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Master's thesis

**Fostering critical literacy and intercultural
competence through the graphic novel
adaptation of Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred***

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Thank you!

Abstract

This thesis focuses on the development of critical literacy and intercultural competence through the use of the graphic novel adaptation of Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* in the English classroom. The aim of the present thesis is to demonstrate that the use of a graphic novel can further pupils' thinking and meaning-making process. Pupils' understanding and empathy can be strengthened by working with diverse perspectives and narratives of historically misrepresented people. This thesis presents examples of 'power' and 'empathy', and analyses and discusses these themes in relation to specific English subject competences, core values and principles from the Norwegian National Curriculum 2020 (LK20). In addition, the themes are discussed in relation to various theoretical approaches and competencies such as critical literacy, intercultural competence, pedagogy of Multiliteracy and dual coding theory (DCT). The present thesis serves as an example on how instrumental graphic narratives can be when used in the English classroom.

Sammendrag

I denne masteroppgaven undersøker jeg utviklingen av kritisk *literacy* og interkulturell kompetanse hos elever ved bruk av grafiske romaner i engelsk undervisning i videregående opplæring. Jeg benytter Duffy & Jennings' (2017) adaptasjon av Octavia E. Butlers *Kindred*. Målet med oppgaven er å demonstrere hvordan bruken av grafiske romaner kan utvikle tanke- og meningsskapende prosesser hos elever. Jeg argumenterer for at elevers forståelse og empati kan styrkes ved å jobbe med tekster som utfordrer menneskers syn på mangfoldige perspektiver og narrativ, med spesielt fokus på historisk feilrepresentert menneskegrupper. I oppgaven blir temaene 'makt' og 'empati' analysert og diskutert gjennom eksempler fra den grafiske romanen *Kindred*. De er i tillegg diskutert i relasjon til læreplanen (LK20), hovedsakelig kompetansemål, sentrale verdier og kjerneelementer tilknyttet engelskfaget. Temaene er også diskutert med bakgrunn i de teoretiske tilnærmingene: kritisk *literacy*, interkulturell kompetanse, *Multiliteracy* pedagogikk og *dual coding* teori (DCT). Oppgaven illustrerer hvor nyttig grafiske romaner kan være i engelskfaget.

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1. Introduction

‘Show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become’ – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

The above statement is taken from a speech centered around the ‘Danger of a Single Story’ (Adichie, 2009). The speech underscores the importance of representation and warns against the dangers of misrepresentation. Adichie (2009) speaks on how a single narrative of someone or something can effectively suppress and silence individuals, peoples and communities. The objective of this thesis is to illustrate how literature can be used to combat the suppression of these marginalised communities. Specifically, this thesis explores how using the graphic novel adaptation of Octavia E. Butler’s *Kindred* in the classroom has the potential to challenge and broaden pupils’ knowledge and perspectives.

Adichie’s (2009) speech emphasizes how the historically misrepresented and/or under-represented peoples have suffered as a result of a narrative that they were not able to influence and/or write of themselves in order to show their nuanced, intricate and complete aspects. Narratives have the power to build and destroy institutions, to uplift and oppress societies, and to unite and separate nations. Every story has the power to leave an impression and impact our lives. Showing people as one thing and only one thing can create dangers that have unrelenting and diminishing social, political and economic consequences. Therefore, as a teacher, it is my responsibility and mandate to introduce diverse perspectives and narratives in the classroom. The task might not always be to change the narrative entirely, but to add to it or complete it. The idea that whoever is in power controls the narrative is an example of an ongoing plea from marginalized people trying to add their voices to their own history. As much as experiences are unique and particular, they can also be shared experiences. These shared experiences create many and various perspectives. However, every perspective might not be able to be put forth, seen and heard. Nonetheless, the aim is to give a more balanced narrative to a story. In doing so, the narrative is closer to becoming a true reflection of the individual, the people or the event it is describing.

The Norwegian National Curriculum 2020 (LK20) specifies the importance of discourse in order to provide space for the participation of various voices. This idea is communicated as follows: ‘All participants in the school environment must develop awareness of minority and majority perspectives and ensure that there is room for collaboration, dialogue and

disagreement' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a). This is obtainable when narratives with different perspectives and experiences are introduced in the classroom. Furthermore, this thesis shows that introducing narratives of historically marginalized or misrepresented people can help foster understanding and empathy in pupils. The LK20 states that 'the ability to understand what others think, feel and experience is the basis for empathy and friendship between pupils' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a). This attribute is something the pupils will take with them outside of the classroom as they are participants of not only their immediate society but also the global one.

This thesis exemplifies the use of African-American literature in the classroom in order to foster empathy and develop critical literacy and intercultural competence. A relevant core value promoted by the LK20 is pupils' ability to 'assess different sources of knowledge and think critically about how knowledge is developed' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a). The core value is corroborated further as such: '[pupils] must also be able to understand that their own experiences, points of view and convictions may be incomplete and erroneous' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a). This core value is in direct correlation with the purpose of this thesis, which is the use of the graphic novel adaptation *Kindred* in the teaching and development of critical literacy and intercultural competence by challenging and adding to the ideologies, mentalities, experiences and perspectives of the pupils. The latter statement further emphasizes the importance of the multimodal aspect of a literary work, which has the potential to underscore the message that is being conveyed. Moreover, the importance of a graphic novel can be tied to the fact that it allows imagination and creativity in the construction of meaning. Reading a graphic novel demands that pupils actively make meaning through the weaving of words and images.

Developing critical literacy and intercultural competence turns pupils into open-minded, empathetic and capable individuals. These are qualities that are integral in the fulfilment of one of the main aims of developing critical literacy and intercultural competence, namely, social change (Behrman, 2006, p. 495; Gregory & Cahill, 2009, p. 10). Pupils become active participants in the global community and can demand social change and bring voice to the marginalised. As Nussbaum (1997) states:

It is for this reason that literature is so urgently important for the citizen, as an expansion of sympathies that real life cannot cultivate sufficiently. It is the political promise of literature that it can transport us, while remaining ourselves, into the life of

another, revealing similarities but also profound differences between the life and thought of that other and myself and making them comprehensible, or at least more comprehensible (p. 111).

This supports the purpose of this thesis which is to illustrate the significance of a literary work in the development of understanding, awareness and empathy.

1.1 Thesis statement

As introduced in the section above, this thesis focuses on the development of critical literacy and intercultural competence through the use of a literary work. Specifically, in this thesis it is argued that a didactic approach using the graphic novel adaptation of Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* in the English classroom can help foster critical literacy and intercultural competence.

1.2 Structure

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the background for this thesis. It also states the study's aim and thesis statement. Chapter two is the previous research chapter where I provide the summary and important aspects of research that is relevant to the present thesis. Chapter three highlights the methods that serve as a basis of the analysis and discussion chapters. Chapter four presents an outline of competencies and theoretical approaches. This includes critical literacy, intercultural competence, Multiliteracy and multimodality, respectively. This chapter also provides sub-sections that define graphic novels in general and dual coding theory. The literary analysis is presented in chapter five. This chapter has three sub-sections that deal with the plot, and the two main themes, power and empathy. These themes are the foundation of that chapter. Chapter six deals with the discussion of the themes analysed in chapter five. This chapter incorporates research and theoretical approaches from the previous chapters. Finally, chapter seven provides a summary of the present study and revisits the thesis' aims. This chapter concludes this thesis with suggestions for possible future research.

2. Previous research

This section presents previous research that discuss the value of using literary sources in the classroom. It should be noted that the papers presented below are only a few examples from this field of study. These were chosen because of the similarities that can be related to the present study.

Graphic literature is a resource that has the potential to help learners develop critical literacy. In his study on using Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus* as a teaching resource, Christian Chun (2009) argues that such novels 'can help explain how language works both for and against people and enable students to acquire an appreciation for critical literacy' (p. 144). In other words, graphic novels have the potential to demonstrate the details of language use, both in words and image, and this multimodal aspect can convey messages that are instrumental in portraying the right or wrong image of a people. This research presents graphic novels as an alternative 'to traditional literacy pedagogy' that caters to English-language learners' needs in achieving advanced reflective skills. It is argued further that these types of multimodal texts help 'deepen the students' reading engagement and develop their critical literacies' (Chun, 2009, p. 144). The study's aim is the use of graphic novels in 'making a case for incorporating and expanding a pedagogy of multiliteracies' (Chun, 2009, p. 144). Chun (2009) applies the 'critical literacy tool-kit' developed by Morgan and Ramanathan (2005) to exemplify how *Maus* can potentially be used in the secondary school classroom (p. 148). The tool kit consists of four aspects (Morgan & Ramanathan, 2005, p. 156-158), however, Chun utilizes the following three: (a) using narratives and/or autobiographies that can link personal experiences and 'sociohistorical and institutional power relations' together, (b) juxtaposing various texts 'in ways that question and subvert received disciplinary knowledge', and (d) using multimodal and semiotic strategies in the classroom (Chun, 2009, p. 148-149). This means that Chun (2009) chooses to use different approaches that might aid in the development and achievement of critical literacy.

