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Indigenous representations in Norwegian EFL textbook pertaining the L97 and LK20 curriculum from the semiotic approach perspective

Master's thesis in Language Studies with Teacher Education, years
8 - 13

Supervisor: Astrid Rasch

Co-supervisor: Aaron Matthew Ackerley,

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Abstract

This master thesis aims to explore the changes in cultural meaning potential in English Textbooks used in Norway. To accomplish this a qualitative analysis and a comparison, of three textbooks from the 1990s textbook series Flight 8-10 and three textbooks from the 2020s textbook series Engelsk 8-10 has been conducted. These textbooks were based on the L97 and LK20 curriculum. The thesis bases itself of the semiotic approach to textbook studying that Weninger & Kiss (2013) propose, where the goal is to understand and recreate the underlying meaning making that pupils create in response to new texts. The results of this thesis show that the Flight series features a problematic portrayal of indigenous groups, reducing their representation to stereotypes, without addressing the underlying struggles they face. The Engelsk has a bigger focus on indigenous issues and struggled and has an inclusive approach by integrating indigenous perspectives into broader thematic discussions within the textbook. Through qualitative analysis and comparison, this thesis uncovers significant shifts in the cultural meaning potential of English textbooks over time, reflecting of the evolving curricular goals and change in the quality of intercultural competence.

Sammendrag

Målet med denne masteroppgaven er å utforske endringene i det kulturelle betydningspotensiale i engelske lærebøker brukt i Norge. For å oppnå dette har det blitt gjennomført en kvalitativ analyse og sammenligning av tre lærebøker fra 1990-tallets Flight 8-10 serien og tre lærebøker fra 2020-tallets Engelsk 8-10 serie. Disse lærebøkene er basert på læreplanene L97 og LK20. Oppgaven baserer seg på den semiotiske tilnærmingen til lærebokstudier som Weninger & Kiss (2013) foreslår, der målet er å forstå og gjenskape den underliggende forståelsen som elever skaper som respons på nye tekster. Resultatene av denne oppgaven viser at Flight-serien har en problematisk framstilling av urfolk, ved å redusere deres representasjon ned til stereotyper, og uten å adressere de underliggende utfordringene de står overfor. Engelsk-serien har derimot et større fokus på urfolksproblematikk og har en inkluderende tilnærming ved å integrere urfolks perspektiver i bredere tematiske diskusjoner i læreboken. Gjennom en kvalitativ analyse og sammenligning, avdekker denne oppgaven betydelige endringer i det kulturelle betydningspotensialet i engelske lærebøker over tid, som gjenspeiler utviklingen av læreplanmål og endring i kvaliteten på interkulturell kompetanse i lærebøkene

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1.0 Introduction

In an increasingly globalised society, the demand for intercultural communicative skills is greater. The cultural content in teaching material needs to reflect this change, but most Norwegian textbooks are still found to have problematic elements that might hamper attaining the required intercultural competence (Brown, 2017). It is significant to evaluate textbooks used in school, not just from a didactical approach but also from a critical semiotic approach. This is of significance as textbooks, in addition to relaying knowledge, also have a socialising effect which reflects the broader social and identity expectations (Nylenna, 2017). A central element of studying textbooks is to understand the way they are perceived and understood by the pupil. Examining the cultural meaning potential in the textbooks, meaning the understanding of the way different aspects in a segment affect the overall understanding in the pupil, requires an approach which examines the textbook with the pupil in mind. Kiss & Weninger (2013, p. 24) propose a method which incorporates the semiotic approach to understanding how meaning is constructed, by using Charles Sanders Peirce's ideas of how meaning is made, concepts which will be explored further in the methodology section. To explore the shifts that have occurred in Norwegian textbooks from the nineties to the ones used today, this thesis will examine the cultural meaning potential that exists in Norwegian EFL textbooks from two distinct curriculum periods. By comparing textbooks from the 1997 curriculum with those from the 2020 curriculum, this study aims to showcase any changes in the representation of indigenous groups and assess the quality of intercultural education over time. The choice to focus on indigenous groups serves to narrow the scope of the investigation while addressing a significant aspect of cultural diversity. Towards the conclusion, the main argument will be that the cultural significance portrayed in the newer textbooks has integrated a greater awareness of the issues concerning cultural minority groups, particularly indigenous communities, as articulated by post-colonial scholars challenging Western perceptions of other cultures.

1.2 Thesis statement

The goals of this thesis are twofold. Firstly, this thesis will research six Norwegian EFL (English foreign language) three in a series based on the 1997 Norwegian curriculum named *Flight* and three in a series from the 2020 Norwegian curriculum named *Engelsk*, to analyse the cultural content that deals with indigenous groups in English-speaking countries. In addition to the six

textbooks, their accompanying teacher's textbook will also be included in the analysis. The first goal is to understand the semiotic elements in the textbook, understanding the meaning that is being communicated by the textbooks. To achieve this, the analysis will be based on the semiotic analysis method proposed by Weninger & Kiss (2013), which will be further explained in the methodology section.

Secondly, the goal of the text is to evaluate the cultural content in light of post-colonial theory and other studies on the quality of cultural educational material. The motivation for this thesis is to understand the complexity that emerge in foreign culture teaching and intercultural education, to see if common pitfalls are present in Norwegian EFL as has been found in other studies. The rationale of comparing two textbooks that are twenty-two years apart is to illustrate how ideas of how to teach culture might or might not have changed as radically as is hoped and proposed by new research on the topic, and curricular ambitions. To look into this issue with the limited time and space in this thesis has at its disposal, only indigenous people's depiction in textbooks is chosen to limit the scope of this thesis. Both of the EFL textbooks that will be analysed have been or are used in Norwegian lower secondary school.

The research question therefore is: *How has the cultural meaning potential in the depiction of indigenous groups in EFL textbook changed in English textbook used in Norway from the 1997 Norwegian curriculum to the 2020 Norwegian curriculum?*

1.3 Literature review

There are numerous studies in the interdisciplinary research area of textbook research on the topic of culture in EFL textbooks. This is especially true in contemporary Norwegian research largely due to the updated curriculum (LK20) and its increased emphasis on intercultural competence (Murray, 2022, p. 2). This part will highlight some findings on cultural EFL research, both internationally and in Norway.

The main finding in recent research done on the cultural content in Norwegian EFL textbook is that there tends to be stereotyping of indigenous groups. There's a prevailing trend of portraying indigenous peoples in stereotypical and one-dimensional ways, often relying on superficial characteristics such as (Brown, 2017, p. 30). These depictions fail to convey intercultural competence and instead reinforce stereotypes, contributing to the marginalisation of indigenous communities. Similarly, non-European cultures are frequently depicted as an "oriental

other", perpetuating an orientalist framework (Brown, 2017) (Thomas, 2017) . Despite efforts to include stories from the global south written by local authors, the selective nature of these inclusions tends to reinforce existing biases (Thomas, 2017). Studies examining the representation of indigenous peoples in English textbooks consistently highlight problematic portrayals, with indigenous communities often lacking proper representation or being framed in a homogenised manner that reinforces stereotypes (Ettema, 2021) (Hetland, 2022).

Internationally, research on foreign language books indicate that foreign culture is treated as something static with essential characteristics. (Canale, 2016, p. 239) Germán Canale (2016) authored an article where he summarised the findings of a sample of nine earlier research articles on the topic of foreign language textbooks in general, as opposed to just EFL. He found three distinctly problematic sides of exclusion and inclusion in the representation of foreign culture in most textbooks. these will be presented in more depth in the theory section. In summary, these issues come from the exclusion of facts, the use of an “us” vs “them” approach to other cultures and a simplification of cultural diversity within other groups. (Canale, 2016, 239-240)

Weninger & Kiss (2013) are influential researchers who researched the subject of the cultural content of language textbooks using the semiotic approach. Weninger (2021, p. 134) note that there are two types of research orientation when researching language textbooks: textbooks as pedagogic aids and textbooks as cultural artefacts. This paper falls into the category of studying textbooks as cultural artefacts. The article will be explored further in the methodology section. Otherwise, similar semiotic studies conducted are Stranger-Johansen (2015) and Derakhshan (2021). Through using the semiotic method that this text is based on, they managed to analyse the cultural potential in English textbooks to uncover some of the stereotypes and simplifications which can hinder intercultural development in pupils.

My thesis aims to explore the cultural meaning potential in a previously used Norwegian EFL textbook series from the time when intercultural competence started to become a bigger part of the English Subject during the 1990s (Hoff, 2020, p. 72-73). These findings will be compared to the cultural meaning potential found in a contemporary Norwegian EFL textbook series to shed light on the changes in how textbooks talk about indigenous groups. Hetland (2022, p. 65) mentions that future textbook studies should consider the supplementing material, in this case, the teacher’s textbooks, that come with language textbook packages which schools buy.

2.0 Historical Background

This section will describe the historical background of the Norwegian education system in its active role in establishing certain narratives about other cultural groups, both foreign and indigenous. Furthermore, a brief mention of the historical development of EFL will be included, ending with a look into the L97 and LK20 curriculum points which touch on cultural learning in lower secondary schools.

