instead explicitly asked if she thought different when teaching culture in the two classes.

Due to Christmas-break and personal reasons, the in-depth interviews were not conducted until March and April 2019. Tjora (2017) argues that the establishment of a relaxing and safe atmosphere is key to a successful interview and useful quality data. As I had already spent much time with the teachers —I followed their teachings, ate lunch with them and spent time in their break room after and in between teachings, I felt that we had established a relaxed and safe relation ahead of the interviews. The interviews took place in the teachers' classrooms and were audio-recorded. For fear of technical difficulties with the recordings, I also took notes. As with the focus groups, the interviews were conducted in Norwegian as this gives the most authentic data. The transcribed material is also in Norwegian, which makes direct quotes and excerpts translated into English when included in the findings and discussion chapter.

An overview of how and when the interviews were conducted can be seen in *Table 7.0* below.

| Method | Date | Subject | Participant | Length |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| In-depth interview | 03.04.19 | General studies English | Teacher A | 17.03 min |
| | 20.03.19 | International English and Vocational English | Teacher B | 15.50 min |

**Table 7.0. Overview of in-depth interviews with teachers**

# 4 Findings and discussion

This chapter will present the data collected from the teacher interviews, the observation and the focus group interviews and in light of previous research and theory use this data to discuss and answer the research questions:

**RQ1:** **What is upper secondary English FL teachers' understanding of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture?**

**RQ2:** **How are these understandings reflected in the classroom practice?**

The chapter will first discuss the findings from the in-depth interviews to answer research question 1 before it will discuss how the teachers' understandings are apparent in the classroom context. In this section, findings from the observation and the focus-group interviews in addition to the in-depth interviews will be relevant.

There is a large data-material in this study, and naturally, every interesting aspect of the data material cannot be presented. Thus, only findings that are relevant to answer the research questions are included. Direct quotes and excerpts from the transcripts are used to underline or comment on these findings.

## 4.1 Teacher understandings of the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture

### 4.1.1 Teacher A

Similarly to the main idea in the communicative competences, Teacher A argues that the most important thing she tries to teach her pupils is the ability to communicate. In this connection, she expresses a wish to: «teach them to *use the language to communicate*». Teacher A argues that both written and oral communication is important and that in the English subject for general studies, the pupils are meant to learn how to communicate in a way that they will have use for in their later studies. She points out that formal writing is especially important. The focus on the communicative part of language as the most important was also a finding in teachers in Sarcu et al. (2005) and Oranje and Smith's (2018). In the New Zealand context, 70% of the teachers favoured language teaching, and very few reported that ICC was the most important outcome of language learning (Oranje & Smith 2018). A possible reason proposed by Oranje and Smith (2018) is that the participants interpret the curriculum as aiming for communicative competence. As discussed in chapter *2.2.2 Curriculums,* the Norwegian curriculum for the English subject does similarly not mention the intercultural approach explicitly. As a result, teachers must be familiar with the theoretical perspective to integrate it into their teachings fully (e.g. Dypedahl). Another possible reason can be the backwash effect and assessment (Sercu et al. 2005). Preparing pupils for exams in English often require to develop their written and oral communication skills, besides, what is typically assessed in teachings is the pupil's ability to communicate successfully both in oral and written forms. The teachers in Sercu et al. (2005) equivalently argued that because the exams are mostly focused on language, they could not devote much time to the intercultural aspect of language. Teacher A answered that she did not know whether she would organise her teachings differently if she was not tied to any curriculum or exams, however, when asked what she finds most important

to teach she argued that the English subject is *meant to* teach the pupils to communicate. It is hence reasonable to believe that she understands and interprets the curriculum as aiming for communicative competence, and hence she structures her teachings accordingly.

Teacher A expressed about the relationship between culture and language:

> Teacher A: «it has a big role (…) but if I am able to show it in my teachings is another question».

Her statement can be interpreted in multiple ways, either that she consciously wants to include culture and has an intention to do so, but is uncertain if it comes through to her pupils. Another possibility is that she does not have a conscious perception on teaching culture and the relationship between culture and language up until now, but that she realises through the interview that it is important —and therefore should be reflected in her teachings. A third explanation for her answer might be the fear of falling into stereotypes. Kramsch (2013) argues that teachers might feel inadequate to teach culture and therefore stay on the safe ground of grammar and vocabulary for fear of falling into stereotypes. However, throughout the interview, Teacher A repeatedly mentions that she talks more about culture than she initially thought, for instance, through using cultural expressions such as film, texts and pictures.

> Me: I was wondering, you briefly mentioned it, but what place does culture have in your teachings?
>
> Teacher A: Yes, it does have… It depends on what we are talking about, we are probably talking more about culture when looking into native peoples, and that is not right, but we probably talk more about culture then, yeah. And more about, yeah, yeah, there is a lot of social science-ish on other occasions as well…
>
> Me: Sooo, a bit more when it is as a topic …?
>
> Teacher A: Yes, no, no we talk about culture in Great Britain as well and, and the USA and yeah…And we use cultural expressions, texts, a few photos, films… Yeah, yeah. Yes, it probably does have a pretty big role.
>
> Me: Yeah, so if we think in terms of the whole school year, do you have culture as a topic in some parts of the year or throughout the year as a whole or what?
>
> Teacher A: Yes, I think throughout the year, yes. Less when we talk about language directly, like we did in the beginning when you were there, or, it does touch upon culture then as well…
>
> Me: Okay, so it is kind of imbued?
>
> Teacher A: Yeah, it does go through the whole, yeah… we are not addressing it as a separate topic, not addressing culture as a separate topic. We are talking about an area and then we touch upon culture.