Furthermore, Chun (2009) states that 'history for many students is often a boring exercise in the classroom primarily due to many standardized and sanitized textbooks that strip away the interesting dramas and contradictions that constitute our histories' (p. 147). Thus, the use of *Maus* in the classroom becomes 'intellectually engaging content realized through its visual narrative strategies' (Chun, 2009, p. 147). The study argues further that such multimodal sources bring forth themes and issues that are often not problematized or put in the forefront

in the classroom (Chun, 2009, p. 148). The previously mentioned factors of this study are important given the parallel that can be drawn to my thesis. The use of one specific graphic novel to teach specific themes such as institutionalized racism, genocide and human rights, can be related to the use of *Kindred* in discussing similar themes in pursuit of critical literacy. In addition, the use of such graphic novels is a prime example of how the Norwegian National Curriculum can be incorporated in the classroom. Chun's study is an example that targets core values such as human dignity, identity and cultural diversity, as well as democracy and participation. Finally, literary sources as such have the potential to engage students in a cross-curricular project.

Another study that discusses the importance of using graphic novels in the classroom is Michael Boatright's (2010) *Graphic Journeys: Graphic Novels' Representation of Immigrant Experiences*. His article 'provides a critical literacy analysis of three graphic novels' that primarily deal with immigration and immigrant experiences (Boatright, 2010, p. 469). The three graphic novels are Tan's (2007) *The Arrival*, Kiyama's (1931/1999) *The Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco, 1904-1924*, and Yang's (2006) *American Born Chinese*. Boatright (2010) states further that 'because graphic novels convey meaning by employing both illustrations and words, I argue that the combination of images and words in graphic novels privileges certain perspectives and merits critique in their representations of immigrant experiences' (p. 469). Boatright approaches his research through the application of multiple critical literacy frameworks. The first framework is within McLaughlin & DeVogd's (2004) understanding that critical literacy studies encourage 'readers to delve past a comprehension-level understanding of a piece of text to identify the underlying ideologies, or belief systems, inherent in any given word or image' (Boatright, 2010, p. 470). The second framework within Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco's (2001) and Suárez-Orozco et al.'s (2008) work explores 'social mobility myths, issues of assimilation, and immigrant identities' (Boatright, 2010, p. 470).

A correlation that can be made between this study and the present thesis is the use of graphic novels as primary source of analysis. In addition, the critical literacy framework suggested by McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004) is an essential theoretical foundation that is used to argue the importance of using *Kindred* in the classroom. It is important to note that Boatright (2010) focuses on the themes 'immigrant experiences' and uses these various graphic novels to bring different aspects and perspectives, whereas the present study focuses on one graphic novel to bring about various themes into the classroom.

Graphic novels allow a cross-curricular collaboration on different levels. A study that presents an example of this practice is Rhoades, Ashley Dallacqua, Sara Kersten, Johnny Merry and Mary Catherine Miller's (2015) *The Pen(cil) is Mightier Than the (S)word? Telling Sophisticated Silent Stories using Shaun Tan's Wordless Graphic Novel, "The Arrival"*. This research study 'focuses on four teacher-researchers' experiences with Shaun Tan's (2006) *The Arrival*, a wordless graphic novel that is in their elementary, middle school, high school, and university classrooms' (p. 307). Although based on a wordless graphic novel, the study resulted into a 'deep exploration of issues surrounding diversity and social justice' (Rhoades et al., 2015, p. 307). The non-arts teachers 'examined their use of arts-based texts, meaning-making processes, and pedagogies in academic settings within a critical multimodal literacies framework (Rhoades et al., 2015, p. 308). It is explained further that this approach 'enabled readers of all ages to engage actively and deeply with *The Arrival*, developing vital evolving academic, social, and contemporary communication skills and practices' (Rhoades et al., 2015, p. 308). The aim of this study was to 'help art and non-arts education researchers and teachers understand the possibilities and challenges of this type of interdisciplinary pedagogical work' (Rhoades et al., 2015, p. 309). The questions that the research is based on are: (a) 'why use multimodal texts such as graphic novels to bring arts-based pedagogies into non-arts spaces?' and (b) 'how to use such texts critically' (Rhoades et al., 2015, p. 309). The findings of this study show that the use of the graphic novel allowed topics such as ambiguity, resistance, dialogic meaning-making, embodied experiences, and empathy to be discussed (Rhoades et al., 2015, p. 309).

The purpose of this study is an aspect that the present thesis also explores. This refers to the fact that Rhoades et al. (2015) describe that the research was based on their interest of 'using graphic novels as non-traditional texts to engage students in content as well as the development of critical thinking skills and critical consciousness' (p. 311). This study's practice-based research separates it from the present thesis. Nonetheless, the discussion of possible themes that can be extracted from using *Kindred* in the classroom is similar to Rhoades et al.'s research. This means that the themes that are discussed are the result of the reading process. In addition, both theses are similar in the fact that both aim to achieve critical literacy in the classroom.

A project that discusses specific themes based on Octavia E. Butler's novel *Kindred* is Sofia Hammarström's (2015) research. In her research project: 'Black Feminist theory and literature in the critical language classroom. An interdisciplinary study of Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred*

and how it can be used to engage in critical pedagogy in the Swedish upper secondary ESL classroom’, she states that ‘the aim of this interdisciplinary study is to consider how teachers of English as a second language (ESL) at Upper Secondary School in Sweden might engage with critical pedagogy through the use of literature’ (Hammarström, 2015, p. 6). In addition, the study explores how the reading of a work of fiction provides ‘a basis for critical student discussion’ (Hammarström, 2015, p. 6). The study applied a Black feminist critical framework in analysing the novel. The analytical process of this study is based on four research questions:

- (a) What does the novel suggest about the consequences of patriarchal ideology? How are the female characters portrayed? How do these portrayals relate to the gender issues of the period in which the novel was written and the period in which the novel is set?
- (b) Does the work reinforce or undermine patriarchal ideology? In other words, does the author seem to have a feminist agenda with the novel and, if so, in what way does that agenda manifest itself?
- (c) How does the work reveal the ways in which race intersects with gender in creating women’s experience?
- (d) What does *Kindred* tell the reader about African heritage and African American history and experience? (Hammarström, 2015, p. 15).

The research questions resulted in the discussion of themes such as heritage, intersection between racism and sexism, and equality in relationships. Furthermore, the research project discusses these themes in relation to the values expressed in the Swedish National Curriculum for the Upper Secondary School. Thus, the factors that are relatable to my thesis are that this interdisciplinary study ‘examines a work of fiction by applying a critical lens within critical theory, and [...] it examines a way to cover the exigencies of the Swedish National Curriculum and the ESL subject syllabus’ (Hammarström, 2015, p. 6). However, the present thesis’ analysis is within the framework and core values of the Norwegian National Curriculum.

3. Method

A qualitative research method has been used for the purpose of this research. Specifically, the methods applied were literary analysis and document analysis.

A literary analysis is a meaning-making process based on a literary work. As Kusch (2016) states factors that literary analysis considers are genre, close reading and context (p. 15). Genre 'provides a good orientation' (Kusch, 2016, p. 30) to the literature and is influential to my analysis. However, my main focus has been close reading of the graphic novel and contextualising. This means 'not only understanding the surface meaning of the sentences, but comprehending the deep underlying meanings within and connections among them' (Kusch, 2016, p. 30). In the process of contextualizing, the idea is to understand 'the context of references and meanings by exploring connections between the literature and major cultural and historical events at the time' (Kusch, 2016, p. 16). In this case, the context is not only the time the graphic novel was published, but also the time of when and where the story is set. It is important to note that in literary analysis, 'the author's experiences and statements' serve as context and not necessarily as 'confirmation of meaning' (Kusch, 2016, p. 16). Thus, literary analysis is the aspect of going beyond the surface in order to extract meaning from a text. In regard to the present thesis' use of a graphic novel, the meaning making process refers not only to words but also images. Therefore, the connection and comprehension that Kusch (2016) refers to above also applies to the connection between the written words and images, and how that specific interconnectedness affects the analysis.

A document analysis consists of reading and processing a written material and using it as a basis for the analysis and discussion section in order to substantiate, corroborate and answer the research question (Repstad, 2007, p. 103). The document analysis is of the Norwegian National Curriculum 2020 (LK20). Specifically, the analysis has dealt with the core values, principles and competence aims from the English subject both as a common subject in general and vocational studies, and as a programme subject in programmes for specialization in general studies. The use of the document analysis is essential as it serves as a solid didactical background. It should be noted that the LK20 is discussed in relation to specific examples from the literary analysis of the graphic novel. When using document analysis as a method, the content of the curriculum is considered as data for the research itself (Repstad, 2007, p. 103). This means that the analysis and interpretation of the chosen competence aims are used

to contextualise the relevance of the themes/topics for the research, which is the case with the present study.

The methods used make the analysis and discussion sections of this thesis rely heavily on my understanding and interpretations of the data. The material used is the graphic novel adaptation of Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* and the core values, principles and competence aims for the English subject. Specifically, the literary analysis chapter uses various theoretical approaches in order to explore the chosen examples for the respective themes. The theoretical chapter gives an overview of multiple approaches that allow the fostering of intercultural competence and critical literacy. The material is analysed through these various approaches.