2.1 Scandinavian exceptionalism in education

A general fact that needs to be addressed first is that Norway was not a major colonial or imperialist power in the 19th and 20th century in the same way as other major colonial powers like Great Britain or France. Traditional research on the effect of colonialism has looked at the relation between the metropole and the colony. The semi-peripheral status that the Norway and the other Scandinavian countries have had in conjunction with not being an active colonial administrator, has led to the development of the idea of a Nordic exceptionalism (Eidsvik, 2012, p. 14-15). Nordic exceptionalism can refer to this idea of that the Nordic countries are outliers when discussing the topic of European colonialism. It can also refer to the self-perception which is intrinsically different from the major colonial powers in Europe. These two ideas, one being external while one being internal, has led to a promoted image of the Nordic countries being peace-loving and rational (Loftsdottir & Jensen, 2012, p.2). This has been challenged by recent studies which have looked at colonialism as a process which encompasses exploration, missionary activities, trade, and a knowledge production which non-empire European nations took part in (Eidsvik, 2012, p. 15-17). This ontological knowledge production is criticised by post-colonialists, which will be covered more in the theory section.

This exceptionalism can also be found in contemporary textbooks which feature Sami people. Eriksen (2022, p. 104) notes how the Norwegian self-image is manifested in an understanding that the Nordic model which emerged in the post-war era is a great success. This ignores the invisible inequalities that emerged from it and the dominance of Eurocentrism in educational narratives. She goes on to address a textbook example of how the Sami are portrayed, concluding that Sami people are portrayed as an orientalised “other”, with the main focus being on essentialised cultural traits such as festivities and costumes (Eriksen, 2022, p. 105-106). The significance of addressing the point about Nordic and Norwegian exceptionalism

regarding a common European colonial memory is that this way of remembering is problematic to have considering new research. This new research has shed light on the effect that these narratives have when addressing colonial injustices both abroad and nationally, as well as being a hindrance when trying to foster the development of intercultural competence.

2.2 Historical development of EFL

The roots of English as a foreign language (EFL) lies in the establishment of the colonial empires of the past. Language goes hand in hand with colonial enterprises, as can be traced back to the days of Columbus when it was decided that the Castilian language would be codified and established as the language to educate the new Spanish subjects in America (Phillipson, 1992, p. 31). For English, such attitudes can be seen in the East India company-controlled India, where English was seen as a way of modernising the country, and as a means of interacting with the imperial core's enlightened texts and communicating with colonial officials. Viswanathan (1995, p. 432) notes the ambiguity of what was to shape the "curriculum", as the British government themselves cared little about teaching the bible. Language education became the focus early on, and the British view that developed in the eighteen-hundreds can be understood through the opinion of Lord Macaulay. His opinion, as expressed in his Minute on Indian Education, reflects a view on the literature of the English language "*is of far greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in the language of the world together.* (Macaulay, 1995, p. 428). His minute expressed his belief in the need to create a new governing class: "*Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect*". (Macaulay, 1995, p. 428-430). This would create a trend which resulted in English becoming the language of education, administration, trade and all the formal domains in the expanding colonial empire. The status of local languages was low in the other colonies of the British as well, with English being dominant (Phillipson, 1992, p. 109-111).

The English language expanded further through the British Council in the aftermath of the Second World War. EFL was successfully continued after the dismantling of the colonial empire of Britain, as attention shifted to a broader scope of the world. Phillipson (2009, p. 31-34) notes that a general trend that still is present in EFL is the ethnocentric ideology that is passed to the learners, in which a colonialist world view creates oriental perceptions of the "other" in education. This topic will be explored further in the theory section.

The British Council came to be influential in Norway, and they had an influence on the EFL subject from the end of the Second World War until the mid-nineteen-sixties. The influence from the UK was most likely already felt through the many Anglo-Norse societies that had emerged earlier. British Council sent a representative to Norway in 1947, and the group came to influence the education of English teachers to a large degree, as multiple people attended the lectures given by the council (Gundem, 1989, p.190-191). This influence on EFL in Norway continued until the nineteen-sixties when new pedagogies from America came to influence the English subject to a larger degree, as the influence of the British council decreased (Gundem, 1989, p.189).

Regarding the teaching of the cultural content in EFL textbook in Norway, the situation since the mid nineteen-nineties have been dominated by the focus on the intercultural dimension of language learning. From the mid-sixties to the mid-nineties, English had become a language who all students went through in school, which became more learner-focused and where culture was seen as a feature of the language itself (Hoff, 2020, p. 70-71). Intercultural awareness was understood to be an important aspect of language learning, and this came into the mainstream EFL field in Europe during the ninety-nineties through the work of the Council of Europe. This can be seen in the curriculum that came in 1997 (L97), where English came to be recognised as a global language, and the aim of the English subject was to avoid stereotyping and include a more diverse representation of culture in textbooks. (p. 71-73). This can be seen in the chapter *The course's place in the school*: “*Through learning a foreign language, students get the opportunity to know other cultures. Such insight lay the foundation for respect and increased tolerance and expose other ways of knowing and strengthen the students own cultural understanding. Through this, the student strengthens their own identity.*” (Ministry of Church Affairs, Education and Research, 1996, p. 223). A specific competence aim that is of relevance for this thesis is found in the 10th grade list of competence aims: “- *work with culture and societal issues in English-speaking countries, e.g.... indigenous rights, for example Sami people, war and peace.*” (Ministry of Church Affairs, Education and Research 1996, p. 232).

Intercultural competence has a stronger presence in the most recent curriculum from 2020 (LK20). In the English curriculum which details the competence aims targeted towards the end of lower secondary school, there are two relevant competence aims: “*explore and reflect on the*

situation of indigenous peoples in the English-speaking world and in Norway” and “explore and describe ways of living, ways of thinking, communication patterns and diversity in the English-speaking world” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020). The theory behind intercultural competence will be explored further in the theory section.

3.0 Theory section

This section consists of three parts. The first part look into the post-colonial theories on how non-westerners are depicted in general in the West. The second part delves into the didactical side of the issue of textbooks, and how to understand the textbook as a cultural artefact. The last part explains the theoretical background of what intercultural competence is and what it entails. The relevance of these chosen topics are that they deal with issues that are relevant when addressing the presentation of indigenous groups in the textbooks, as other studies on textbooks have found their portrayal to be problematic.

3.1 Othering and Decolonising Education

Central in the field of post-colonial studies of is the idea of orientalism, and that of the “other”, which both are terms Edward Said introduced to shed light on the dynamic between the “*occident* and the “*orient*”. Orientalism has three meanings: the academic disciplines that came into being during the 17th century, the view that there is a distinction between the west and the “other”, and the third meaning introduced by Said. This third understand of orientalism is “*the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing view of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.*” (Said, 2003, p. 3). The authority that the west has developed in terms of knowledge, and ways of knowing, has led to an oriental view on what Said refers to as the Orient, but that later came to be extended to include all forms of non-Western modes of knowledge. This extends to indigenous groups as well, as they are often portrayed a certain way through a Western lens.

The doctrine of understanding the world that originates from the West is, is often thought to be generic and unbiased by Western institutions of knowledge. An aspect of colonialism is its continuation after the period of decolonisation in other forms than direct control. “Coloniality” is the more subtle form of asymmetrical power relation that reproduces colonial patterns of domination. This links back to the aspect of Orientalism where the dominant scientific knowledge of the West tends to be Eurocentric and in conflict with alternative ways of knowing (Sahlane & Pritchard, 2023, p. 4).

One of the central features of the decolonial approaches is the challenging of the dominant position that Eurocentric ways of knowing have, where the Western episteme and logic is viewed as universal while other forms of knowledge are viewed as exotic (Sahlane & Pritchard, 2023, p. 5). Indigenous knowledge and thinking are important in this manner, as they can challenge the dominating narratives and address the injustices of the past and those injustices that still take place.

More specific to the field of education, several researchers and activists are calling for the decolonisation of the curriculum. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021, p. 3-4) emphasises the necessity to remove the Orientalist view on knowledge and advocates for decolonising the methodologies used and the previous knowledge. Representation of indigenous people is problematic in the West, as many indigenous people feel that what is written about them in books and textbooks does not reinforce their belief system. Their values, customs and identity are not identifiable for them, as they feel that “*when tell us only about others, they are saying that we do not exist;*” (Smith, 2021, p. 39). The struggle for decolonisation involves not only reclaiming Indigenous languages and narratives but also reshaping the present and future through a more inclusive and equitable approach to knowledge production and representation. (Smith, 2021, p. 36-41).

Sahlane & Pritchard (2023, p. 9) note how despite the attempt to include what they call intercultural literacy, which is understood to mean the same thing as intercultural competence, most educational policies which aim to further cultural diversity fail to challenge the underlying aspects of colonial thought. White privilege remains unchallenged and there still exists a native-speaker hierarchy where the first-world countries become the norm.