In this part of the interview Teacher A wonders if culture is perhaps talked more about when discussing native people and less when talking about language in itself. She also comments: «and that is not right». This example and her hesitance on when and how culture is included in her teachings might indicate that she has not reflected on the role of culture in her teachings before the interview but realises through the interview that culture is present in her teaching, also on aspects she has not thought of. McLeod (1976, p. 212) argues that: «by teaching a language (…) one is inevitably already teaching culture implicitly». That Teacher A has been implicitly teaching culture is perhaps what she realises through the interview.

Teacher A thinks it is difficult to define culture but talks about traditions, history, music and art, and also ways of expression—both how to dress and how to behave. These are both big C and little c aspects of culture. She also mentions literature as another big C aspect in focus in her teachings. Teacher A sums up culture as what «describes a people and shows how they live». This description of culture using the classification of «a people» might indicate the view

of one language (a people)=one culture, which is tied to the modernist view on culture (Kramsch 2013). It can also be argued that she has a significant focus on the knowledge perspective of ICC when talking about culture: in the interview, she stated that she wants her pupils to get an understanding of different cultures, what differentiates them and what is culture-specific, as well as some traditions and current circumstances. The focus on the knowledge perspective is not unfamiliar; Sercu et al. (2005) also found that the teachers rated cultural facts and events as the most important objective when teaching culture.

Even though Teacher A does not seem to have a familiarity with the intercultural language teaching approach, through the interview, she expresses views that are in line with its objectives. Amongst other things, she argues that she uses own culture and history in the teachings when talking about «the stolen generations». She also expresses that she uses own culture when talking about stereotypes:

> Teacher A:     (…) And also when we talk about stereotypes it is natural to draw in what is typically Norwegian and how people from the other places see Norwegians, if they can imagine this somehow.

In this excerpt, she draws attention to if the pupils can imagine how other people see Norwegians. If she encourages the pupils to take a step back, or «decenter» themselves as Byram et al. (2001) writes, to imagine or reflect on own behaviours, it can be argued that she is engaging her pupils in the *Savoir être* part of ICC.

The findings indicate that Teacher A finds teaching culture as an important aspect of teaching language. She understands the communicative approach as the most important part of language learning, at the same time it can also be argued that she is «favourably disposed» (Sercu et al. p. 10) to ICC as she finds the cultural components of language important to include in teachings. Something that strengthens this is her attitudes towards central objectives in intercultural language teaching highlighted above. However, it appears that Teacher A might not feel like she is fully prepared to teach the cultural and intercultural components in her English teachings; Teacher A expresses that she wants to include culture in her teaching but admits she sometimes finds it difficult:

> Teacher A:     (…) but I don't always think there is an easy way to [include culture in teachings].

### 4.1.2 Teacher B

Teacher B argues that culture has a significant role when it comes to language and language learning and points to the importance of adapting the language and that language expresses sides of a culture — for instance, what to say and not to say and idioms. In this utterance, Teacher B uses examples of little c practices to explain why she understands language and culture as intertwined. The little c culture consists of everyday culture such as behaviours and norms (Kramsch 2013) and can be tied to Teacher B's mention of «what to say and not to say». It can also be argued that a focus on adapting the language can be a part of the discourse perspective, which is tied to the post-modernist view on culture. When asked what the most important thing Teacher B wants to teach her pupils, she in contrast to Teacher A does not mention communication.

The most important thing Teacher B tries to teach her pupils is to relate to the community they are a part of —not just what is close, but also in the world. She wants them to know what goes on in the world and engage in it from a critical stance:

Me:          So, what do you think is the most important that you teach your pupils in the
             English teachings?
Teacher B:   Eh, I find that the most important is that they are relating to the community
             around them and not just what is close but that they, they know what goes on in
             the world and that they are able to engage in it with a critical view…

This utterance can be argued to be in line with developing Risager's (2007) «world citizen» who should have knowledge about pressing global challenges. It can also be argued that her utterance touches upon the critical cultural awareness part of ICC; however, this depends on what she includes in «critical view». Either way, it is interesting that what Teacher B finds most important when teaching English is developing attitudes and skills, also because the attitudes and skills she describes are not something that is traditionally assessed in the English subject. However, looking at the *Purpose* and overarching aims of the curriculum, developing the pupils' values, critical thinking and democratic citizenship is an important aspect of the educational purpose in Norway. These focus areas are also often tied to the *Bildung* theories (Hoff 2014), the *Bildung* theories can, in turn, be linked to the critical cultural awareness part of Byram's (1997) model for ICC. However, essential to note is that Teacher B was interviewed as a teacher in an International English class where the role of culture in the curriculum is different to the common subject (Dypedahl 2007) and that she might answer only with the International English objectives in mind. Although this may be true, through the interview, Teacher B tends to specify if something is different in the two subjects. When asked whether what she finds important is highlighted in the curriculum, Teacher B answers:

Teacher B:   Yes! I think so, yes. Especially in the programme subject… a bit less in the
             common subjects.

This can be regarded as evidence that teacher A answers as a language teacher and not only as an International English teacher. Since the programme subject, International English highlights the intercultural approach and because Teacher B answers that what she finds important to teach pupils is more present in the programme subject, this utterance can also be evidence that Teacher B finds it important to teach the cultural or perhaps the intercultural component when teaching language.

In contrast to the example above, Teacher B has another focus when asked about what she finds most important to teach her pupils about culture. Teacher B expresses her intention to teach her pupils to familiarise themselves with how people relate to the world, why people think as they do and how the community is shaped and why. She, for instance, wants to use background history to explain a correlation. An example she mentions is how the American gun culture intrigues her pupils: «and then it is possible to go back and look into why it is as it is», she comments.