The fact that people are 'meaning-making beings who actively construct their own meanings of situations and make sense of their world and act in it through such interpretations' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 288) is an essential ontological perspective relevant to the present thesis' qualitative research method. In other words, this perspective brings forth the analytical and meaning making process that is based on the researcher's background, cultural markers and identity. Furthermore, 'meanings used by participants to interpret situations are culture- and context-bound, and there are multiple realities, not single truths in interpreting a situation' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 288). This perspective is particularly relevant to this thesis given that the analysis is based on my definitions, meanings and understandings as a result of the interaction with the data. As Cohen et al. (2018) elaborate further, research is 'influenced by the researcher's values as expressed in the choice of the focus of the research, [...] method of working and data collection, analysing and reporting findings' (p. 289). My awareness of this subjectivity is an integral part as this subjectivity can potentially be a limitation to the interpretive and analytical process. However, a close read of the literature, previous research, theoretical framework and additional sources can aid in bringing and sustaining objectivity throughout the thesis.

4. Theory

The current chapter presents the theoretical framework that this thesis is based upon. The theories and competencies that are outlined are: critical literacy, intercultural competence, Multiliteracy, multimodality and dual coding theory.

4.1 Critical literacy

Critical literacy has been defined and redefined by many throughout the years. This chapter deals with the many definitions and understandings that have surrounded this competency.

Critical literacy is a skill or a competency that learners are expected to develop. Before diving into the many theoretical approaches to critical literacy, it is important to understand what literacy is. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to have a detailed account on the various and complex meanings of the term literacy. However, basic definitions are presented as follows. At its simplest form, literacy ‘refers to the reading and writing of text’ (Luke, 2012, p. 5). Additionally, it is also described as ‘a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society’ (Montoya, 2018). In other words, literacy is a continuous process of developing and widening one’s own understanding and knowledge with the aim of potentially becoming a proficient and competent member of a society.

Literacy is often mentioned in relation to Paulo Freire’s work from 1970, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where he discusses literacy not only as reading and writing skills meant for work or tertiary education, but literacy as ‘the origin of genuine dialogue and active participation in communication’ (Endres, 2001, p. 401). This notion was elaborated further by Freire and Macedo (1987) where literacy is described as emancipatory, referring to the position where ‘literate individuals are able to function independently and flexibly in society’ (Gregory & Cahill, 2009, p. 7). Readdressing Freire (1970), the belief that was held was that literacy education played an integral role in ‘perpetuating or overcoming oppression’ (Endres, 2001, p. 401). This means that, the knowledge and understanding of the social, cultural and political factors of oppression are essential in becoming an individual that either perpetuates or overcomes said oppression. This idea centred Freire’s focus on identifying ‘the ways in which the learners’ initiation to the most basic aspects of written language can involve them in critical reflection about social and political life’ (Endres, 2001, p. 401). The latter definition and

understanding of literacy serves as a starting point to the dialogue of what critical literacy is and the importance and significance it carries.

As mentioned above, critical literacy stems from Freire's approach to literacy education. Endres (2001) writes that '[critical literacy] has been developed by critical theorists of education who are profoundly influenced by Freire' (p. 402). Here is how critical literacy is described in some studies and articles:

The term critical literacy refers to use of technologies of print and other media of communication to analyse, critique, and transform the norms, rule systems, and practices governing the social fields of everyday life. (Luke, 2012, p. 5)

[Critical literacy] is a set of practices and civic competencies that help the learner develop a critical awareness that texts represent particular points of view while often silencing others. (Ciardiello, 2004, p. 138)

Critical literacy [...] aims to draw attention to implicit ideologies of texts and textual practices by examining issues of power, normativity, and representation, as well as facilitating opportunities for equity-oriented sociopolitical action. (Borsheim-Black, Macaluso & Petrone, 2014, p. 123)

Critical literacy uses texts and print skills in ways that enable students to examine the politics of daily life within contemporary society with a view to understanding what it means to locate and actively seek out contradictions within modes of life, theories, and substantive intellectual positions. (Bishop, 2014, p. 52)

Critical literacy espouses that education can foster social justice by allowing students to recognize how language is affected by and affects social relations. Among the aims of critical literacy are to have students examine the power relationships inherent in language use, recognize that language is not neutral, and confront their own values in the production and reception of language. (Behrman, 2006, p. 490)

In critical literacy [...] we would engage in problematizing – seeking to understand the problem and its complexity. In other words, we would raise questions and seek alternative explanations as a way of more fully acknowledging and understanding the complexity of the situation. (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 54)

The common denominator of these descriptions is that critical literacy education deals with (a) identifying the importance and the influence of any type of text, (b) being aware of the perspective that it represents, (c) highlighting certain groups and/or voices, and (d) internalizing this enlightenment to where an individual becomes an active participant in making necessary and systematic changes to certain societal norms.

4.1.1 Why is critical literacy important?

This section provides arguments for why it is important to teach and exercise critical literacy in the classroom. In their article, Gregory and Cahill (2009) state that ‘initiating the use of practices which promote the development of critical literacy entails minimally an examination and reformation [...] of the social contexts and environments that students interact with, exposing them to the hidden agendas and biases of texts’ (p. 10). This means that the main reason for working with critical literacy is to inspire and execute social change. The same sentiment is also communicated by other theorists. Critical literacy ‘focuses on teaching and learning how texts work, understanding and re-mediating what texts attempt to do in the world and to people, and moving students toward active position-takings with texts to critique and reconstruct the social fields in which they live and work’ (Luke 2000 in Borsheim-Black et al., 2014, p. 124). Luke (2012) revisits this position by stating that ‘critical literacy has an explicit aim of the critique and transformation of dominant ideologies, cultures and economies, and institutions and political systems’ (p. 5). He adds that ‘as a practical approach to curriculum, it melds social, political, and cultural debate and discussion with the analysis of how texts and discourses work, where, with what consequences, and in whose interest’ (Luke, 2012, p. 5). A recurring theme is the importance of text, its purpose, our attitudes and reactions to said text.

The potential exploration of various perspectives and the task toward social change can be made possible based on the concept that ‘students who engage in critical literacy become open-minded, active, strategic readers who are capable of viewing texts from a critical perspective’ (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 56). Elaborated further on that as ‘they understand that the information presented in texts, magazines, newspapers, song lyrics, and websites has been authored from a particular purpose’ and that meaning is ‘grounded in the social, political, cultural and historic contexts of the reading event’ (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 56). This is a critical aspect to develop given that, due to technological advancements, distribution of text has increased exponentially, both in amount and in speed, towards these last decades.

Luke (2000) brings a sociological perspective into the argument of critical literacy teachings (p. 2). He states that ‘the work of literacy teachers is not about enhancing ‘individual growth’, ‘personal voice’, or ‘skill development’, but it mainly being ‘about building access to literate practices and discourse resources, about setting the enabling pedagogic conditions for students to use their existing and new discourse resources for social exchange in the social fields where texts and discourses matter’ (Luke, 2000, p. 2). These texts and discourses matter because they are seen as a form of capital, and whoever has ‘access to them, who can manipulate and construct them, who can critique, refute, second guess them are the key educational issues of the next century’ (Luke, 2000, p. 2). This justifies why critical literacy should be held in a high regard inside and outside of the classroom. Specifically, given that the underlying ideologies of the future generation and the concepts of social construction depend on it.

4.1.2 How can critical literacy be developed?

Many have theorized possible methods for the teaching and the exercising of critical literacy. This section extends on some of the methods that can be used to teach critical literacy in the classroom, as well as develop a general critical stance.

However, it is important to discuss beforehand that critical literacy does not have a set of rules and methods that are fixed and can be applied in every context. McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004) state that ‘there is no list of methods in critical literacy that work the same way in all contexts all the time’ (p. 54). They expand on the previous statement as follows: ‘It is key to any exploration of critical literacy that the teacher constantly assess student responses to ensure that the experience is true to the philosophy and goals of critical literacy but not necessarily consistent with the examples of others who practice critical literacy’ (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 55). In other words, although a certain method is used, it is important to adapt it to the setting/context at hand. This makes the teaching and the lesson more relatable and understandable.

A key factor in teaching and learning critical literacy is the role of the teacher and the learning environment that is created. As Luke (2000) states, ‘the aim is a classroom environment where students and teachers [work together]’ (p. 7). McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004) discuss the teacher’s responsibility in this learning process. They explain that:

The role of the teacher in initiating and developing critical literacy is multifaceted. It begins with personal understanding and use of critical literacy and extends to teaching

students about critical literacy, modelling reading from a critical stance in everyday teaching and learning experiences, and providing access to a variety of texts that represent critical literacy. (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 55)

Additionally, ‘when examining the teacher’s role, it is important to note that we cannot just ‘become critical’, [but that it is instead] a process that involves learning, understanding, and changing over time’ (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 55). In short, a teacher’s role in developing critical literacy within the classroom begins with (a) ‘personal understanding of and engagement in critical literacy’ (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 55), (b) creating the proper environment for your students, and (c) trying different methods that would suit your classroom.