The idea among the public of authenticity is strong when thinking about indigenous groups in the West, which often leads to an essentialist view of indigenous people. The idea of authenticity is harmful towards indigenous groups, as it is an idea which serves to essentialise what counts as being indigenous and not. This tendency reflects a broader essentialist view on Indigenous people prevalent in Western discourse, especially regarding their identity and cultural practices. Central to this belief is the idea of a “biological essentialism” which relates to race; the definition of what is indigenous is cultures and structures which existed before exposure to the West. Only the West has the privilege of being complicated, internally diverse and contradictory, while indigenous culture is conservative and never-changing (Smith, 2021, p. 82-84).

3.2. Didactical considerations

This section will delve into the various aspects of what makes textbooks a challenging cultural resource to use in the classroom, what intercultural competence is and how it relates to the topic of critical literacy.

3.3.1 The problematic side of textbooks

Santomé (2009) notes how textbooks are increasingly forming the selection of material that pupils will engage with in schools and notes some misguided curricular interventions which comes from this. As a result of the increased interest in making society more efficient, more neoliberal tenets came into education with groups such as industrialists and politicians increasingly trying to align education in tune with businesses' commercial interests. The changes that these interests brought along, together with the increasing of textbooks and textbook material, have caused teachers to take less of an interest in the selection process of teaching materials (Santomé, 2009, p. 64-65). The danger here is that textbooks increasingly have become a tool in which different forces can push an agenda, or a way of understanding certain cultural issues, be they commercial interest or the state wanting to control the collective memory.

Santomé (2009, p. 65) argue that a just education system is one in which promote diversity and multiculturalism, and he identifies nine “Trojan horses” which is often present in educational material and curriculum. The most relevant for this thesis are point two on exclusion, point seven on infantilisation and point nine on presentism or historical void. (Santomé, 2009, p. 65). These points will be explained in the following paragraphs.

Exclusion is the practice where cultures and groups which are not considered part of the “normal” is excluded from educational material. Exclusion is manifested through a curriculum or textbooks which overlooks or minimizes the contributions and experiences of marginalised groups, reinforcing dominant racist, classist, and sexist discourses. (Santomé, 2009, p. 68-69).

Infantilisation occurs on two level in many pedagogical interventions. The first way is the “Walt Disneyfication,” which is a teaching method that shields students from social injustices and harsh realities by presenting an artificial, simplified view of the world reminiscent of Disney movies. Textbooks using this approach present pupils with fantastical imagery and simplistic representations of society, making it difficult for them to discern fact from fiction. This strategy promotes a conservative "comfortable leisure culture" endorsed by corporations like Walt

Disney, perpetuating classism, racism, sexism, and ageism. An aspect that is also mentioned is the “*Tourist Curriculum*”, which entails treating subaltern cultural realities in a trivial manner like how tourists usually experience them. The engagements in this type of cultural learning is limited to clothing, food, ritual and landscapes (Santomé, 2009, p. 74-75).

Presentism or historical void is a curriculum approach that overlooks the social evolution of cultural groups and presents cultures as fixed entities without historical context. This philosophy aligns with notions of the "end of history," promoting acceptance of the current economic order and discouraging critical reflection on societal issues. Textbooks should instead challenge history by including the many struggles which have taken place and highlight the successes of earlier fights for rights and change (Santomé, 2009, p. 76-77).

3.3.2 Problem of exclusion and inclusion of foreign cultural representation.

Germán Canale (2016), mentioned earlier in the literature review, found three common problematic trends. The first common trend is the frequency of exclusion. A common occurrence when teaching new concepts to pupils is to use simplification strategies to achieve the best didactical result, and this is featured in most textbooks. Simplification is when different types of knowledge are represented in a more familiar manner, “simpler”, to aid understanding. Such simplifications perpetuate the broader processes of exclusion, in regard to the depiction of foreign cultures. The motivation behind these choices of simplification is not always ideologically driven, but the result is a problematic occurrence of exclusion of important culturally diverse aspects of learning about other cultures (Canale, 2016, p. 232-233). The other aspects that Canale (2016) notes on exclusion is similar to Santomé’s (2006) understanding of exclusion mentioned above.

The second trend is related to cultural inclusion. Foreign cultural diversity is often included in a way where diversity is not discussed within a culture but between cultures. This inclusion oversimplifies cultural elements and perpetuates stereotypes by not acknowledging the cultural diversity within a foreign culture. Cultural diversity is mainly portrayed through stereotyped comparisons between cultures, neglecting nuanced understanding and the dynamic nature of cultures. Textbooks tend to associate culture with place in a nationalist framework, emphasising homogeneous representations of native and foreign cultures (Canale, 2016, p. 235-236).

The third trend is how cultural inclusion is used to shape perceptions of cultural diversity within a global context. Most common in the biggest languages of English and Spanish, this trend tries to showcase a global superdiversity where one highlights the homogeneity in the global world. The problematic side of pointing to the global spread and influence of English might be the underscoring of colonialist and imperialist aspect which lies behind this. The inclusion of cultural diversity in textbooks might also be read as a sign of establishing a meta-culture which the student is supposed to connect to. This meta-culture aims to erase potential conflicts and tensions among communities of users globally, aligning with ideologies of global administration and homogenisation. This subtle manipulation of cultural diversity within textbooks reflects broader discourses of colonialism, imperialism, and neoliberalism, promoting a shared global culture while side-lining local complexities and asymmetries of access (Canale, 2016, p. 236-238).

3.3.3 The intercultural student

The intercultural student is an ideal type of student which EFL tries to foster. Intercultural competence has become an important aspect of the English subject, as it has moved from being a language specific to those countries that speak it as a first language, to a global language that is used by most countries in the world. The promotion of intercultural competence has come as a consequence of globalisation, where teachers are expected to prepare pupils to interact with people who can have a multitude of multicultural backgrounds (Sahlane & Pritchard, 2023, p. 5).

Intercultural competence involves fostering an awareness of various lifestyles, thought patterns, and communication styles that a student might meet in the increasingly globalised society. To achieve this, students need to cultivate intercultural competence, enabling meaningful interactions with individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This process involves acknowledging how one's own and others' cultural backgrounds influence communication. Through engagement with different cultures, students engage in a dynamic exchange, drawing upon familiar and unfamiliar cultural resources in their interactions (Murray, 2022, p. 1).

The intercultural shift has caused a shift in theories regarding how to teach culture in the EFL classroom. Culture is no longer a set of specific knowledge to be acquired, a trend we see in the English curriculum from 1997 (Ministry of Church Affairs, Education and Research, 1996, p. 230-231), but rather something to be acquired through reflective understandings of cultural

assumption and belief. Tseng (2002, p. 11 as quoted in Kiss and Weninger, 2013, p. 21) suggests that cultural meaning emerges through the interaction of individual and social cultural contexts. In other words, learners generate interpretations influenced by their personal backgrounds and the cultural context of the target language. As the teacher, it is important to facilitate exploration of cultural material as: "learning *takes place when learners negotiate tensions and differences in their interpretations.*" (Tseng, 2002 as quoted in Kiss and Weninger, 2013, p. 23), which means that fostering an environment where learners actively engage with cultural content is a goal. This shift in perspective highlights the need for textbooks that promote critical reflection and meaningful interaction with cultural content.

4.0 Methodology

In this section, the arguments proposed by the original author will be explained, as to argue for why a semiotic analysis approach to textbook is a useful one. Thereafter, the main framework of the method that will be used to analyse the data material will be explored, as well as detailing how the analysis will be conducted. Towards the end, the layout of the primary sources will be explained, and how the segments in the textbooks were chosen.

4.1 The semiotic approach to textbook analysis.

An aspect that makes textbooks different from other types of texts is that they are inherently meant to be used in a learning context. A critique proposed by Csilla Weninger and Tamas Kiss (2013) in their article is the contemporary approaches to analysing culture in EFL textbooks. They argue that attempts at quantifying culture in English textbooks are problematic, as it assumes meaning is fixed and therefore countable. “*..counting what (one thinks) something means or represents may be far away from authorial intention or, more important, learners’ actual interpretation.*” (Weninger & Kiss, 2013, p. 699). They also question the implications of such studies, in taking it as evidence of textbook writers’ ideological stance towards culture (Weninger & Kiss, 2013, p. 699).

The strength of the semiotic analysis of language textbook is that it gives a valuable insight into understanding how cultural meaning emerge through the complex interrelation between text, image and task, to see what meaningful interactions there are with cultural content. to understand the cultural meaning potential. Using Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotic principles, especially his triadic relationship between signs, their objects, and interpretants which will be explained in more detail next chapter, is a major part of this method. The key analytic aspect of the semiotic research is to understand the “*how contextual semiotic researches shape the process of meaning making*” (Kiss & Weninger, 2013, p. 22). This is done through understanding how the multiple signs and objects shape the interpretant in the meaning making process.