Me:          And what knowledge do you want them to learn, or what do you try to teach
             them? What do you find important?
Teacher B:   I find that very hard to answer. Eh, I try to like think how it is to establish how
             people, how do I put it…relate to the world, how they, for instance how the
             society is formed, what it entails and why it is like that. That was very badly put,
             but, hehe.
Me:          No, but I get what you mean.
Teacher B:   Yeah, eh

| | |
|---|---|
| Me: | Why people think as they do in a way. |
| Teacher B: | Yes, and often with some background history. Like if the topic is USA, that it is pretty relevant with their history how their culture is today. That one try to explain some correlation. Now, all the pupils are very fascinated by the gun culture. And then it is possible to go back and look into why is it as it is? |

In this part of the interview, the attitude part of the intercultural language teaching approach is not as illustrated. However, a reason for this might be that Teacher B is asked explicitly about what *knowledge* she wants to teach her pupils. If compared to the knowledge perspective of ICC (*Saviors)*, Teacher B similarly in her answer identify how people see themselves and practices in the target language or country as necessary knowledge to teach. In addition she provides an example of how being able to explain events can help understanding the target culture, this is in line with Byram et al.'s (2001) *Savoir comprendre.* In both these *Savoirs,* Byram et al. (2001) underline the importance of relating this to own culture. Even though Teacher B does not bring in this aspect here, she underlines the importance of own culture in another part of the interview.

When asked what culture she has a focus on in her teachings, Teacher B answers that in addition to the British and Anglo-American cultures, she draws in the Norwegian culture in her teachings. Reflecting on our own culture is regarded as particularly essential when developing intercultural competence and the majority of teacher participants in Oranje and Smith's (2018) study also found reflection on own culture as an important aspect when teaching culture. However, what is particularly interesting is that Teacher B brought up own culture without being directly asked about the role of own culture in her teachings, this might indicate that she finds it especially vital.

When asked if she has a focus on culture throughout the year or as a topic for parts of the year, Teacher B explains that culture is overall throughout the year. She describes that in International English, there are also the topics of *multiculturalism* and *across cultures* which requires a broader focus on culture within a time period, this is different from the common subject. By this, Teacher B might imply that the curriculum for International English has another focus on culture than the common subject she teaches in the vocational class. It thus becomes evident thorough the interview that Teacher B is aware that the programme subject International English has a larger focus on the culture dimension than the common subject like Dypedahl (2007) also argues. Teacher B is additionally asked if there is any difference in how she thinks about culture and teaching culture in vocational English as opposed to International English. She argues that her point of departure is the same in the two, but that the theme of culture is a bit less focus on and less overall in the vocational English class due to time issues. This finding correlates to Sercu et al. (2005) who in their teacher participants, found that the intercultural part of language teaching was less prioritised when having time issues.

It can be argued that Teacher B has a more conscious relationship about the role of culture in her teachings than Teacher A. Throughout the interview Teacher B touches upon relevant aspects of the intercultural language approach, and it seems that her understanding of teaching language allows a large room for teaching culture. An indication of this might be because already before the researcher mentioned culture, Teacher B presented having an understanding of important aspects of the English subject as closely tied with *Bildung* theories and developing pupils' skills and attitudes, this is in the field closely tied to the intercultural approach to teach language.

## 4.2 Teacher understandings in the classroom context

### 4.2.1 Teacher A

In the period of the observation, most of the classroom activities and the tasks the pupils engaged in was from a communicative approach to language. The pupils were on multiple occasions working with reading, written and oral assignments. Amongst other things, during the observations the pupils were writing a short story and had oral presentations. On one occasion Teacher A had also prepared a listening exercise. In accordance with what teacher A mentioned in the interview, a lot of cultural expressions was used during the observation (mostly big C), however, these were not used to teach culture or develop cultural awareness. Instead, these occasions can be seen as «missed potentials» (Hoff 2019) for intercultural language teaching.

Teacher A expresses in the interview that she tends to use the textbook a bit too much in her teachings. She underlines that the textbook is built on the curriculum, and thus signifies that she trusts that the textbook adequately covers the curriculum. She says that she is relatively satisfied with the textbook, something that might indicate that her understanding of how language should be taught is met in the textbook she uses. Either way, this makes the contents and tasks of the textbook especially relevant for what is included in her teachings. Lund (2012)'s study into how the intercultural approach is addressed in textbooks showed that although the textbooks include relevant texts for developing ICC, the task sets and comments do not to a large degree include reflection questions that can explicitly develop their ICC. As Hoff (2019) argues, the teachers must hence be able to recognise the opportunities for developing intercultural competence and provide the pupils with relevant reflection questions. If the teachers do not provide this, working with cultural expressions can be «missed potentials» for intercultural language teaching instead.

During the observation, the pupils were working with the short story «The way up to heaven» by Roald Dahl. With the right follow up tasks and discussion questions, literature can foster intercultural learning (Hoff 2019), however, in this example Teacher A only presented Roald Dahl and some of his works before she explained the characteristics of the short story genre. The focus was hence on the *form* short story, and the purpose was to teach the pupils how to write their own short stories. Another task which can be categorised as a missed potential for ICC teaching was during the listening exercise. The pupils were to listen to clips with different accents and decide what country the native speaker in it was from. The pupils knew the range of countries and accents beforehand and were asked to write down the country of the native speaker they heard in each clip. Afterwards, Teacher A went through the answers in plenary. The clips included a lot of information which can be categorised as stereotypical for each country, and this task was hence perfect for reflection upon stereotypes related to accents or countries —both in the target language area and in Norway. The native speakers in the clips also used expressions and slang, which could have been a good point of departure to look into discourse or little c practices.