Janks (2000) describes four dimensions to the achievement of critical literacy education. These dimensions are categorised as *domination*, *access*, *diversity* and *design* (Janks, 2000, p. 176). *Domination* refers to seeing ‘language, other symbolic forms, and discourse more broadly, as a powerful means of maintaining and reproducing relations of domination’ (Janks, 2000, p. 176). Within this dimension, ‘critical discourse analysis is used to understand how language works to position readers in the interests of power. It assumes a critical theory of ideology [...], which sees power as negative and productive of inequitable social relations’ (Janks, 2000, p. 176; Gregory & Cahill, 2009, p. 9). For instance, in the graphic novel adaptation *Kindred*, the language used between the characters puts the reader in a position where they become critical of the power dynamic between characters. That power dynamic that has led to the inequitable social relations, namely slavery. Furthermore, the pedagogical association attached to this concept is called critical language awareness which:

Emphasises the fact that texts are constructed. Anything that has been constructed can be de-constructed. This unmaking or unpicking of the text increases our awareness of the choices that the writer or speaker has made. Every choice foregrounds what was selected and hides, silences or backgrounds what was not selected. Awareness of this prepares the reader to ask critical questions: why did the writer or speaker make these choices? Whose interests do they serve? Who is empowered or disempowered by the language used? (Janks 1993 in Janks, 2000, p. 176)

The *access* dimension investigates the question: ‘How does one provide access to dominant forms, while at the same time valuing and promoting the diverse languages and literacies of

our students and in the broader society?’ (Janks, 2000, p. 176). The dominant forms in this case include languages, varieties, discourses, literacies and knowledge, genres, ‘modes of visual representation and a range of cultural practices related to social interaction’ (Janks, 2000, p. 176). For teachers, this approach deals with the ‘access paradox’ where On the one hand, providing students with ‘access to dominant forms [...] contributes to maintaining their dominance’ (Janks, 2000, p. 176), and on the other hand, denying students access perpetuates ‘their marginalisation in a society that continues to recognise the value and importance of these forms’ (Janks, 2000, p. 176). Within this approach, ‘educators provide access to language and language structures of the dominant group while maintaining the integrity of nondominant language and structure use’ (Gregory & Cahill, 2009, p. 9). This can be exemplified by how *Kindred* allows teachers to provide access to a dominant language and culture, which is English and American respectively. At the same time, the graphic novel brings forth the narratives and voices of a nondominant group within that same language and culture.

The *diversity* dimension deals with the fact that ‘different ways of reading and writing the world in a range of modalities are a central resource for changing consciousness’ (Janks, 2000, p. 177). Further explanation is that ‘because discourses are linked to a wide range of social identities and are embedded in diverse social institutions, they provide the need and the means for reflecting on our own taken-for-granted ways of saying, doing, thinking and valuing’ (Janks, 2000, p. 177). This means that through access to diverse discourses, an individual is made to challenge their own perspectives and social identities. As Gregory & Cahill (2009) conclude, ‘educators working from a diversity perspective give attention to the way that language is used to create or legitimize social identities’ (p. 9). *Kindred* meets the requirements within this dimension given that the diversity among the characters based on race, gender, age and life experience allows for a reflection on our understanding.

The fourth dimension, *design*, highlights (a) ‘the ability to harness the multiplicity of semiotic systems across diverse cultural locations to challenge and change existing discourses’ and (b) ‘the importance of human creativity and students’ ability to generate an infinite number of new meanings’ (Janks, 2000, p. 177). The main focus within this orientation is that ‘students have to be taught how to use and select from all available semiotic resources for representation in order to make meaning, while at the same time combining and recombining these resources so as to create possibilities for transformation and reconstruction’ (Janks, 2000, p. 177). For example, working with *Kindred* in the classroom can help pupils create meaning by interacting with characters with diverse cultural markers, and be challenged to reconstruct or redesign

their meaning and understanding based on the perspectives of these characters and additional input that they receive from their peers.

McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004) discuss techniques such as: juxtapositioning, problem posing and alternative texts. Juxtapositioning is ‘a technique that helps demonstrate multiple perspectives. It can occur in a variety of formats, using a number of informational sources’ (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 56). This means that when using this technique to teach a theme or a topic, multiple perspectives, whether traditional or non-traditional, conventional or otherwise, should be presented and up for discussion and understanding. The present thesis’ primary source *Kindred* allows pupils to juxtapose between multiple characters and their experiences and understandings. For example, discussing the protagonist Dana’s perspective on Sarah can allow for (a) juxtapositioning between Dana’s initial perspective on Sarah and Dana’s perspectives after having lived in that period herself, (b) juxtapositioning the general understanding and perspective that Dana and Sarah have, their similarities and differences, and (c) juxtapositioning pupils’ own perspectives and understandings with that of Dana’s.

Problem posing deals with readers questioning ‘the author’s message from a critical perspective’ (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 58). With this technique, students start with ‘the literal understanding of the text’ (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 58). Students continue learning essential information about the topic ‘through reading; writing; discussion; and the use of a variety of comprehension strategies including, predicting, self-questioning, and summarizing’ (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 58). During this process, the teacher guides students in raising questions, in providing opportunities for students to engage with their peers, and in selecting ‘queries that would facilitate critical understanding of the topic being studied’ (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 59). In *Kindred*, a topic of discussion would be which aspect of slavery does the author emphasise and what kind of implications do such choices bring about.

The technique of alternative text ‘represents a different perspective about the topic the reader experiences’ (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 59). It is explained further that ‘the text can be narrative or informational and can consist of oral, written, visual, or imagined representations, including but not limited to drawings, oral descriptions, dramatizations, and songs’ (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 59). Through this method ‘students can examine the message conveyed by a text, photo, or song and then write an alternative text, take or find an alternative photo, or create alternative lyrics’ (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 59).

Meaning that instead of just being provided with alternative texts as in the juxtaposition method, here, students are expected to create the alternative narrative themselves. This would give them a deeper understanding of what it means to control a narrative, while making them more active participants in the education of critical literacy. In practice, pupils can work with specific *Kindred* characters, for example Sarah and Mrs. Weylin, and create alternative texts on how their lives would have turned out if they had made different life altering decisions.

Methods and/or techniques that Behrman (2006) presents are: reading supplementary texts, reading multiple texts, reading from a resistant perspective, producing counter-texts, conducting student-choice research projects, and taking social action (p. 492). Reading supplementary texts and reading multiple texts as techniques draw similarities to what McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) categorise as juxtapositioning and alternative text. Behrman (2006) proposes reading and working with supplementary and multiple texts in critical literacy education in order to: (a) ‘allow students to confront social issues glossed over or avoided by traditional texts’ and (b) ‘to introduce students to the subjectivity of authorship’ (p. 492). Behrman (2006) reiterates the notion of extracting meaning from text by stating that:

Reading multiple texts encourages students to understand authorship as situated activity. Students can consider who constructed the text, when, where, why, and the values on which it was based. By experiencing different treatments of the same topic or event, students begin to recognize that text is not ‘true’ in any absolute sense but a rendering as portrayed by an author (p. 493).

Reading from a resistant perspective suggests that students can be ‘encouraged to “peel” different layers of meaning from a text and to explore how the same reader might approach a text from different identities based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexuality, and religion’ (Foss 2002 in Behrman, 2006, p. 493). This emphasises how ‘the reader’s values and the author’s stance can position the reader to form an interpretation of text’ (Behrman, 2006, p. 493). This method requires the student to consider ‘how the author’s conscious choice of words, word order, or sentence structure can position the reader to accept an argument or value a statement from the writer’s perspective’ (Behrman, 2006, p. 494).

Producing countertexts deals with student-created counter narrative that ‘presents a topic from a nonmainstream perspective’ (Behrman, 2006, p. 494). This is argued further as ‘producing countertexts can serve to validate the thoughts, observations, and feelings of students and other

underrepresented groups' (Behrman, 2006, p. 494). Behrman (2006) concludes that 'the countertext approach identifies students as members of a marginalized subgroup whose 'voice' has been given legitimacy' (p. 494). Therefore, adding that 'the successful use of countertext may require classroom conversation about the process by which any text gains acceptance, within both the immediate and more global communities' (Behrman, 2004, p. 494). It should be noted that this technique is similar to the alternative text method suggested by McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004).

The production of countertext emphasises on the students' perspective, whereas conducting student-choice research projects focuses on the student's choice of topic (Behrman, 2006, p. 494-495). When using this method, the student chooses a topic that is important and/or personal to them and 'conducts extensive research on it' (Behrman, 2006, p. 495). The reason behind this approach is to highlight that 'the everyday events occurring in the lives of students are legitimate objects of academic study' (Behrman, 2006, p. 495). This makes the classroom more relatable and current. Which gives the students the opportunity to have 'more control over their own learning' (Behrman, 2006, p. 495), in addition to becoming 'engaged participants in a problem affecting them and be able to reflect upon the social and cultural forces that exacerbate or mitigate the problem' (Behrman, 2006, p. 495). For example, *Kindred* can potentially initiate discourses that allow for the comparison of the brutalities of the slavery era and the present times.