Unguided and guided semiosis refers to the meaning making process which happens either with or without being told how to understand something. Unguided semiosis is the natural interpretations of signs and objects, with guided semiosis being shaped by the pedagogical tasks themselves and through the teacher's guidance. An example provided by Kiss & Weninger (2013, p. 22-23) is a page from a textbook where two large images with scenes from the movie *2012* are presented, with a summary of the movie and three accompanying tasks. Their criticism of the relationship between text, image and tasks in said text is that learners are not free to create

meaning themselves. The first task is to check which natural disasters are present in the movie given the information given. This nullifies the unguided semiosis, the meaning making by the pupil, and redirects the attention over to denotational work, which can undermine the goal of teaching intercultural skills.

If we see culture not just as facts about different societies, but also as the ideas and values they hold, expressed through language, images, and activities, then textbooks become valuable sources of cultural insights (Kiss & Weninger, 2013, p. 24). In their own study of two Hungarian EFL textbooks (Weninger & Kiss, 2013, p. 704-710), they found that both books underutilised the potential for cultural learning and critical engagement. The findings suggest that the textbooks primarily focus on denotational meanings, establishing direct connections between text and image, often neglecting the potential cultural layers embedded within the materials.

4.2 Methodological framework

The method presented in the article Weninger & Kiss (2013, p. 699-702) wrote is a semiotic approach to textbook studies based on the principles of Charles Sanders Peirce, and is the method that forms the basis of this thesis. Instead of treating culture as a static entity, they adopt a perspective that views culture as a process, continually evolving and influenced by numerous factors. This approach aligns with the linguistic anthropological theory of that grew in the previous decades, which emphasises understanding culture as a dynamic phenomenon rather than a fixed product (Weninger & Kiss, 2013, p. 699-700.)

The central aspect for the method is the utilisation of a semiotic framework, with key concepts related to Peirce's semiotic theory. This framework enables one to investigate the interplay between language, cultural artifacts, and social meanings embedded within EFL materials. The aim is to explore how cultural beliefs and values emerge, evolve, and are negotiated within the context of language teaching materials. Peirce's triadic relationship between signs, their objects, and interpretants provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the semiotic processes underlying cultural representation in EFL textbooks. By categorising signs into icons, indexes, and symbols, one will be able to uncover the complex ways in which cultural meanings are conveyed through linguistic and visual elements. An easy explanation of Peirce's concept is the understanding that the word "I" is a sign that refers to an object which in this case refers to the personhood of me as the author. The interpretant is the mental understanding in the reader that connects the sign to the object (Peirce, 1980 as

paraphrased in Weninger & Kiss, 2013, p. 701). In other terms, a text about Native Americans will often include a relevant text, some images and some tasks. Applying the principles of Pierce to this text will mean looking into what the intended meaning behind the text is, but also look into how the text independently of the intended meaning makes sense in the eyes of the pupil. The cultural meaning potential is the underlying interpretant which pupils make in the meaning making process through unguided semiosis, and can be understood through the semiotic lens.

Indexicality is also a significant part of the method. Indexicality is the concept where the images in textbooks are closely linked to the text in a way that guides the reader's understanding primarily toward the literal or explicit meaning (denotation) of the content. This indexical relationship between images and text influences how students interpret cultural representations within the textbooks. By considering the indexical nature of signs within EFL textbooks, the aim is to elucidate the ways in which cultural representations are constructed and interpreted by learners and teacher (Weninger & Kiss, 2013, p. 702).

In practice, six example segments from the textbook (explained in 4.4) will be researched to get an overview over the cultural meaning potential in teaching about indigenous topics. The text, images and tasks will be identified and analysed separately, looking over their individual contribution to teaching the topic regarding the issues raised in the theory section. The last part of the example will connect these different aspects of each segment to judge how the semiotic relationship is shaped towards the ideal goal of attaining intercultural competence.

4.3 Textbook sampling and background

The textbooks that will be analysed will in this thesis are The *Flight 8-10* textbook series by Bromseth & Wigdhal (1997) (1998) (1999) and the accompanying Teacher's book (Bromseth & Wigdhal, 1997, 1998, 1999) and the *Engelsk 8-10 fra Cappelen Damm*¹ textbook by Haegi, Madsen & Mohammad-Roe with the accompanying Teacher's book (Haegi, Madsen, Mohammad-Roe, 2020). Both book series have been published by the largest publisher in Norway Cappelen Damm, and its predecessor *J.W. Cappelens Forlag* (Cappelen Damm, 2024). Both these books are structured into thematical chapters, each containing what the books refer to as "segments", which in reality are segments consisting of texts, images and tasks related to these texts and images. In the *Flight* textbooks, these are organised from A-D in increasing text

¹ Will henceforth be referred to as Engelsk 8, Engelsk 9, Engelsk 10 or Engelsk 8-10

difficulty. In the *Engelsk fra Cappelen Damm* series there is no similar hierarchy. These “texts” will be selected based on the criterion expressed in the following section.

4.3 Selection of segments for analysis.

In order to find material for the analysis, criterion for selection needs to be presented and argued for. The strategy in approaching the textbooks will be to use purposeful sampling, more specifically criterion sampling. Nick Emmel (2013, p. 33) states that: “*the purpose of purposeful sampling is to select information rich cases that best provide insight into the research questions and will convince the audience of the research*”. In this case, criterion sampling will involve selecting pages from the textbook deemed representative for the representation of cultural diversity in both English-speaking countries and in a global context.

In practice, the criterion for selection will involve finding texts by a member of an indigenous group, a text on the topic of a specific or unspecific indigenous group in an English-speaking country, or a segment in which a particular indigenous group has a major presence. Even though the initial part of the analysis consists of a quantitative analysis in order to find the texts which are relevant, said quantitative analysis will not form a part of the conclusion on the cultural potential of the textbook. This is based on the methodological critique presented earlier by Weninger & Kiss (p. 699) The teacher’s textbook will only be researched as it related to said sections of the textbook, meaning that it will only be featured in the semiotic analysis. This is relevant to mention as much of the Teacher’s book related to the Flight series also serve to add supplementary material relating to the audio and workbook which are not to be analysed in this thesis.

4.4 Considerations and Limitations

A limitation of this research is the guesswork that the method has in trying to understand what the unguided semiosis of the pupils is. This weakness has been pointed out by Derakhshan (2021), who notes that Weninger & Kiss’ article “*in their study, they manipulated some hypothetical scenarios about the meaning-making processes of images*” (Derakhshan (2021, p. 81). He therefore chose to supplement his study with interviews aimed at giving greater insight into the meaning-making process of Iranian teachers and pupils. To address the limitation in the methodology, this text will include the teacher’s textbook to create a stronger view of what the textbook authors believe is the preferred guided semiosis.

5.0 Analysis of research findings

The analysis section will first present an overview over the relevant segments which deal with an indigenous topic or group present in the *Engelsk* series and *Flight* series, while later the sections following will include the analysis of certain segments in the textbooks which were picked out as the most representative among the multitude of segments found in the textbooks.

In summary, the analysis found that the *Flight* series tends to offer a more simplified and information-driven approach to indigenous topics, often focusing on historical events and overlooking contemporary issues and cultural diversity. The *Engelsk* series adopts a topic-based and reflective approach, incorporating indigenous perspectives into broader thematic discussions and encouraging critical examination of cultural concepts. While both series utilise textual and visual elements, the *Engelsk* series use them more effectively to prompt critical thinking and exploration of cultural themes. Overall, the findings suggest that the *Engelsk* series provides a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of indigenous cultures and issues, aligning closely with educational goals of promoting intercultural competence and fostering inclusive learning environments.

5.1 Quantifiable findings

The following section will include two figures which present an overview of the relevant segments from the textbook, as well as which indigenous group the segment features. As this is a qualitative study, this part will be an overview of the selected text and not an analysis in of itself. An exception to that is a finding that the figures illustrate, which is that if one compares the treatment of indigenous topics between the *Engelsk* and *Flight* textbook series, while the *Flight* series contains a greater volume of texts on indigenous groups, they are often segregated into separate chapters. This isolation limits students' exploration of interconnectedness with broader themes. The *Engelsk* series, on the other hand, integrates indigenous texts seamlessly into chapters fosters a cross-topic understanding and promotes cross-cultural awareness.

In summary, the findings after the quantitative review of the six textbooks reveal that all books contain certain segments which feature indigenous representation, except *Flight* 8 where there can be found no mention of any indigenous groups. The cultural content in the book instead focuses on the topic of national identities in the British Isles, exploring English, Scottish and Irish culture.

	Chapter	Name of segment	Indigenous group
Flight 9	2	Native Americans	Unspecific
	2	Why some trees are always green	Cherokee
	2	Everything in life is a circle	Unspecific
	2	The true story of Pocahontas	Powhatan
	2	To walk the Sky Path	Seminole
Flight 10	4	Islands in the south	Aboriginals
	4	The land of the long white cloud	Maori
	4	The dreamtime	Aboriginals
	8	Hunger	Inuits

Figure 1. shows that many of the texts feature indigenous people in the US and different Commonwealth countries. As mentioned earlier, Flight 8 is not included in the figure as there were no relevant chapters dealing with indigenous topics.