Findings from the focus-group interview with pupil-group 2 show that the pupils have somewhat intercultural knowledge; however, they also mention aspects from the communicative approach. The pupils think to use English in a conversation is the most important thing they will learn in their English class, hence the pupils also rate being able to communicate in the foreign language as something they value. Nonetheless, as previously mentioned, being able to communicate successfully also includes intercultural aspects. When

asked about what knowledge they think Teacher A tries to teach them, the pupils answer «grammar» and «to use the language». Again the pupils mention aspects closely linked to the communicative approach. Pupil group 2 argue that the knowledge they have about culture is learnt at school and find it important to learn about culture because it can prevent prejudices and develop respect for others and their point of view:

| Me: | Do you think it is important to learn about culture? |
|---|---|
| E3-J: | If we learn more about culture we learn more respect towards others and you dont get prejudices and the likes. |
| E4-J: | And the whole country and the whole world is in a way affected by different cultures and different cultures can have different rules for instance. |
| E3-J: | And views. |
| E4-J: | …Yes, and views. So we should in a way know how to respect them. |
| E3-J: | Like, that you dont step on anyone's toes. |
| E1-G: | Especially now with the globalisation of the world it is especially vital to have an understanding of others and their view. |
| E4-J: | «The world is getting closer» |
| E3-J: | «smaller» |
| E4-J: | hehehe, «smaller»… you know what I mean, hehehe. |

As mentioned in the introduction, E1-G shows that he is on his way to become what Risager (2007) describes as a «world citizen». E3-J's statement about prejudices also underlines that she wants to gain knowledge and learn skills to develop attitudes not to get prejudices. Important to mention is that the pupils express that they are unsure if it is in English or their social science-class they have learnt more about culture. The pupils use terms such as «negative» and «positive stereotypes» and mention «import» and «export»; these are typical terms from social science. Even though they do not know whether most are learnt in social science, they underline that they have had oral presentations about culture in Britain. The topics were contemporary art, football, street art and literature. These are all big C cultural aspects. The in-depth interview with Teacher A also concluded that she has a focus on big C culture in her teachings.

In sum, most of Teacher A's teachings from the observation is based on the communicative approach to language. Teacher A does include cultural expressions in her teachings, regardless these are only implicit in her teachings and few of these cultural expressions are used to develop pupils' intercultural competence. Hence, the findings from the observation to a large degree correlates to the findings from the in-depth interview.


### 4.2.2 Teacher B

From the findings in the interview with Teacher B, it can be argued that she understands teaching culture as an essential part of teaching language, especially in the programme subject. By the same token, almost all of the International English teachings in the observation touched upon culture to some degree. Some of the findings from the observations also suggest an intercultural language teaching approach. Teacher B expresses in her interview that it is important to draw in the Norwegian culture in the teachings. On one occasion in international English, Teacher B arranges for an activity where the pupils are each given a sheet of paper with an English variety written on it. Without looking at each other's sheets, they are ordered to form a line where they decide if their variety of English has a low or high status. After the line is made, the pupils name their accent to the others, and some feel the need to rearrange. Teacher B then asks questions about connotations related to the different accents, as an example she asks if the pupils have experienced that the southern US accent often belongs to

the stupid one in tv-series (Simpsons is mentioned). She then goes on to compare to Norway —are certain accents also tied to certain characters here? Also, on other occasions, Teacher B draw in reflection on own culture. In an oral assessment in the form of a group conversation, she had made a proposal of talking points. Even though the assessment was based on the pupils' communicative competence, the questions addressed cultural components. One of these questions was: w*hat do you think people coming to Norway think is the most strange, or difficult to learn?* In this example, Teacher B encourages her pupils to reflect on little c practices in own culture. The rest of the questions can be found in **Appendix 5**. Teacher B's understanding of the importance of reflection on own culture found in the interview is hence also reflected in her classroom practice. This finding is in contrast to Oranje and Smith (2018), who found a «mismatch» between the teacher participants' perceptions on reflection on own culture and how they reported about their practice.

In the focus group interview with pupil group 3, the pupils showed a lot of intercultural knowledge and attitudes and can be regarded as far along in the learning process of becoming interculturally competent per Fennes and Hapgood's (1997) definition. The pupils show that they see the necessity to tread carefully in intercultural meetings and that they understand that culture is something that one can never learn to the fullest (Fennes & Hapgood 1997). They express that Teacher B's teachings have prepared them for intercultural meetings:

> EJ-1:   (…) now I have enough knowledge to understand that I in fact have to think before I act because it might not work that way.

It must be remembered that Teacher B was in charge of both an international English class and a vocational English class during the time of the data collection. The nature of these two classes is very dissimilar, and this also applies to the presence of culture. Teacher B argued in the interview that she thinks the same about teaching culture in the two classes, however almost no cultural content was mentioned in the vocational class during the observation. Only on one or two occasions the content of the vocational English class touched upon culture, additionally, on one of these occasions, another teacher was in charge as Teacher B was out of the classroom for an oral assessment. There is hence a «mismatch» between Teacher B's perceptions and her classroom practice in the vocational class. One possible reason can be the nature of the subject; the common subject does not require as much focus on cultural components as the International English subject, this might be a reason why developing the pupils' linguistic and oral competence had a focus during the observation of the vocational class. Another possible reason might be Teacher B's wish to have a vocational focus. During the observation, most of the contents had a vocational purpose, and this was also something Teacher B expressed as vital. A third possible reason is that Teacher B does not focus that much on culture in regular International English teachings as was seen in the observation. In international English, Teacher B pointed out that the topics of m*ulticulturalism* and *across cultures* were in focus when I was there, and that these topics require a broader focus on culture. It can hence be questioned whether the role of culture is as present through the rest of the year as of the time of the observations. However, in the focus group interview with pupil-group 1, the pupils agree that they have in fact talked about some cultural differences in their English teachings, for instance, «what is allowed and not allowed in other countries» (E1-G, Focus group 1). When asked about what they think the teacher wants to teach them about culture, E1-G answered: «What differences there are in other countries as opposed to Norway kinda…». These findings indicate that Teacher B might teach the intercultural aspects of language to a larger degree than seen in the observations. However, the findings also imply that the nature of the English subject in question impact how the teachers teach the cultural component.