Critical literacy education is brought into test with the technique of taking social action. Meaning that 'in order to employ their literacy skills to challenge power structures, students can engage in social action projects aimed at making a real difference in their or others' lives' (Behrman, 2006, p. 495). The reason behind social action is that 'critical literacy instruction should not be limited to the promotion of personalized or internalized reconceptualizations of language, power, and text' (Behrman, 2006, p. 495). When comparing the student-choice research project and the taking of social action; the first one moves 'important real-life issues into the school setting' and the latter moves 'students' real-life concerns beyond classroom walls' (Behrman, 2006, p. 495). Meaning that 'taking social action allows students to recognize literacy as a sociocultural process and to engage literacy as a vehicle for social change' (Behrman, 2006, p. 495), which, as seen in the previous sections, is one of the main aims of critical literacy education.

Janks (2019) explains the importance of reading with and against text in the acquisition of critical literacy. In explaining reading with text, Janks (2019) writes that ‘to read with texts, we have to understand the positions on offer, follow and engage with writers’ arguments, and be willing to consider their standpoints and ideas’ (p. 561). She adds that ‘if we do not comprehend and engage with the meanings on offer, we cannot learn from texts we disagree with’ (Janks, 2019, p. 561). Furthermore, it is stated that ‘reading with a text is easy to do if we resonate with the writer and really hard to do if the writing threatens our worldview, the principles we hold dear, or the values we live by’ (Janks, 2019, p. 561). Janks (2019) argues further that ‘it is hard to undertake a critical reading of texts that confirm our views’ (Janks, 2019, p. 561), however there should be a set of critical questions that should be asked during this process. Continued clarification states that:

Critique requires readers to evaluate the different positions by weighing claims and counterclaims; by recognizing the differences between truths, half-truths, and lies; by examining the rhetoric and measuring it against what they know; by considering who benefits and who is excluded; and by bringing social justice values to bear. Critique ends with an ethical evaluation of the interests at stake (Janks, 2019, p. 563).

A concluding thought given by Janks (2019) is that ‘educators often mistakenly think that critical literacy is reading against a text’, however ‘critical literacy pedagogy needs to attend to both practices’ (p. 563).

The idea with these methods and/or techniques is that there is not one that can stand on its own in the achievement of critical literacy. Whether it be the use of the four dimensions suggested by Janks (2000), or the other various ways of reading texts described by McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) and Behrman (2006), the aim can only be reached if the methods are used interchangeably depending on the classroom environment that is created and the topic that is being studied.

4.2 Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence (IC) is an integral aspect of critical literacy that the national curriculum promotes as a core element in the English subject. This section presents important factors of what intercultural competence entails. In order to conceptualize IC, many models

and various descriptions are presented, but only a few are utilized for analysis and discussion. The outline given in this section reflects the understanding that this thesis operates from.

IC can be defined as ‘the ability to relate constructively to people who have mindsets and/or communication styles that are different from one’s own’ (Dyppedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 81). Dyppedahl & Bøhn (2020) add that ‘intercultural competence is relevant both when we interact with people in person and when we interpret people’s actions and words through texts’ (p. 81). This means that the acquisition and development of intercultural competence occurs when an individual encounters a culture that is different from what they are already familiar with. The term culture in itself is broad and carries layered meanings. The Council of Europe (2016) describes culture as a construct of three aspects. Those are: (a) material resources such as tools, clothing, and food, (b) socially shared resources such as language, religion and norms, and (c) subjective resources used by individual group members such as values, attitudes, beliefs and practices (p. 19). It is explained further that ‘the total set of resources is distributed across the entire group, but each individual member of the group appropriates and uses only a subset of the total set of cultural resources potentially available to them’ (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 19). This means that culture is a set of aspects available for every individual, the difference and variety arise depending on which aspects the individual chooses to apply and/or portray. This also leads to the understanding that any group can have its own respective culture. ‘Nations, ethnic groups, religious groups, cities, neighbourhoods, work organisations, occupational groups, sexual orientation groups, disability groups, generational groups and families’ (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 19) and many more are examples of different cultural groups. The fact is that ‘all people belong simultaneously to and identify with many different groups and their associated cultures’ (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 19). In short, one individual is a combination of multiple groups that represent multiple cultures. The concept that every individual identifies with multiple cultural groups confirms that their encounter with others slightly different from their group is intercultural. The Council of Europe defines IC as ‘the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant psychological resources in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities presented by intercultural situations’ (2016, p. 23).

Examples of models of IC include Deardorff’s Pyramid Model (2006), Deardorff’s Process Model (2006), Hunter, White and Godbey’s Global Competencies Model (2006), Fantini’s Worldviews Convergence Model (1995), and Byram’s Intercultural Competence Model (1997) (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, pp. 13-33). In various ways, all models communicate

the importance of similar factors that aid in the attainment of IC. It is important to state that the models are starting points in order to understand intercultural encounters and settings, and that a model does not necessarily fit ‘all cultures, all contexts, all conditions’ (Bennett, 2009, p. 122).

According to Bennett (2009) there are four strategies to build IC. She describes these strategies as intercultural positioning systems. The aim with an intercultural positioning system is to ‘locate *ourselves*, to develop our own cultural self-awareness through understanding our cultural patterns’ (Bennett, 2009, p. 127). She explains that in the process of self-awareness and pursuit of our own cultural aspects, there can be an exploration of ‘the gap between our values, beliefs, and behaviors and those of others’ (Bennett, 2009, p. 127). These four steps are factors that many models have as part of the developmental process: ‘(1) fostering attitudes that motivate us, (2) discovering knowledge that informs us of our own and others’ cultural position, (3) assessing the challenge and support factors that affect our adaptation, (4) developing skills that enable us to interact effectively and appropriately’ (Bennett, 2009, p. 125). When expanding on fostering attitudes that motivate us, Bennett (2009) writes that ‘the place to begin developing intercultural competence is with motivation’ (p. 127). A critical factor in motivation is inquisitiveness (Bennett, 2009, p. 127). Although, it is also important that it is aided with adequate information and knowledge that would allow for appropriate responses to unfamiliar cultural encounters (Bennett, 2009, p. 128). In the process of gathering information about various cultural settings, Bennett (2009) discusses the importance of being able to assess the different levels of challenges that intercultural interactions present (p. 131). She states that as individuals, depending on a wide variety of factors, ‘we need to examine what aspects of the intercultural context can provide support and what aspects present challenges. If the person is overly supported, adaptation or development is less likely. If the person is overly challenged, the individual flees the intercultural context, whether psychologically, physically, or both’ (Bennett, 2009, pp. 131-132). This underlines the importance of finding balance between challenge and support in order to obtain the best possible outcome from an intercultural encounter. The final stage in developing IC is described as the ‘lifetime task of developing the requisite skills for adaptation’ (Bennett, 2009, p. 132). The skills include ‘the ability to empathize, gather appropriate information, listen, adapt, resolve conflict, and manage social interactions and anxiety’ (Bennett, 2009, p. 132). Bennett (2009) concludes that the development of intercultural competence is an ongoing process by stating that ‘if our efforts are consistently intentional, developmental, and inclusive, we will

begin to acquire the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills to make a small claim on intercultural competence, with a great deal of cultural humility' (p. 134).

Values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding are factors that the Council of Europe's intercultural competence model (2016) is built upon. The details within the various competences of the model serve as a basis for the discussion and analysis section of this thesis. The model contains 20 competences classified under four categories: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 35).

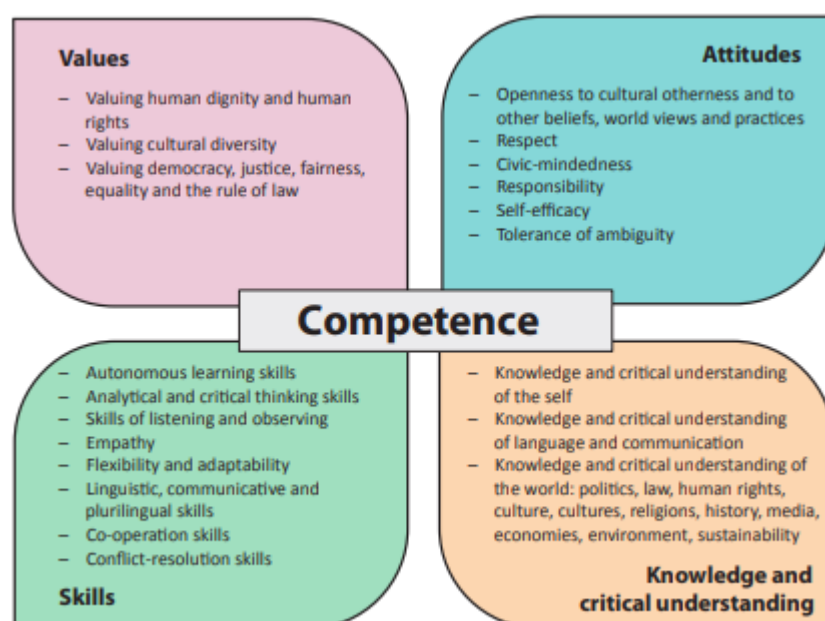


Figure 1: Council of Europe's model for Intercultural Competence

As mentioned previously, a successful intercultural interaction is based on the ability to apply these competences depending on what the situation demands. The category 'values' focuses on the beliefs that individuals have in order to achieve life goals. These values motivate action and 'serve as guiding principles for deciding how to act' (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 36). 'Values offer standards or criteria for: evaluating actions, both one's own and those of other people; justifying opinions, attitudes and behaviours; deciding between alternatives; planning behaviour; and attempting to influence others' (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 36). The values proposed in the model are meant to be essential to the foundation of the competences that 'enable participation in a culture of democracy' (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 36). Additionally, this concept can be linked to the national curriculum's interdisciplinary topic