	Chapter	Name of segment	Indigenous group
Engelsk 8	4	Greetings around the world!	Maori
	4	The Stolen Generations	Aboriginals
Engelsk 9	3	The Absolutley True Diary of a Part-Time Indian	Spokan
	4	Chief Seattle's letter	Suquamish & Duwamish
Engelsk 10	3	The invisible target	Indigenous groups in general

Figure 2. shows that each book in the *Engelsk* series has at least one segment which deals with an indigenous topic. The segment *The invisible target* will be further explored in the analysis. The reason that the segment is called “indigenous groups in general” is because it deals with the broader issue of representation for indigenous people in American cinema, without focusing specifically on one group.

5.2 Flight 8-10

The following section will present examples from the textbook series *Flight 8-10*, highlighting the semiotic elements and analysing how these interact with each other to create a possible interpretant and analyse how the cultural expression from each segment might be beneficial in conveying an intercultural understanding of indigenous people or might be problematic in othering. The issues raised in the theory section of inclusion, exclusion and simplification will also be addressed.

A key finding from the examination and analysis of all the segments listed in Figure 1, is the idea of “*objective*” facts when teaching. On the surface, most of the texts on indigenous people in the Flight series are meant to provide facts and information about indigenous peoples. This is clear in the chapter “*Native Americans*” in Flight 9 (Bromseth, & Wigdahl, 1998b, p. 21-25, 29, 33-34), where there is an introduction text. Which gives some insight into what moccasins and tepees are and who Sitting Bull is. Later in the chapter some pages which consists of giving information the use of smoke signals and the Indian Sign Language. The same can be seen in Flight 10 (Bromset & Wigdahl, 1999b, p. 86-87, 99) where information is given about the Māori way of greeting and the origin of the Aborigines. The issue here lies in the assumption that these "objective" facts are presented without bias or interpretation. In reality, the way information is selected, framed, and contextualised can subtly reinforce Eurocentric stereotypes and at worst case perpetuate historical inaccuracies (Sahlane & Pritchard, 2023, p. 4-5).

Example 1: Everything in life is a circle

The segment *Everything in life is a circle* (Bromseth & Wigdhal, 1998b, p. 30-32) is made up of a text segment which gives a brief description of the history of Native Americans, their culture and their interactions with the Europeans who came to America. The first half of the text attempts to summarise a very generic view of Native American origin and some cultural practices, such as the belief in the Great Spirit, strong ties with nature and the gender dynamics of the tribe. These dynamics are explained: “*The man was the hunter and warrior, while the woman collected plants and berries, and made food and clothing. Men and women were considered equal partners as all of these tasks were just as important to preserve life in the tribe*” (Bromseth & Wigdhal, 1998b, p. 30). The second half of the text explains the consequences following the arrival of Columbus, touching on the loss of life and loss of the traditional culture, until it ends with explaining the (then) contemporary situation of Indian

reservations, mentioning the compensation received from the government for past grievances. The textual information given shows clear signs of what Smith (2021, p. 38-39.) refers to when she writes about ways of knowing. The text tells the story of the indigenous people of North and South America from a Western perspective, in a simplistic manner which fails to recognise many of the injustices faced by the indigenous Americans both historically and contemporary (in the 1990s when the textbook was published).

Three images are found in this segment, one labelled “*Medicine mask dance*”, the second one labelled “*The first landing of Columbus in America*” and the last one is unnamed and depicts a person wearing traditional Native American clothes, holding a feather in front of a banner which says: “NO MORE BROKEN TREATIES”, with the US senate building in the background. The picture of Columbus has an indexical relation to the text and serves as a second reminder on the last page that Columbus “discovered” America. The space given to Columbus in the text and among the images is problematic because it perpetuates a Eurocentric perspective on history, marginalising the experiences and contributions of indigenous peoples (Murray, 2021, p. 4-5). Though the book does mention the effects of smallpox and of the wars in the 1800s in the US, any mention of contemporary systemic issues is lacking. The other two pictures act as illustrations in the segment, their inclusion points towards what a Native American is but is otherwise not utilised in the text. This portrayal is problematic as they are left with little context and serve as a way of essentialising what a Native American is, creating an image about how “all” Native Americans are like.

The tasks that accompany are denotational, they ask for information from the texts, except for the last one in which students are asked “*Have you seen movies where Indians play a part? Discuss in class how different movies picture the Native American*” (Bromseth & Wigdhal, 1998b, p. 32). This question asks the pupil to remember and examine what they have seen of Native American representation in cinema, without providing any guidance towards what good and bad representation is. The task, and this segment, does not challenge the Eurocentric view of Native Americans, even though the task tries to get pupils to reflect on the aspect of representation. The teacher’s book recommends a vocabulary test for this section, but otherwise does not suggest anything of note regarding cultural teaching (Bromseth & Wigdhal, 1998a, p. 44). A problematic aspect that is present in this segment is the reductionist view on Native

Americans. This segment tries in three pages to tell a complex story about individual native tribes, their origin, and their present-day challenges, in a way that ends up painting a very homogenous picture of a very diverse group. Canale (2016, p. 232-233) noted how many foreign language textbooks struggle with the problem of exclusion. Some level of simplification needs to be in place from a pedagogical point of view, though this segment comes off as being at a level of simplification which leaves much to be desired.

Example 2: The land of the long white cloud

The segment *The land of the long white cloud* (Bromseth & Wigdhal, 1999b, p. 88-89) contains a text which gives a brief introduction to Aotearoa /New Zealand, and starts by asking the question: “*Do you want to visit a country that has it all? Then go to The land of the long white cloud.*” The text mentions in the first sentence that the name of New Zealand for the Māori is Aotearoa, which means “land of the long white cloud”. The first part covers the topics of the Māori origin myth, giving information on the Māori covering their demographics and aspects of their artistic aspects. The rest of the text provides a summary of the relationship between New Zealand and the United Kingdom, give some information about things to do in Auckland, and ends by explaining why New Zealanders are nicknamed Kiwis. This segment is a good illustration of a problem in curricular material which Santomé (2009, p. 74-75) call tourist curriculum. Though the origin myth of the Māori is mentioned, the rest of the text focuses on aspects such as their wood and bone carvings, and tattoos, and mentions in the paragraph proposing what to do in Auckland, that in Lower Queen Street “*you can buy anything from sheepskin, woollen garments, Māori woodwork and jade ornaments...*” (Bromseth & Wigdhal, 1999b, p. 89). The segment is reducing indigenous cultural realities to trivial experiences which are to be consumed the same way as tourists do when they visit.

The segment features six pictures, four of which depict the nature of New Zealand, one that depicts the bay in Auckland and one which depicts a wood-carved Māori work of art. These pictures have an indexical relationship with the text, illustrating aspects of New Zealand alongside the text. For example, when mentioning Auckland, a picture from the city is shown. The pictures are not utilised in any of the tasks and are left as an indexical decoration in the segment, enforcing lexical meaning by sacrificing potential use as a source of cultural meaning. This might be a consequence of the tourist angle that the segment attempts at, focusing more in selling the image of what Aotearoa /New Zealand is like through a Eurocentric lens.

The tasks consist of denotational work, which ask the pupil to answer questions relating back to information from the text, except the last one which asks students to express what would excite them about travelling to Aotearoa/New Zealand. The Teacher's book (Bromseth & Wigdhal, 1999a, p. 84) suggests using this text for a content test, which consists of answering further questions about the modern history of Aotearoa/New Zealand, and one which relate to the Kiwi bird. The tasks act at signs which point towards aspects of the text and image, and created an indexical relationship which asks the student to learn the content without examining any aspect of it. The last question ask student what would excite them, and for some strong students that might be some aspect which could contribute to a wider cultural expression. This aspect is not promoted by the book, which more so wants the student to pick which aspect excites them the most among those aspects listed in the text.

This segment, as mentioned earlier, as a whole is an example of Santome's (2009, p. 74-75) tourist curricular material, by presenting how New Zealand is seen through the eyes of a Norwegian tourist and why one should visit it. The inclusion of the Māori can be said to act as a source of "exotic" aspects of New Zealand, advertising them as an aspect worth consuming when going to New Zealand. The Māori creation myth and some cultural aspects of their culture are mentioned, but large parts of their history of oppression and wars are silenced. The guided semiosis that the textbook proposes does not challenge the pupils' interpretant and ideas of Aotearoa/New Zealand and the Māori, and therefore it is not a valuable source of intercultural potential.

Example 3: The dreamtime

The segment *The dreamtime* (Bromseth & Wigdhal, 1999b, p. 96-97) starts with explaining what a creation myth is and asks about which creation myths the pupils know of. Then the text gives some background to an undefined Aboriginal origin myth, and how it happened in the Dreamtime. The rest of the text is a retelling of this origin myth. This is the only text in the book which can be categorised as being made by an "indigenous author", but no author or source is credited. The lack of representation of indigenous authorship is problematic as these sections on indigenous topic gain a very colonial lens to it. Smith (2021, p. 82-84) mention that many indigenous people often end up being essentialised in textbooks. Dedicating space to explain the origin myth in of itself is not an issue in of itself. However, with the lack of other texts to show a diverse picture of Aboriginals, this text in some sense essentialise those aspects of indigenous

culture that predates Western interaction, creating an essentialised belief system that might not be representative for all Aboriginals even though that is the end semiosis that will be taken away after being exposed to these chapters.