# 5 Conclusions

This chapter will evaluate the study by looking into reliability, validity, relevance and ethical perspectives. It will also give suggestions for further research before it reflects on what implications the study has for me as a future teacher.

## 5.1 Evaluation of study

After conducting a research study, the researcher must evaluate the methodology once more (Dalland 2017). This must be done by critically evaluating how the methods served and if they were a fit to answer the research questions. The focus of the evaluation will be on reliability, validity and relevance, and briefly touch upon ethical perspectives of conducting this research study.

### 5.1.1 Reliability and validity

It is essential to reflect on one's position in the study in order to strengthen its reliability (Tjora 2017). Accordingly, it is essential to question if the researcher has something in common with the informants/participants or have a particulate knowledge or commitment to the topic of the study that might influence the access to the field, selection of participants, data collection, analysis or results.

Since I am in the teacher training programme and had a job as an English teacher at the time of the data collection, it is quite evident that I have things in common with the teacher participants. Hence my experience as a teacher and student in the teacher training programme might have been beneficial to gain access to the participants. As these are roles that current teachers can identify themselves with, they might easier say yes to contribute to the research. I also found that these roles helped create a better relationship between myself and the teachers because we had a lot in common. In a short time, we had created a very relaxing atmosphere, and as previously mentioned, this is something Tjora (2017) identifies as a key to good quality data. Another factor of reliability is that my perspective on teaching language and teaching culture, as well as my teaching experiences, might influence how I formulate the questions, analyse the transcripts and observation and how I understand the results. Through my practice, I have experiences on how difficult it can be to approach culture in teachings and to teach language as culture. These experiences are something I bring with me through the whole process of this thesis, and they are also part of the reason why I was interested in finding out more on this phenomenon. Knowledge about the field or area that is studied might be beneficial when formulating precise questions. At the same time, a possible disadvantage is that the researcher brings their biases (Tjora 2017). Because qualitative data is interpretive, my biases and subjectivity will be present in the interpretation of the data material, however, by presenting my thoughts, ideas and interpretations transparently and by including direct quotes from the data material in the thesis, the readers can to some extent make up their minds on how they interpret the data. Tjora (2017) argues that the use of direct quotes can strengthen the reliability of the study as the informants' «voices» becomes evident to the reader.

An important question to ask when discussing the study's reliability is whether another researcher would get the same data, analyse it and draw the same conclusions when

conducting the same study (Tjora 2017). It can be argued that these data and results came because of the selected participants and because I was the researcher. On the other hand, the study has provided transparency on how it was planned, conducted, how the data material included was chosen and interpreted and how my position in the study might influence different aspects of it. The study has also provided transparency by including interview guides, the observation table and the information and consent form as appendixes. Including extracts from the transcripts can also be regarded as transparency. It can then be argued that because of the study's transparency, a new researcher could conduct the same study with different participants. However, because the different participants will bring in their individual cognitions, and the researcher brings their own biases and objectivity, the results might not be the same.

To evaluate validity might be to evaluate if the study found the right answers to the questions raised. To have good validity is often done by remaining conscious towards relevant theories and perspectives as well as previous research in the field, this can be done by comparing findings from previous studies to the current study (Tjora 2017). Even though this study has used another methodological approach to the topic of cultural awareness in language teachers than the most influential studies in the field and has formulated different questions, the findings have heavily relied on the same theories and perspectives. The findings in this study are also seen in the light of findings from relevant studies in the field.

Another way of evaluating if the study has answered the questions raised can be to look into relevance.

### 5.1.2 Relevance

One of the primary demands for the data collected in research is for it to be relevant for the thesis statement and the research questions (Dalland 2017). In order to establish relevance, it is essential to choose participants who can generate the data sought for in the thesis. In sub-chapter *3.3 Participants, a* justification for the choice of participants has been provided. As the thesis wants to look into upper secondary EFL teachers' understandings, it was natural that the data was based on observation and interviews with English teachers in upper secondary. Both observations, in-depth interviews with Teacher A, Teacher B and the different focus-groups generated a lot of relevant and useful data for the research questions. However, another vital aspect of relevance is for the interview questions to be formulated so that they answer the research questions (Dalland 2017). The questions formulated in the interview guides were broad and designed to open for several talking points. Some questions were included as introductory to ease the tension, while some asked directly concerning research question 1. Most of the questions generated a lot of relevant data for the RQ, but in hindsight, the data from the teacher interviews could have been of a greater relevance if the right follow-up questions were asked. Dalland (2017) argues that the better you master the method, the better the results. A weakness with how the teacher interviews were carried out was my nervousness which I found hindered me in being calm enough to ask the right questions for elaboration. Because I am unexperienced with the method of interview, I felt I was bothering the teachers with my questions. As a result, I rushed through the questions in the interview-guide instead of taking the time to ask thorough follow-up questions, as was the plan beforehand. An example of this might be not asking Teacher B to elaborate on what she meant by «critical view» when she was asked about what she finds most important to teach her pupils about culture. If more questions for elaboration had been provided, the findings might

have had more depth.