‘democracy and citizenship’. Value is seen as a factor that has a normative prescriptive quality, which means it mainly focuses on what should be done and/or ‘thought across many different situations’ (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 36). Although many models put value as a competence under ‘attitude’, this model separates the two and in doing so emphasizes the importance that the ‘values’ category holds. While ‘values’ suggests or speaks to how an individual should act and think, ‘attitude’ refers to the actual thought that an individual has towards something or someone. The Council of Europe (2016) describes an attitude as ‘an overall mental orientation which an individual adopts towards someone or something’ (p. 39). Furthermore, the Council of Europe (2016) adds that ‘attitudes usually consist of four components: a belief or opinion about the object of the attitude, an emotion or feeling towards the object, an evaluation (either positive or negative) of the object, and a tendency to behave in a particular way towards that object’ (p. 39).

The term ‘skills’ is present in multiple models. As a competence in the current model, it indicates ‘the capacity for carrying out complex, well-organised patterns of either thinking or behaviour in an adaptive manner in order to achieve a particular end or goal’ (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 44). The final category consists of ‘knowledge and critical understanding’. Knowledge is described as ‘the body of information that is possessed by a person’ and understood as the ‘comprehension and appreciation of meanings’ (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 51). In this context, critical understanding is used to ‘emphasise the need for the comprehension and appreciation of meanings in the context of democratic processes and intercultural dialogue to involve active reflection on and critical evaluation of that which is being understood and interpreted (as opposed to automatic, habitual and unreflective interpretation)’ (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 51). Which refers to an individual’s ability to think thoroughly through the aspects of the interaction that they partake in.

The descriptions that the Council of Europe provides in regard to these competences draw similarities to Bennett’s (2009) outline of achieving IC. Additionally, Dypedahl and Bøhn (2020) echo the factors that enable the achievement of intercultural competence in their own model (p. 85). This means that elements such as values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding are once again imperative in the acquisition and overall developmental process of IC. The central factor of all the descriptions given and presented by many theorists is that the success of an intercultural meeting is based on the knowledge of the self and others, and the willingness to actively learn and evolve in the pursuit of cultural understanding and acceptance. The Council of Europe (2016) summarizes that interculturally competent

behaviour is achievable through the ‘flexible mobilisation, orchestration and deployment of varying subsets of psychological resources, drawn selectively from the individual’s full repertoire of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding’ (p. 25).

However, it is important to note that ‘the acquisition of intercultural competence is never complete and perfect, but to be a successful intercultural speaker and mediator does not require complete and perfect competence’ (Byram et al., 2002, p. 11). This statement is important in this learning process because it underlines the idea that the journey in becoming interculturally competent is always in constant growth and evolution. Byram et al. (2002) give two specific reasons as to why the task to reach complete and perfect competence is futile. The first reason is that the possibility ‘to acquire or to anticipate all the knowledge one might need in interacting with people of other cultures’ (Byram et al., 2002, p. 11) is non-existent. Additionally, any given culture in itself is dynamic. The second reason for their statement is that complete and perfect competence, besides not being achievable, is also not required. This means that ‘everyone’s own social identities and values develop, everyone acquires new ones throughout life as they become a member of new social groups; and those identities, and the values, beliefs and behaviours they symbolise are deeply embedded in one’s self’ (Byram et al., 2002, p. 11). This means that no matter how open-minded and accepting an individual is, unexpected beliefs, values and behaviours can be shocking, thus leading them back to the need to adjust, accept and understand others (Byram et al., 2002, p. 11). I present these perspectives to point out that there is no such thing as the perfect model for the perfect occasion. The models are intended to be adapted by individuals based on their intercultural encounter.

4.2.1 IC in the Norwegian EFL classroom

The previous section gives a framework on what intercultural competence is and how it can be achieved. The following paragraphs discuss the importance of intercultural competence in the English classroom.

The Norwegian National Curriculum (2020) mentions intercultural competence in relation to the English subject curriculum. The third core element in the English subject curriculum, ‘Working with texts in English’, states that:

Working with texts in English helps to develop the pupils’ knowledge and experience of linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as their insight into ways of living, ways of thinking and traditions of indigenous peoples. By reflecting on, interpreting and

critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society. Thus the pupils will develop intercultural competence enabling them to deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns. They shall build the foundation for seeing their own identity and others' identities in a multilingual and multicultural context. (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b)

In the classroom setting, intercultural encounters happen when pupils are introduced to texts with cultural aspects, mindsets and communication styles different from their own. Although, as stated in the core element, working with English texts might enable them to deal with different ways of living, thinking and communicating, it is not a given. This can be supported by the Council of Europe's (2016) statement about adapting their IC model in the classroom, which is that the competences are necessary and promote the 'participation in democratic processes and intercultural dialogue but are not sufficient to ensure such participation' (p. 18). However, the aim of the English subject remains the contribution to the development of pupils' intercultural development. In addition, it is important to note that the acquisition of IC in the classroom is not exclusive to one subject and the 'goal should be to integrate intercultural issues into other learning aims' (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 84).

In addition, the national curriculum approaches IC similarly to Bennett (2009) which emphasizes on the self, as in locating and understanding ourselves first in a world of diversity. Specifically, the 'relevance and values' part of the English subject states that: 'knowledge of and an exploratory approach to language, communication patterns, lifestyles, ways of thinking and social conditions open for new perspectives on the world and ourselves' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b). In other words, the understanding of the other starts first with the understanding of the self.

Byram et al. (2002) list the following aspects when dealing with interculturalism in the classroom:

- Helping learners to understand how intercultural interaction takes place
- How social identities are part of all interactions
- How [students'] perceptions of other people and other people's perceptions of them influence the success of communication

-
- How they can find out for themselves more about the people with whom they are communicating (p. 14).

In considering these factors, the role of the teacher is to facilitate the development of skills, attitudes, values and knowledge and critical understanding. Byram et al. (2002) add that ‘the teacher’s task is to help learners ask questions, and to interpret answers’ (p. 16). As Dypedahl and Bøhn (2020) conclude, ‘intercultural competence is a complex concept, but English teachers have a good starting point for helping learners to develop such competence through their experiences with language learning, knowledge of English-speaking countries and English as a lingua franca’ (p. 97).

The process of becoming interculturally competent is gradual and ongoing. This is mainly because culture is not a fixed object and individuals are always evolving. The aim is to be able to identify characteristics that could potentially guide and help an individual in navigating the intricacies of an intercultural meeting. As a teacher, ‘the main goal is to prepare learners for meeting a multitude of mindsets and communication styles both locally and globally’ (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 91).

4.3 Multiliteracy

Multiliteracy is a theoretical approach to literacy pedagogy developed by the New London Group (1996). In developing this approach, the New London Group maintain that the use of the Multiliteracies approach to pedagogy will enable students’ achievement of two literacy learning goals. These are: ‘creating access to the evolving language of work, power, and community, and fostering the critical engagement necessary for them to design their social futures and achieve success through fulfilling employment’ (Cazden et al., 1996, p. 60). The group argues that the ‘changing technological and organizational shape of working life provides some with access to lifestyles of unprecedented affluence, while excluding others in ways that are increasingly related to the outcomes of education and training’ (Cazden et al., 1996, p. 61). Thus, the reason to start developing various teaching approaches to the evolving learning needs.

In order to discuss the concept of multiliteracy, the New London Group explain their understanding of literacy, or as they refer to it, ‘mere literacy’. They state that the term ‘remains centered on language only, and usually on a singular national form of language at

that, which is conceived as a stable system based on rules such as mastering sound-letter correspondence [...]. Such a view of language will characteristically translate into a more or less authoritarian kind of pedagogy' (Cazden et al., 1996, p. 64). Therefore, the group's intention is to apply a pedagogy of Multiliteracies to counter such authoritarian pedagogy.

Cope & Kalantzis (2015) expand on the previous statement as follows:

The Multiliteracies notion sets out to address the variability of meaning making in different cultural, social or domain-specific contexts. This means that it is no longer enough for literacy teaching to focus solely on the rules of standard forms of the national language. Rather, communication and representation of meaning today increasingly requires that learners become able to negotiate differences in patterns of meaning from one context to another. These differences are the consequence of any number of factors, including culture, gender, life experience, subject matter, social or subject domain, and the like. Every meaning exchange is cross-cultural to a certain degree (p. 3).