There is only one picture featured in this segment, which depicts the Twelve Apostles, which is a rock formation in Victoria, during a sunset. The picture does not have any significance for the text or the tasks and has no named description or any relevance to the Aboriginal creation myth. There is a slight Eurocentric aspect to this, as the rock formations are named after a Christian aspect, in a text which otherwise deals with an Aboriginal topic.

There are three tasks, number one asks the student to retell the myth in their own words, the second asks the student to compare this creation myth to any other creation myths they know of, and the last question asks the student to explain four difficult words from the text. The teacher's textbook does not contain any specific additions to this segment other than to mention that this is a reading/-listening segment and cultural knowledge (Bromseth & Wigdahl, 1999a, p. 101). This segment, while lacking in length, number of pictures, and tasks, essentially asks the pupil to retell what they just read and reflect on their own knowledge of other creation myths to do comparative work to look for similarities and differences. This means that pupils are asked to use their own knowledge of creation myths, which in a multicultural classroom might entail different creation myths which when discussed in class can hold much value for promoting intercultural understanding.

The teacher's textbooks have been mentioned when they were relevant for the segments. In addition, each of the textbooks had a section towards the end of the chapters which was labelled "extra background information" (translated) (Bromseth & Wigdahl, 1999a, p. 101) (Bromseth & Wigdahl, 1998a, p. 51-52). The information given to the Native American chapter goes into more detail on individual Native American groups, but this information is treated as "extra" meaning optional and up to the teacher to give the pupils. The supplementary text regarding Australia can be found in appendix 1 and is quite short but gives valuable insight into the contemporary situation and issues which affect the Aboriginals in Australia. The issue, however, is that this is treated as optional information that the teacher can give the pupils, and not something which the book series actively includes in the pupil's own textbooks.

The cultural meaning potential that can be found in the *Flight* series based on these examples, shows that much emphasis is placed on presenting indigenous cultures in a simplified and superficial manner, often reinforcing Eurocentric perspectives and perpetuating stereotypes. The examination reveals a consistent theme of presenting indigenous cultures in a simplified and often stereotypical manner, lacking depth and nuance. Text segments such as "Everything in life is a circle" and "The land of the long white cloud" illustrate this trend by providing cursory overviews of indigenous histories and cultures, focusing more on superficial aspects than on the complexities and diversities of these indigenous groups. The inclusion of images in these segments further reinforces Eurocentric perspectives, ignoring indigenous knowledge and contemporary issues. The tasks accompanying these segments tend to be denotational, focusing on retrieving information from the text rather than encouraging critical thinking or cultural exploration.

5.3 Engelsk 8-10

The following section will present examples from the textbook series *Engelsk 8-10*, highlighting the semiotic elements and analyse how these interact with each other to create a possible interpretant and analyse how the cultural expression from each section is concerning issues raised by the theory mentioned earlier.

A key finding from the examination and analysis of all the segments listed in Figure 1, is that most segments deal with an indigenous topic, except for the addition of the Māori way of greeting in a text about how greetings happen in different parts of the world, deal with struggled and issues that different indigenous group face. This is in line with the competence aim that is intended for the lower secondary age group: *explore and reflect on the situation of indigenous peoples in the English-speaking world and in Norway* (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020). As will be seen in the example segments from the text, most segments that feature indigenous topics depict negative aspects in society that they experience or a historical injustice which they face. The competence aim "*explore and describe ways of living, ways of thinking, communication patterns and diversity in the English-speaking world*" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020) is not featured in many of the segments, which is a negative aspect which might essentialise indigenous groups as being nothing more than a marginalised group. Their culture and distinct aspects are sacrificed to tell the story about their injustices, which might hamper the intercultural aspect of the English subject.

Example 1 The Stolen Generations

The segment The Stolen Generations (Madsen & Mohammad-Roe, 2021a, p. 180-183) contain a text that details the consequences of British colonisation of Australia, and the stealing of mixed Aboriginal children with the aim of raising them in foster homes and institutions. These children were called the stolen generations, and the text details their treatment and has a short section towards the end which details the process of apologising to the Aboriginal communities.

Three photos can be found in this segment, one showing Aboriginal youth and children outside a Children's Home, a scene from the movie Rabbit-Proof Fence, and a photo of an Aboriginal woman from 2008 who attends the Prime Minister of Australia's apology speech. In the Teacher's book, it is noted that the teacher should remind the pupils to read the captions to the photos in the article. The images have an indexical relationship to the text, as they illustrate aspects the text writes about. However, they also go further than merely illustrating, the images also provide new aspects to the text. An example is the picture of the woman who attended the apology speech, where the Aboriginal flag is shown, an aspect of the Aboriginal community which holds cultural potential, as a symbol of Aboriginal identity and struggle. The teacher's book also suggests "*Discussing images: 26 January is a public holiday in Australia called Australia Day. Some Australians celebrate this day with parades and barbecues. However, for the Aboriginals it is a day of mourning, and they call this National Sorry Day*" (Madsen & Mohammad-Roe, 2020a, p. 180-183). This suggestion utilises the present pictures by introducing new information not found in the text to pupils to guide their semiotic understanding of the questions. It does not however ask the student to interpret the images on their own term, which would be wiser to do before then adding the context, if the goal is to teach intercultural competence in this task.

Four of the tasks ask the pupil to work with the information in the text, which is denotational work to further understand the information in the text. One task asks the pupil to write a diary entry related to one or two paragraphs from the text, and one task asks the student to read a short text about the Sami minority in Norway and answer the names of the indigenous people in Norway and the US is, and what similarities there are in the treatment between indigenous groups in the US and Norway. While this segment does inform the student about the injustice that the Aboriginals, and potentially other indigenous groups if the task mentioned is

worked on, but otherwise the pupil will have limited cultural experience with an Aboriginal. While addressing important historical injustices, this segment fails to teach the student what makes Aboriginals distinct, what constitutes them as a cultural group and who they are.

Example 2 The invisible target

The segment *The invisible target* (Haegi, Madsen, Mohammad-Roe, 2021d, p. 146-149) contains a text which describes the lack of representation that many groups in the US experience in media. The text starts by asking students to reflect on what it would be like to have no one to identify with on the television screen and in the news. Then the rest of the text deals with the lack of representation in movies, and the overrepresentation of negative news; “*They (newsmakers) focus on crimes by but not crimes against* (Haegi, Madsen, Mohammad-Roe, 2021d, p. 146). All the segments in the *Engelsk* series have a vocabulary list which aims to aid in understanding the meaning of the text. In this segment, many of these words are words such as *bias, stereotype, indigenous people, a colonising power, sovereignty, prejudice, and just*. The highlighted vocabulary shows that the focused aspect of this segment is on challenging the white privilege that many white authors have in modern cinema. Santomé (2009, p. 76-77) mention that an issue in many books is that there is a historical void which promotes the current economic order and discourages critical reflection. This segment tries to address the media that most young people consume and encourages critical reflection on the representation of indigenous groups and other ethnic minorities in cinema.

There are two pictures in this segment, one of a group of unspecified Native Americans in a panel in front of a problematic display of a Native American caricature used as a university mascot, and a scene from the movie *Ghost in a Shell* (2017). There is also a statistic in this segment which shows the representation of BAME (Black, Asian & minority ethnic) characters in top-grossing fictional films (2014). These pictures do not have an indexical relationship, as they provide specific cases to illustrate examples in a complementary manner to the text. The teacher’s book suggests discussing the image of the scene from *Ghost in a Shell*, starting with reading the caption then discussing “*In what ways are these films examples of Hollywood “whitewashing”?* *How are minorities presented in popular culture an in the news in Norway*” (Haegi, Madsen, Mohammad-Roe, 2021c, p. 148). Asking the student to compare the situation of minority groups in other English-speaking countries to minority groups in Norway is a common occurrence in many of the segments in the *Engelsk* series and ends up challenging the pupils to

critically examine their understanding of contemporary issues which face indigenous groups in Norway and abroad. A critique, however, is that this task is only highlighted in the teacher's book, students are not exposed to many tasks which ask them to critically examine semiotic elements in the text to explore their understanding of the subject, which is an aspect which is important when trying to obtain intercultural competence (Kiss & Weninger, 2013, p. 25).

There are eight tasks in this segment, five of them ask the pupil to work with the language, meaning and sources of the text while two of the tasks ask the pupil to go further. One of these tasks asks the student to discuss positive or negative they recently have seen about an ethnic group nationally or abroad and ask the student to either build up on the positive news or counteract the negative news story with a positive one to counter negative stereotypes. The other task asks the pupil to reflect on what effects constant negative reports about their race or culture might make them feel. The task of looking for positive or negative news can potentially open perspectives in the classroom that are hard to replicate in a textbook, narratives which might challenge broader tendencies of Norwegian exceptionalism in English as a subject. In discussing indigenous topics on a broader level, it is expected that the competence aims to also explore and reflect about indigenous peoples in Norway, not just indigenous groups in English-speaking countries. This segment does address the indigenous phenomenon of not being represented well in the media, both internationally and nationally.