### 5.1.3 Ethical perspectives

Tjora (2017) argues that because people are not in the habit of being observed to a considerably extent in their daily life, people who are a part of observational studies or studies using observation should be well informed about the study, and get a thorough presentation of the one who is coming to observe. However, in this study, my supervisor and I had agreed that I should try to tell as little as possible regarding precisely what I was looking for in the observations, as mentioning essential keywords such as «teaching culture» and «intercultural language teaching» could influence the teachers' class preparations and their teachings. The lack of information to the participants raises the question of whether it is ethically right that the teachers had to decide if they wanted to participate without knowing what I was looking for in the observation. For this reason, the participants must know that they can retract their consent as participants at any time. It is vital to underline this at an early stage of the data collection.

Confidentiality is another ethical perspective to take into consideration when conducting a research study at an upper secondary school. As an observer in a classroom, you might be presented with events or information that you should not know in the first place and due to the duty of confidentiality you are not to retell or discuss this information with persons outside of the classroom. In the meeting with the department manager for general studies and the teachers from the English section beforehand the observations, the issue of confidentiality arose, and we discussed it briefly to confirm that we had the same perception on it. Through the whole process of this thesis, I have been very cautious not to break my confidentiality.

## 5.2 Future research

With the new curriculum, *Fagfornyelsen* (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2020), the intercultural part of language is much more apparent in the English subject curriculum than it was in LK06. However, it can be argued that this is only evident in the *Purpose* section of the curriculum and not in the competence aims. One of the things that underline this view is that the division between *Language learning, Oral communication, written communication* and *Culture, society and literature* has been erased, and the new competence aims are very much focused on the communicative aspect of language. Following Dypedahl (2007), I fear that these factors might make it more difficult for language teachers who have little or no knowledge of the intercultural perspective to identify the competence aims based on the intercultural approach. Questions that arise in such a context are: how will the new curriculum affect the role of culture in the teachings? How do teachers understand the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture with a new curriculum where the competence aims are even more focused on communicative competence? In this connection, it would have been interesting to find out how teachers understand the relationship between teaching language and teaching culture operating under the new curriculum.

A large scale quantitative study such as Oranje & Smith's (2018) could be conducted to shed light on teachers' understanding of the intercultural approach to language learning in a larger, or even national context. Such a study would have greater generalisability than this small scale

study. As a part of the proposed large scale quantitative study, it would also be interesting to conduct focus group interviews with some of the participants to provide further insights to the teachers' understandings, perceptions and cognitions and if the nature of the English subject has an implication on the focus of culture in a large scale study as well.

## 5.3 Implications for me as a teacher

When I was to choose a topic for my master's thesis in November 2017, I was in Brisbane, Australia for my semester abroad and it was in one of my courses there I discovered my interest in the intercultural aspects of language learning. Coming from a homogeneous rural area, all my years in school, I had mostly been surrounded by ethnic Norwegians, both student-composition and teachers, with very few exceptions. My experiences with cultural knowledge were, therefore, for the most part, based on own understandings about different cultures and peoples with different nationalities, and I had minimal first-hand experience with intercultural meetings. However, in my time as a study abroad student in Australia, I met people from all over the world in my courses and other student activities. Some people were inquisitive about how life was in Norway —this especially applied to some of the Chinese students we came in contact with— but even with my roommates from Denmark and Scotland, I discussed similarities and differences in our countries/societies. These conversations and the discussions in my course *Language and Intercultural Communication* made me reflect upon how the historical and ideological circumstances in my life had influenced my perspectives and my values.

A similar moment of realisation that I experienced when reflecting on how my values and my perspectives are shaped and how intercultural meetings expand these perspectives is something I also want my pupils to experience. However, through my own experiences, this research study and previous research, it has become evident that teacher understandings and their practices are not always aligned. Nonetheless, the research presented in this study has also found that exposure and knowledge on the intercultural approach seem to make teachers integrate the intercultural language teaching approach to a larger extent in their teachings than those who are not familiar to it.

The implications the work with this thesis will have for me as a teacher is first and foremost directly linked to my cautiousness about how my perceptions and understandings are reflected in practice. It might be challenging to integrate the intercultural approach and teach language as culture in the day to day teachings, but my work with the theories, perspectives and previous research when writing this thesis makes me more equipped to do so than I was before conducting the study.

# Bibliography

Byram, M. (1997) *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M., Gribkova, B. & Starkey, H. (2002) *Developing the Intercultural Dimensions in Language Teaching: A Practical Introduction for Teachers.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved from: https://rm.coe.int/16802fc1c3

Byram, K., & Kramsch, C. (2008) Why Is It so Difficult to Teach Language as Culture? *German Quarterly, Arts & Humanities*, *1(1),* 20-34. Retrieved from: http://faculty.weber.edu/cbergeson/516/byram.2008.pdf

Canale, M., Swain, M. (1980) Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics, 1(1),* 1–47. DOI: https://doi-org./10.1093/

Council of Europe (2001) *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved from: https://rm.coe.int/1680459f97

Dalland, O. (2017) *Metode og oppgaveskriving.* (6.utg). Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.