Parallels can be drawn between the notion stated above and the concept of intercultural competence. In other words, Multiliteracies focus on the idea that communication and encounters happen across various groups and cultures, and in order for an individual to successfully navigate during these encounters, they need a certain skillset (or a toolbox) that they can draw from. The process of developing and maintaining this skillset needs to be taught. Therefore, it can be argued that Multiliteracies promote the sharpening of certain skillsets in order to acquire intercultural competence. It can also be argued that both multiliteracies and intercultural competence focus on the meaning making process during any given context.

Furthermore, Cazden et al. (1996) present the idea that maybe 'educational research should become a design science, studying how different curricular, pedagogical, and classroom designs motivate and achieve different sorts of learning' (p. 73). With this understanding, the group describes teachers as 'designers of learning processes and environments, not as bosses dictating what those in their charge should think and do' (Cazden et al., 1996, p. 73). This means that, while working within certain frameworks, teachers are seen as facilitators of discourses that would allow learning. The New London Group explain further that 'learning and productivity are the results of the designs (the structures) of complex systems of people,

environments, technology, beliefs, and texts' (Cazden et al., 1996, p. 73). Once again, the emphasis is on the learning that happens as a result of intricate encounters.

Cope & Kalantzis (2015) state that 'the essential idea in the Multiliteracies approach is that learning is a process of 'weaving' backwards and forwards across and between different pedagogical moves' (p. 4). Therefore, the group established categories with learning activity ideas into four dimensions: situated practice/experiencing, overt instruction/conceptualizing, critical framing/analyzing, and transformed practice/applying (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 4).

The situated practice/experiencing dimensions considers the weaving of theory and practice, or the 'school learning and the practical out-of-school experiences of learners' (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 4) as a key pedagogical factor. This means 'building upon the learning resources of the everyday and the familiar, prior knowledge, community background, personal interests, and perspectives and individual motivation. [...] Meanings are grounded in the real-world of patterns of experience, action, and subjective interest. Learners bring their own, invariably diverse knowledge, experiences, and interests into the learning context' (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 18). On the other hand, this dimension promotes learners' immersion into 'an unfamiliar domain of experience, either real (places, communities, situations) or virtual (presented texts, images, data, facts or other represented meanings' (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 19). The reasoning behind the development of this dimension is the idea that 'people do not learn anything well unless they are both motivated to learn and believe that they will be able to use and function with what they are learning in some way that is in their interest' (The New London Group, 2000, p. 33). Therefore, actively introducing topics and themes that are not only interesting to the learners, but also relevant in their daily lives and in their participation in the community and society is an important aspect of literacy. In other words, using the graphic novel adaptation *Kindred* in the classroom could provide perspectives on power relations and roots of social injustices that can aid pupils in assessing current global, political and social issues. This means that what pupils have learned in the classroom as a theory, is then practised and applied in real life contexts outside of the classroom.

The overt instruction/conceptualizing dimension is described as involving 'the development of a metalanguage to describe 'design elements'' (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 4). They expand on this dimension by dividing the concept into two: conceptualizing by naming and conceptualizing with theory (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, pp. 19-20). The former 'entails drawing distinctions, identifying similarities and differences, and categorizing with label' (Cope &

Kalantzis, 2015, p. 19). This means assigning names and labels, and making learners active conceptualisers and creators of concepts and theories. The latter is a process in which ‘concept names are linked into a language of generalization’ (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 20). They add that ‘such theorizing involves explicit, overt, systematic, analytic, and conscious understanding, and uncovers implicit or underlying realities which may not be immediately obvious from the perspective of lifeworld experience. Theorizing is typically the basis of paradigms or schemas which form the underlying synthesizing discourse of academic discipline areas’ (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 20). In other words, this dimension highlights the collaboration ‘between teacher and student wherein the student is both allowed to accomplish a task more complex than they can accomplish on their own, and where they come to conscious awareness of the teacher’s representation and interpretation of that task and its relations to other aspects of what is being learned’ (The New London Group, 2000, p. 33). The importance of this aspect is also emphasized in the National Curriculum (LK20) which promotes students’ active participation in their own learning. The ultimate goal here is ‘conscious awareness and control over what is being learned’ (The New London Group, 2000, p. 33). For instance, focusing on the conceptualizing dimension when using *Kindred* allows for the naming, theorizing and critical understanding of concepts such as intersectionality and complicity. Pupils can provide their own theories of these topics by comparing, contrasting and discussing with their peers in order to gain awareness of their own thinking and meaning making process before examining the teacher’s and other sources’ interpretation of the same concepts. Thus, becoming active participants in the process of theorizing such concepts.

In the pedagogy of Multiliteracies, the critical framing/analyzing dimension ‘involves analyzing text functions and critically interrogating the interests of participants in the communication process’ (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 4). In depth, this dimension focuses on two aspects: analyzing functionally and analyzing critically. When analyzing functionally, the examination is of the ‘function of a piece of knowledge, action, object or represented meaning’ (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 20). Whereas analyzing critically is a process that:

Interrogates human intentions and interests. For any piece of knowledge, action, object or represented meaning, we can ask the questions: Whose point of view or perspective does it represent? Who does it affect? Whose interest does it serve? What are its social and environmental consequences? Analyzing Critically involves critical evaluation of one’s own and other people’s formative experiences, perspectives, and motives (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 21).

In other words, through critical framing, learners are expected to ‘gain the necessary personal and theoretical distance from what they have learned; constructively critique it; account for its cultural location; creatively extend and apply it; and eventually innovate on their own, within old communities and in new ones’ (The New London Group, 2000, p. 34). For instance, critically analyzing the *Kindred* character Dana allows pupils to designedly interrogate her intentions and interests. In other words, pupils can critically discuss the perspectives she represents and whose interests she serves, and simultaneously explore how the elements Dana represents impact their own meaning-making process.

The transformed practice/applying dimension entails the ‘application of knowledge and understanding to the complex diversity of real-world situations’ (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 4). The applying process focuses on applying appropriately and applying creatively. Applying appropriately is the process in which ‘knowledge is acted upon or realized in a predictable or typical way in a specific context. Such action could be taken to meet normal expectations in a particular situation’ (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 21). Applying creatively is the process in which one takes ‘knowledge and capabilities from one setting and adapts them to quite a different setting – a place far from the one from which that knowledge or capabilities originated, or perhaps a setting unfamiliar to the learner’ (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 22). The transformed practice can also be described as the application of the other three dimensions. This means the application of newly learned understandings and practices in a reflective manner in order to achieve the intended goal (The New London Group, 2000, p. 35). Specifically, in considering the graphic novel adaptation, pupils’ knowledge and understanding originates in a context that is different from their own. Therefore, using it in a classroom encourages pupils to apply their already existing knowledge in a creative and unconventional way in order to make meaning of the various intercultural encounters. In addition, working with the diverse characters from *Kindred* provides pupils with alternative perspectives, understandings, practices and choices. The transformed practice dimension demands that pupils make use of these newly gained alternative perspectives and be able to adapt and incorporate them in understanding other circumstances.

The interconnectedness of these dimensions is the basis of the pedagogy of multiliteracies. The New London Group developed the approach in order to further learning in various contexts involving/in between various groups. Within the concept of Multiliteracies, Cope & Kalantzis (2015) state that ‘meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal – in which written linguistic modes of meaning interface with oral, visual, audio, gestural, tactile,

and spatial patterns of meaning' (p. 3). This means that the need to 'extend the range of literacy pedagogy' (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 3) becomes even more crucial and relevant.

4.4 Multimodality

Multimodality is the use of different modes in order to make meaning. Kress (2000) describes multimodality as 'to be constituted by a number of modes of representation' (p. 184). Modes refer to systems such as visual, auidial and textual communication. Specific examples of modes are 'sound, movement, graphs, maps, photos' (Rimmereide, 2020, p. 192).

Kress (2000) puts forth the initial statement by explaining that:

Human bodies have a wide range of means of engagement with the world; a wide and highly varied range of means of means of perception. These we call our 'senses': sight, hearing, smell, taste, feel. Each is attuned in a quite specific way to the natural environment, providing us with highly differentiated information (Kress, 2000, p. 184).

This speaks to the guaranteed 'multimodality of our semiotic world' by adding that 'none of the senses [mentioned above] ever operates in isolation from the others' (Kress, 2000, p. 184). In other words, whether individuals are aware or not, they make use of all the semiotic resources at their disposal to make meaning of their surroundings. To further elaborate on the concept, Kress (2000) states that 'all texts are multimodal' (p. 187). He explains that 'no text can exist in a single mode, so that all texts are always multimodal although one modality among these can dominate' (Kress, 2000, p. 187). This understanding means that when dealing with such texts, individuals engage 'in a (reading) process, which involves processing two or more modes simultaneously and recognising the interconnections between them' (Rimmereide, 2020, p. 192). Furthermore, Kress' point of view on the multimodality of all texts could be an argument for why teachers should consider multimodality regardless of which texts they work with.