Example 3 Chief Seattle's letter

The segment Chief Seattle's letter (Haegi, E., Madsen, T., Mohammad-Roe, S, 2021b, p. 192-197) contains a text that begins with a short informational paragraph about the displacement suffered by indigenous people in the US, and the loss of land that many Native Americans have experienced through history. The rest of the text is part of a letter written by Chief Seattle to the then-American President Franklin Pierce. He expresses his view on land ownership, different from the government who wants to buy the land, and what the land means for his people. This letter can be a source of cultural understanding of a way of thinking that is inherently different from the Western understanding of land ownership. In this regard, this text adds an indigenous perspective that one of the two relevant competence aims has as a goal. This competence aim is: *“explore and describe ways of living, ways of thinking, communication patterns and diversity in the English-speaking world”* (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020). Before reading the text, the teacher's book (Haegi, E., Madsen, T., Mohammad-Roe, S, 2021a, p. 192) recommend

asking the pupils to brainstorm what they already know about Native Americans and to draw a mind map on the board and let the pupils express their previous knowledge. This is an activity that will activate the pupil's background knowledge, which is important when teaching new cultural ways of knowing.

There are three pictures in this segment, a coloured photograph of Chief Seattle, a painting of an unidentified Native American on horseback in Taos Valley, New Mexico, and at the end a picture of the Statue of Chief Seattle from the present-day city of Seattle, Washington. These images have an indexical relationship to the text, illustrating what Chief Seattle was like, while the painting seems to have a decorative motive behind its inclusion, as it is not utilised in any of the tasks or by the teacher's book. An issue which has been noted in the other segments is that while this segment does explain an indigenous perspective on environmentalism and thoughts about land ownership, the segment does also not provide much diversity in indigenous perspectives. Canale, (2016, p. 245-236) mentions a trend where foreign cultural diversity is often mentioned between cultures, in this case between the indigenous and the settler perspective on land ownership but does not mention the diversity within a culture. As indigenous groups are diverse and sometimes contradictory, indigenous cultural material also needs to show this diversity within communities as well (Smith, 2021, p. 82-84).

There are six tasks in this segment, two focus on learning difficult words from the text and close reading the letter to find different imagery such as metaphor. Two talking questions are included, asking the student to talk with a partner about why Chief Seattle finds it difficult to sell the land, why the letter is included in this chapter on the topic of love and loss, and what other people have similarly lost their land. Two writing tasks are presented towards the end of the segment, one asking the students about environmentalism or their love for nature, while the other one asks the students to work with adjectives from the text. Many of these are denotational, as they want the pupil to work with close-ended tasks to reach a certain point of view. The pupil is not asked to challenge their own beliefs as a response to the letter or critique the letter's point of view, which might be something that the pupil will end up doing as part of the meaning-making process, which is an aspect of the unguided semiosis that the textbook does not capture fully (Kiss & Weninger, 2013, p. 24-25).

The cultural meaning potential that can be found in the *Engelsk* series based on these examples, shows an effort to address indigenous issues within the English curriculum, aiming to

foster intercultural competence among students. However, an observation found in most segments is the tendency to portray indigenous peoples primarily through the lens of historical injustices or struggles, potentially oversimplifying their cultural richness and diversity within each indigenous group in the limited space that the textbook gives to each group. There is a more conscious thought behind each sign in the segment, with the teacher's book often encouraging the teacher to let pupils explore their understanding and biases on the topic before being exposed to the intended meaning that the segments often have, which according to Kiss & Weninger (2013, p. 23) is the tension that needs to be created for cultural learning to happen.

5.5 Comparison

This section of the thesis will look at differences in the textbook series' depiction of indigenous groups, and the cultural potential which the segments of the text hold. Major differences between the two-text series are differences in what aspect of indigenous culture is presented, how topics are presented in the book and how the cultural potential in each semiotic element is used.

A major difference between the book series lies in the specific information about indigenous groups that fills the limited space in which different indigenous groups are mentioned. The curriculum from 1997 (Ministry of Church Affairs, Education and Research 1996, p. 231) specifies that pupils are to “-*work with a rich and varied assortment of texts, e.g. myths and legends.* This might explain the rationale behind the focus on the creation myth in example 1 and 2 from the *Flight* series and the textbooks do succeed at conveying this curricular goal. However, there is a second curricular goal mentioned: “- *work with culture and societal issues in English-speaking countries, for example... indigenous rights, for example Sami people, war and peace.*” (Ministry of Church Affairs, Education and Research 1996, p. 232) The overall impression from this book series is that little space is given to address contemporary injustices, as a lot of focus is on an attempt to convey information at the expense of exploring issues. The unutilised picture of the indigenous protestor in example one from the *Flight* series points to a priority amongst the textbook authors to not address the issue of land rights when talking about any of the indigenous groups in the book. Kiss & Weninger (2013, p. 24) argue that we should not view cultural education to be just overt information about customs or artefacts of cultural groups, which is the content which dominates the *Flight* series.

Compare this aspect to the *Engelsk* series, in which all the texts, apart from the text dealing with the Māori way of greeting, listed in Figure 2 deal with a different issue that many indigenous peoples face. Kiss & Weninger (2013, p. 24) mention that culture is “*also a set of beliefs and values, that are expressed and, to a large extent, reproduced through semiotic (i.e., linguistic, visual, kinetic, architectural, etc.) activity.*” The two keywords from this quote are “*expressed*” and “*activity*”. Culture is shaped by historical circumstances, but it is also an active expression that needs to be included to expose the student to other cultures. The *Engelsk* series does address the curriculum goal: explore and reflect on the situation of indigenous peoples in the English-speaking world and in Norway (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020), and this is a point in which some of the theorists mentioned earlier claim is lacking in textbooks and educational material (Santomé, 2009, p. 65) (Sahlame & Pritchard, 2023, p. 9). However, the aspect of teaching about diversity inside cultural groups is largely not present, which might essentialise the struggle indigenous people face as the most significant part of their existence.

The segment *Chief Seattle’s letter* (Haegi, Madsen, Mohammad-Roe, 2021b, p. 192-197) is a part of chapter four in the textbook *Engelsk 9*, named *Love and loss*. This chapter is about the concept of love, and how it is a theme in Western culture which manifests itself in many different forms. The topic of loss is also brought up, and how it connects with the concept of love. (Haegi, Madsen, Mohammad-Roe, 2021b, p. 161). As will be revealed, Chief Seattle’s letter is a tribal leader’s story about his relationship, and love, for the land and his grief over the loss of it to white settlers. A strength of this inclusion of indigenous texts in the textbook is that it is woven naturally into the broader topics that the textbook cover. This can be seen in the quantifiable findings mentioned earlier, where we see those texts relating to indigenous topics or perspectives have a broader spread in the *Engelsk* series than in the *Flight* series, where the majority of the indigenous topics are covered in their separate chapters. While there seems to be a greater volume of texts about indigenous groups in the *Flight* series, there is a notable difference in how they are integrated into the curriculum compared to the *Engelsk* series. In the *Flight* series, indigenous topics are separated into their own chapters, isolating them from the broader thematic discussions of the curriculum. This approach may limit student’s opportunities to explore the interconnectedness of indigenous perspectives with broader cultural themes. The *Engelsk* series, on the other hand, demonstrates a more integrated approach, where indigenous texts are seamlessly woven into chapters exploring universal themes like love and loss. This

integration allows for a better understanding of indigenous cultures and their relevance to contemporary society. Moreover, by embedding indigenous perspectives within broader thematic discussions, the *Engelsk* series promotes cross-cultural awareness and fosters a more inclusive learning environment for all students.

A noticeable difference between these two textbook series' is that *Engelsk 8-10* to a larger degree than *Flight 8-10* focuses on reflective work around culture, though not to its full potential. Kiss & Weninger (2013, p. 24-25) are critical of the linear process of educational materials, which often have many activities and questions which are closed-ended. Many of the tasks seen in the examples from the *Flight* series are examples of this and often exist to test if pupils have understood the content of the segment. The knowledge that pupils attain in such tasks are heavily guided by the textbook and can hinder actual critical examination and attainment of intercultural competence. Reflective work can be found in bigger quantity as seen in the tasks in the *Engelsk series*. Canale (2016, p. 232-233) notes that some level of simplification needs to be in place in textbooks for them to be appropriate to the English proficiency level of the student. Many of the tasks in the segments in the *Flight* and *Engelsk* series focus on grammatical aspects of the text, and making sure that pupils understand the message. The level of tasks and text are greater in the *Engelsk* series than the *Flight* series, which might be reflective of a general increase in English proficiency, which is somewhat but not completely reflected in the increase of reflective suggestions in the teacher's book, or the increase in reflective tasks in each segment.

6.0 Discussion

As similar research has been conducted both nationally and internationally, I find it relevant to investigate how the findings of this study compare to the findings of previous textbook research. In trying to answer the research question, relevant topics to discuss in light of my findings are the stereotyping that many studies have highlighted and the exclusion of certain elements when textbooks try to address cultural topics.