Dypedahl, M. (2007) *Interkulturell kompetanse og kravet til språklæreren.* Halden: Fremmedspråkssenteret. Retrieved from:https://hiof.brage.unit.no/hiof-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/147916/Fokus_online_2_2007.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Fenner (2018) The Historical Development of English as a School Subject. In Fenner & Skulstad (eds.) *Teaching English in the 21st Century: Central Issues in English Didactics (*17-41). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

Fennes, H. & Hapgood, K. (1997). *Intercultural Learning in the Classroom.* Crossing Borders. London: Cassell.

Hoff, H. E. (2013) «Self» and «Other» in meaningful interaction: using fiction to develop intercultural competence in the English classroom. *Tidskriftet FoU I praksis 7(2),* 27-50. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264280405_'Self'_and_'Other'_in_Meaningful_Interaction_Using_Fiction_to_Develop_Intercultural_Competence_in_the_English_Classroom

Hoff, H. E. (2014) A critical discussion of Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence in the light og *Bildung* theories. *Intercultural Education, 25(6),* 508-517. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2014.992112

Hoff, H. E. (2016) From «intercultural speaker» to «intercultural reader»: a proposal to recontextualise intercultural communicative competence through a focus on literary reading. In Dervin, F. & Gross, Z. (eds.) *Intercultural Competence in Education: Alternative Approaches for Different Times (51-71).* London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Hoff, H. E. (2018) Intercultural competence. In Fenner & Skulstad (eds.) *Teaching English in the 21st Century: Central Issues in English Didactics (*67-89)*.* Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

Jedynak, M. (2011) The Attitudes of English Teachers Towards Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence. In Wojtaszek, A., J. & SpringerLink. (2011) *Aspects of Culture in Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Learning,* 63-73. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-20201-8_6

Hoff, H. E. (2019) Fostering the «intercultural reader»? An empirical study of socio-cultural approaches to EFL literature. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research.* DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2017.1402366

Kramsch, C. (2013) Culture in foreign language teaching. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research 1(1).* 57-78. Retrieved from http://faculty.weber.edu/cbergeson/516/kramsch.2012.pdf

Liddicoat, A, J. & Scarino, A. (2013) *Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning.* West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

McLeod, B. (1976) The relevance of anthropology to language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly, 10(2)*, 211-220.

NOU 2019:25 (2019) *Med rett til å mestre: Struktur og innhold i videregående opplæring.* Retrieved from: https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/2c79526bf80444b7ba90d1f22e52530b/no/pdfs/nou201920190025000dddpdfs.pdf

Oranje, J. & Smith, L., F. (2018) Language teacher cognitions and intercultural language teaching: The New Zealand perspective. *Language Teaching Research 22(3),* 311-329. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168817691319

Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2013a) *English subject curriculum (ENG1-03)*. Retrieved from: http://data.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03.pdf?lang=http://data.udir.no/kl06/eng

Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2013b) *English subject curriculum for programme for specialisation (ENG 4-01).* Retrieved from: https://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG4-01/Hele/Formaal?lplang=http://data.udir.no/kl06/eng

Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020) *Læreplan i engelsk (ENG01-04).* Retrieved from: https://data.udir.no/kl06/v201906/laereplaner-lk20/ENG01-04.pdf

Lázár, I. (2007) Theoretical background. In Lázár, I., Huber-Kriegler, M., Lussier, D., Matei, G., S., Peck, C. (eds.) *Developing and assessing intercultural communicative competence: A guide for language teachers and teacher educators*. Retrieved from https://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/publications/B1_ICCinTE_E_internet.pdf

Risager, K. (2007) *Language and Culture Pedagogy: From a National to a Transnational Paradigm*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Scollon, R. & Scollon, S. W. (2001). *Intercultural Communication.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Sercu, L., Bandura, E., Castro, P., Davcheva, L., Laskaridou, C., Lundgren, U., del, M., Méndez García, C., & Ryan, P. (2005) *Foreign language teachers and intercultural competence: An international investigation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Skulstad (2018) Communicative Competence. In Fenner & Skulstad (eds.) *Teaching English in the 21st Century: Central Issues in English Didactics (*17-41). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

Solé, C. R. i. (2003) Culture for Beginners: A Subjective and Realistic Approach for Adult Language Learners. *Language and Intercultural Communication, 3(2),* 141-150*.* DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14708470308668098

Streb, C. K. (2012) Exploratory Case Study. In Mills, A. J., Durepos, G. & Wiebe, E. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412957397

Tjora, A. (2017) *Kvalitative forskningsmetoder i praksis.* (3.utg.) Oslo: Gyldendal akademisk.

Vold, E. T. (2017) Qualifying foreign language teachers: Is teacher training enough? *International Journal of Education Research, 82,* 40-53. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2016.12.002

# Attachments

**Appendix 1**. Observation tables

**Appendix 2.** Interview guide with teachers

**Appendix 3.** Interview guide focus groups

**Appendix 4.** Information and consent form

**Appendix 5.** Oral assessment topics Teacher B

**Appendix 1. Observation tables**

| International English | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Activities** | **Approach to culture** | **Intercultural communication** |
| Date: | | |
| | | |
| Date: | | |
| | | |
| Date: | | |
| | | |
| Date: | | |
| | | |

| English for general studies | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Activities** | **Approach to culture** | **Intercultural communication** |
| Date | | |
| | | |
| Date | | |
| | | |
| Date: | | |
| | | |
| Date | | |

| Vocational English | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Activities** | **Approach to culture** | **Intercultural communication** |
| Date: | | |
| | | |
| Date: | | |
| | | |
| Date: | | |
| | | |
| Date | | |

## Appendix 2. Interview guide with teachers

1.  <u>Background information:</u>

- When and where did you take your education?
  How many study-points do you have in language, and how many of those are in the English language?

2. <u>Motivation for learning and teaching English:</u>

- Why did you choose to study language/English?
  What do you think is the most important you teach your students in your teachings?
  Is what you find most important to teach your students a focus in the curriculum?
  If you were free of competence aims, exams and curriculum and could do anything you would like, would your teachings be different? Why/why not? How?

3. <u>Teaching resources:</u>

- Which teaching resource do you use?
  What makes a teaching resource good? In your opinion, what is the difference between a good and a bad teaching resource?
  What do you like best with the teaching resource you use the most? What do you like the least? What do you miss?
  Do you plan your teaching around the teaching resource or do you use the teaching resource in your teaching plan?

4. <u>Many Englishes and culture:</u>

- English is a language being spoken by many across the world. What English do you have in focus in your teachings?
  What do you think culture is?
  What role do you think culture plays in language and language teaching?
  Does it belong in your english class?
  What room do you give culture in your teaching?
  If you think about a one year wheel, do you talk about culture as a theme once a year or is culture present in your teachings the whole year?
  Which cultures are represented in your teachings?

- Is it important to teach the pupils about culture? Why/why not? How?
  What kind of knowledge do you think it is important that your students have about culture in the english-speaking world? Why?
  Do you spend time on stereotypes in your teaching? Why/why not?
  If yes, in what way?
  When you talk about culture in your classroom do you include the Norwegian culture as well? Why/why not?
  If yes, do you focus on similarities or differences?

5. <u>Closing questions</u>

- Anything else?
  Do you keep updated on learning theories/research articles about the English subject?

## Appendix 3. Interview guide focus groups

1. <u>Background information</u>

- Do you like English? Why/why not?
  What do you like most about English/in your English class?
  How do you learn English? Do you only learn English in school?
  What is the most important thing you learn from your English class?

2. <u>What is culture?</u>

- What do you think culture is?
  Are you interested in learning something about other cultures? If so, what cultures? What do you want to learn? Why do you want to learn something about culture?
  If you think about something you have learnt about a culture in any English-speaking country, where have you learnt it? In school? Other places?

- Do you think that your english class wants to teach you something about English speaking cultures? If so, in what way?
  If you learn something about culture in your English class, which cultures have you learnt about?
  What knowledge about culture do you think your teacher wants to give you?
  Do you experience that your English class tries to prepare you/give you knowledge you need for a potential meeting with a new culture? Why/why not? How?
  Do you think that the teachings in your English class rejects or substantiates stereotypes in english-speaking cultures?
  Do you learn something about important events in English-speaking countries/cultures?

- Do you feel like your English class has given you knowledge about products and practices —how you/ they are and how you/they do things— in the English speaking culture?
  In your English class, do you spend time on comparing similarities and differences between English-speaking cultures and the Norwegian culture?
  In what way do your English class provide for discussions about own and other cultures?
  Do you think it is possible to learn everything about a culture without experiencing it yourself? Why/ why not?
  How do you think a meeting with a new culture would look like for you?

**Appendix 4. Information and consent form**

# Informasjon om masterprosjekt

Du mottar dette informasjonsskrivet fordi du har moglegheit til å delta i mitt masterprosjekt om kultur i engelskfaget.

Formålet med masterprosjektet er å finne ut korleis lærarar tenkjer om samanhengen mellom det å undervise i språk og å undervise i kultur. I din klasse vil eg intervjue den ansvarlege læraren og nokre elevar vil delta i fokusgruppeintervju. Det innsamla datamaterialet vil verte bearbeida og framstilt i masteroppgåva. Oppgåva vil verte publisert som forskning.

Det er frivillig å delta, og det er kortid som helst lov å trekkje seg.

## Kva vil skje med datamaterialet frå intervjua?

Eg vil ta opp intervjua med lydopptaker. Desse lydopptaka vil verte sletta så fort dataene har vorte transkribert (transkribert=det som vert sagt i intervjuet vert bearbeida til ein skriftleg form). I det transkriberte materialet vil du vere anonym, det vil seie at namnet ditt og anna identifiserbar informasjon (som namnet på skulen, klassen eller lærar) ikkje vil verte gjengjeve, verken i transkripsjonen eller den ferdigstilte masteroppgåva. Det vil altså ikkje vere noko som kan identifisere deg i mitt masterprosjekt.

Tusen takk for at du deltek!
Med venleg helsing,
Masterstudent i MLSRRÅK ved NTNU,
Amanda Helle

_____

# Samtykkeerklæring

Eg har motteke og forstått informasjon om prosjektet og samtykker til:

☐ at delar av dei anonymiserte dataene som vert samla inn i intervjuet kan gjengjevast som transkripsjon i masterprosjektet til underteikna.


_____

(Signert av prosejektdeltakar, dato)

**Appendix 5. Oral assessment topics Teacher B**

# Conversation

*You may use the following questions as a point of departure for your conversation. Try to keep the dialogue going, not just questions and answers!*

1. Have you ever been to —and/or are you from— another country? Was there anything in the culture that was different from Norwegian cultures?

2. Have you encountered different cultures in Norway? Family, friends, classmates eat. Can you give som examples of differences (Foods, music, decorations, religions, traditions etc.)? What was the same?

3. What do you think people coming to Norway think is the most strange, or difficult to learn?

4. Have you read any literary texts or watched films/TV-series set in a multicultural environment? How are the different cultures portrayed?

5. Do you want to study abroad in the future? Why/why not? And what would you study?

6. Do you know anybody who has been studying abroad? What do they say?

7. Would you like to work in another country?

8. What challenges do you think could occur when you meet another culture?

9. How much should one adapt, and how much should one keep of one's own culture?