6.1 Stereotyping

The stereotyping of indigenous groups can be seen as a legacy of the colonial structures in education which Said (2003, p. 3) talks about when discussing the enduring impact of Orientalism. By perpetuating simplified and often inaccurate representations, textbooks not only

reinforce colonial power dynamics but also contribute to the marginalisation and erasure of indigenous cultures. This phenomenon of essentialising the cultural expression of indigenous groups, can be ascribed more specifically to legacy of the ethnocentric ideology which Philipson (2009, p. 34) note is prevalent in many countries where the British Council pushed their colonial understanding of those deemed as “other”. Despite the best attempts at challenging this by the curricular changes which focused on intercultural competence in the 1990s (Hoff, 2020, p. 70-71), the Flight series fail to properly contextualise indigenous perspectives outside the colonial framework. A very illustrating example of this is found in example two from the Flight series where we the Māori is portrayed as an exotic part when visiting New Zealand, in a text which fits the description “tourist curriculum” by Santomé (2009, p. 74-74).

A major issue that Canale (2016, p. 235-236) points out which is prevalent in language textbooks is the lack of showing the diversity within a foreign culture. This aspect is connected to the critique which Smith (2021, p. 82-84) mention where only the West is allowed to be viewed as complicated and contradictory, while portraying indigenous culture as conservative and ceased to evolve after encountering the Europeans. The *Flight* series’ tendency to essentialise its information follows this trend, which as mentioned above can be seen as a legacy of the way EFL as a subject has evolved. The changes in *Engelsk*, while addressing more of the injustices faced by different indigenous people historically and contemporarily, fail at showing the true diversity which exists within indigenous groups. There is a general lack of in-group diversity which might come as a consequence of the limit space in the book dedicated to indigenous topics, which might have been covered better in other chapters which deal with more multicultural topics. That being said, it is a common trope which the book fails into when it fails to address the diversity withing indigenous groups.

6.2 Exclusion

An issue that can be found in both the textbook series is the aspect of exclusion as a result of simplification. Santomé (2009, p. 65) mention that exclusion of what is not considered part of the “normal” is an occurring theme in many language textbooks, which end up not mentioning negative aspects which the larger society inflicts on indigenous groups. Canale (2016, p. 232-233) also mention the aspect of exclusion in his research on textbook studies, as something which occur because knowledge needs to be presented in a simpler manner to be understood by

the pupil. One point to remind, is that the teacher's textbook for the Flight-series does contain extra material chapters which give more detail on the indigenous groups, where the mention of their contemporary and historical struggles is emphasised to the teacher, who then have to tell the pupil about it. A thing that is clear is that the Flight series, is that in the name of simplifying the textbook, it ends up silencing or ignoring the injustices of the indigenous people. This is in stark contrast to what is found in the *Engelsk* series, which while problematic in their lack of showing internal diversity within indigenous communities, have the issues that indigenous people face at centre when presenting such topics to the pupils. This is an important evolution of the cultural meaning potential in English textbooks, as it on some levels addresses a critique against which Shalame & Pritchard (2023, p. 9) have against educational material. That is not to say that the textbooks could not challenge Western privilege to a larger degree, but compared to the older textbooks it is a change which is more aligned with teaching intercultural competence to the pupils.

An aspect which is mentioned in both curriculums is the aspect of working with Norwegian indigenous groups (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020), with the Sami being mentioned in earlier curriculum (Ministry of Church Affairs, Education and Research 1996, p. 232). This is an aspect which is ignored in the segments in *Flight* which have been studied and are only found in one task explicitly in the *Engelsk* series in the segment The Stolen Generations. The lack of a further deep dive into this aspect is a weakness in both book series, as it proves that challenging the Norwegian exceptionalism is not seen as a priority when engaging with indigenous topics. While the textbooks are not portraying the Sami in the typical "other" way as Eriksen (2022, p. 105-106) point out often is the case, the sheer lack of a critical examination on a deeper level between the oppression faced by the Sami and the oppression faced by other indigenous groups in the English-speaking world is a weakness. This is a failure of the *English* series in trying to challenge the Norwegian exceptionalism and is only somewhat better than the non-mentioning of the Sami found in the segments examined in the *Flight* series. This aligns with the observations made by Santomé (2009, p. 65) regarding the aspect of exclusion in language textbooks, particularly regarding indigenous groups and the simplification of knowledge.

7.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to explore how the cultural content in Norwegian EFL textbooks have changed, focusing on indigenous people as the focus group for this thesis. The research question for this thesis is: *The research question therefore is: How has the cultural meaning potential in the depiction of indigenous groups in EFL textbook changed in English textbook used in Norway from the 1997 Norwegian curriculum to the 2020 Norwegian curriculum?* The *Flight* series demonstrates a problematic tendency to present indigenous cultures through a lens shaped by the legacy of colonial ideologies. This results in oversimplified representations that often essentialise indigenous cultures and overlook contemporary issues faced by these communities. The *Engelsk* series on the other hand, exhibits a more nuanced and inclusive approach. Indigenous perspectives are integrated into broader thematic discussions, addressing contemporary issues and fostering cross-cultural awareness among students. It is evident that the cultural meaning potential in the depiction of indigenous groups in Norwegian EFL textbooks has evolved significantly from the 1997 to the 2020 curriculum. This evolution reflects a trend towards more inclusive and culturally sensitive educational materials which somewhat address the critique towards the curricular material in the West that many of the theorists have pointed out. There remains room for further improvement in challenging colonial narratives and accurately representing the diversity and complexity of indigenous cultures.

7.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Looking into the cultural meaning potential that lies in textbooks should ideally be done by looking over all aspects of culture in the book, not just focusing on indigenous peoples, or any single cultural group for that matter. The reason this was done in this thesis is owed to a lack of time. While the *Engelsk* series might feature mostly negative segments about indigenous groups, that might not be the case when looking into other issues which affect other minority groups. Further research could investigate how culture is treated in depth in texts which at first glance do not seem like it contains cultural potential, but which in most cases promote certain cultural assumptions and biases. Taking a deeper dive into the supplementary material, and online material which follow with textbooks could also give a more comprehensive view given that they all act as elements which points towards a common goal of teaching intercultural competence.

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Appendix

Appendix 1:

At the time when the first British settlers landed in Botany Bay, it is estimated that there were about 30,000 Aboriginals, also known as Aborigines, or “Abos”, In Australia. Aboriginals represent about 1.4 per cent of the population. Half of them live in cities or on the fringe of country towns, but in more remote areas many of them live a more tribe-oriented life. In earlier years, Aboriginals were discriminated against in many ways. They were not given the right to vote until 1966, and laws to wipe out their culture were passed. As a result of years of campaigning and demonstrations these laws have been reversed. Today, the Australian government has programs to improve their standards of living and preserve their ancient culture. Aboriginal people now also have a voice in running their own affairs. Sacred sites have been returned to their original owners, and many Aboriginal names have been restored. For example, Ayers Rock is now known as Uluru. (Bromseth & Wigdahl, 1999a, p. 101)

The master thesis' relevance for me as a teacher.

The motivation behind me choosing this method when analysing the content of EFL textbook as opposed to using discourse analysis or content analysis, is that it teaches me to look deeper into the intended semiosis of the textbook. Many aspects of the *Flight* series are problematic, but there is also cultural potential hidden behind many of the texts that I as a teacher should be able to see independently. A point that does not come across in many of the textbook studies that I have seen, is the acknowledgement that it is the teacher who decided ultimately what will be taught in any given lesson. Thus, developing a framework to look at the cultural potential in each text or piece of media that I will give to my future pupils is a very important skill to develop.

Another insight from working on this thesis is how curriculum aims are translated into actual workable textbooks for the students. To see a multitude of texts in textbooks has given insight into how I can shape my own lesson plans to fit the contemporary curriculum. Getting some insight into how curriculum was like in 1997 has also shown me the changing attitudes towards what knowledge is to be taught, with that old curriculum having more detailed year to year plan for what the pupils were expected to learn. The mentioning of specific authors is also something I was not aware was an aspect. Whether or not this is a positive development I'm not sure of, as I think that having a good mix between indigenous, minority, and "classicals" is probably the best combination when doing an independent evaluation of what my own future pupils will get.

The last insight I will note is the relevance of this thesis regarding is the acknowledgement of the multiple parts of the English curriculum, namely the aspect of language learning, cultural learning and critical literacy. The older books that were analysed, as well as many of the books in the earlier literature of Norwegian and foreign EFL textbook often feature texts whose first goal is language acquisition. This is in of itself not an issue, as long as it does not come at expense of developing the intercultural competence that the students need in order to communicate English effectively in the modern world. The potentially weaker pupils I will become responsible for in the future will also need to acquire a comprehensive cultural exposure which gives them both language acquisition at their level, as well as a positive development in cultural understanding. There is nothing wrong with an image having an indexical relationship with the text, as long as it also is utilised to its full potential, something that I as a teacher will be able to do through a guided semiosis lead by me in class or with the student.