According to Rimmereide (2020), 'multimodal texts employ several semiotic systems in combination' (p. 194). The semiotic systems she refers to are the multiliteracies identified by the New London Group as linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial systems (Rimmereide, 2020, p. 194). The linguistic system refers to vocabulary, grammar, genre and register (styles

of speaking and writing). The visual system includes images, symbols, colours, framing, and point of view. The audio system is comprised of elements such as volume, tempo, as well as sound effects. The gestural system includes facial expressions and body language. The spatial system includes the design and organisation of a space, layout, boundaries and proximity (Rimmereide, 2020, p. 194).

In short, the meaning-making process is elaborating and decoding a multimodal text and requires the application of every tool/skill in our repertoire. In addition, as brought forth by Rimmereide (2020), working with multimodal texts in the classroom, would allow teachers to address several curricular aims and overarching aims of education in the national curriculum (p. 195). Moreover, these types of texts could help students in developing critical literacy skills ‘which enable them to realise that neither verbal nor visual language is neutral’ (Rimmereide, 2020, p. 195).

4.4.1 Dual coding theory

Dual coding theory (DCT) builds ‘on the assumption that thinking involves the activity of two distinct cognitive subsystems, a verbal system specialized for dealing directly with language and a nonverbal system specialized for dealing with nonlinguistic objects and events’ (Paivio, 2007, p. 13). The idea is that the systems are supposed to be composed of logogens and imagens, which are internal representational units that are activated when one recognizes, manipulates or just thinks of words and other things (Paivio, 1991, p. 3). In other words:

The representational units are dormant until they are activated. Activation occurs via pathways that connect representational units to the external world and to each other. The connections are structural [...]. Taken together, representational units, interconnections, and activation patterns constitute dual coding functional systems. (Paivio, 2007, p. 41)

Here, the analytic approach is based on the fact that ‘meaning is interpreted as the activation of internal representations via direct and indirect pathways from sensory systems’ (Paivio, 2007, p. 41).

Logogen, a representational unit, means word generator. In DCT, this refers to the ‘representation that accounts for word recognition when activated’ (Paivio, 2007, p. 37). When logogens are activated, they are used in ‘all language phenomena, including recognition,

memory, production, and verbal aspects of thought in general' (Paivio, 2007, p. 37). In short, a logogen can be considered as a variant of the concept of lexical presentation (Paivio, 2007, p. 37). The other representational unit, *imagen*, is used to refer to 'perceptual recognition, memory, drawing, and other kinds of cognitive processing of nonverbal objects' (Paivio, 2007, p. 39). The representational units of *imagen* are sensorimotor representations, which include visual, auditory, haptic (tactile; identification of felt objects) and motor (that is drawing, gestures and organized nonverbal behavioural patterns) *imagenes* (Paivio, 2007, p. 39).

Paivio (2007) describes levels or types of meaning that are based on the verbal and imagery reactions to words and things. These are: representational, referential and associative meaning (p. 41). These are defined as follows: 'representational meaning implies that an *imagen* or logogen corresponding to a verbal stimulus or an object is available for further processing. Availability is indexed by familiarity or recognition responses to stimulus' (Paivio, 2007, p. 41). This means that, representational meaning refers to 'the memory representation activated directly by word or object in any modality, and is defined by measures of familiarity' (Paivio, 2007, p. 101). Referential meaning 'derives from the relations between words and their referents, internalized as associations between logogens and *imagenes*. The defining operations include measures of the name-ability of objects and the image-evoking value of verbal stimuli' (Paivio, 2007, p. 41). An example used to simplify the understanding of referential meaning is the fact that 'a picture of a dog can elicit different names depending on the context, and the word dog can evoke different images' (Paivio, 2007, p. 101). Associative meaning refers to within-system associations between logogens and between *imagenes* (Paivio, 2007, p. 41). Which means that associative meaning refers to the connections that are made between units within the verbal system (word association) and within the nonverbal system (imagery association) (Paivio, 2007, p. 102).

The verbal-nonverbal distinction that is being made above emphasizes the importance of the 'fundamentally different ways in which the two systems symbolize reality' (Paivio, 2007, p. 33). This approach solidifies DCT as a multimodal theory given that 'both systems are assumed to be composed of modality-specific (visual, auditory, etc.) representational units and structures' (Paivio, 2007, p. 13). Namely, 'the representations are connected to sensory input and response output systems as well as to each other so that they can function independently or cooperatively to mediate nonverbal and verbal behaviour' (Paivio, 2007, p. 13).

4.4.2 Graphic novel

A multimodal text that serves as the base of the present thesis' discussion is a graphic novel and/or comic book. The terms graphic novel and comic books are often used interchangeably (Rimmereide, 2020, p. 199). Graphic novels are categorized under the genre of sequential art (McCloud, 1993, p. 5; Bourelle, 2018, p. 11). McCloud (1993) describes comics as 'juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence' (p. 9).

Towards the purpose of understanding comics, McCloud starts by describing what an icon is. He states that icon refers to 'any image used to represent a person, place, thing or idea' (McCloud, 1993, p. 27). He identifies different types of icons; (a) symbols which refer to images used to represent concepts, ideas and philosophies, (b) practical icons used in language (that is letters), science (for example mathematical signs) and communication (meaning other characters such as currency signs), and finally, (c) pictures which are actual images designed to resemble their subjects (McCloud, 1993, p. 27). However, the degree of how iconic a picture is can be varying. McCloud (1993) adds that 'in the non-pictorial icons, meaning is fixed and absolute. Their appearance doesn't affect their meaning because they represent invisible idea' (p. 28). In pictures, 'meaning is fluid and variable according to appearance. They differ from "real-life" appearance to varying degrees' (McCloud, 1993, p. 28). As an example, McCloud (1993) uses a face emoticon, contemporarily referred to as a smiley-face, to examine 'cartooning as a form of amplification through simplification' (p. 30). By amplification through simplification, McCloud (1993) means that when an image is abstracted through cartooning, the abstraction does not necessarily eliminate details but instead focuses on specific detail. Thus, 'by stripping down an image to its essential "meaning", an artist can amplify that meaning in a way that realistic art can't' (p. 30). In other words, a face emoticon is a circle with two dots symbolizing eyes, and a line that symbolizes a mouth. The importance here is that cartoons are able to focus our attention on an idea. In this case, the universal symbol of a person or a face. The universality of cartoon imagery is that it can describe anyone (McCloud, 1993, p. 31), which in turn creates a sense of relatability. McCloud (1993) explains further how entering the world of the cartoon allows the reader to see themselves because of the lack of details that creates a sense of universal identification and simplicity (p. 36).

The relevance of this concept for this thesis can be connected to the fact that the graphic novel *Kindred* is an adaptation of the novel by the same name. It can be argued that turning the novel into a graphic novel makes it more relatable. In other words, readers can identify more and

empathize on a greater level with the characters because they see themselves reflected in them. This entails that the less details there is on looks, the more focus there will be on what humans have in common. In a way, this approach in storytelling could emphasize the message more than the messenger. Although, it is important to note that the messenger is as important as the message given the characteristics and layered meanings that it reflects.

In addition, important terminology within the realm of graphic novels is panel, text and gutter (Rimmereide, 2020, p. 199). The panel refers to the image enclosed within frames. Panels constitute 'the main feature in a graphic novel' (Rimmereide, 2020, p. 200). In this case, text refers to the verbal mode that is primarily 'presented in speech bubbles or narrative captions' (Rimmereide, 2020, p. 200). The gutter refers to the space and gap between panels (Rimmereide, 2020, p. 200). Moreover, Rimmereide (2020) also explains that a graphic novel is 'designed to be read in a sequence, which means that the images, or the panels, should be read in the same order as other prose, which in Western world means from top left to right, and down' (p. 200). This goes back to the initial descriptions of comics and/or graphic novels being sequential art, primarily because of the way they are meant to be read.

Another aspect that is important in the reading and understanding of comics or graphic novels is closure. McCloud (1993) describes that 'all of us perceive the world as a whole through the experience of our senses. Yet our senses can only reveal a world that is fragmented and incomplete' (p. 62). Consequently, closure is the 'phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole' (McCloud, 1993, p. 63). He explains further that, individuals commit and/or exercise closure in their daily lives by 'mentally completing that which is incomplete based on past experience' (McCloud, 1993, p. 63). This means that individuals rely heavily on their prior knowledge and experience in order to make sense of their surroundings. This aspect speaks to the power of imagination. The reader is expected to be an active participant, fill in the blanks, and to read between the lines and panels.

Finally, when differentiating between pictures and writing, McCloud (1993) states that 'pictures are received information. We need no formal education to "get the message". The message is instantaneous' (p. 49). Whereas 'writing is perceived information. It takes time and specialized knowledge to decode the abstract symbols of language' (McCloud, 1993, p. 49). As previously presented, dual coding theory expands on the latter statement.

5. Literary analysis

This chapter presents the literary analysis of the graphic novel adaptation *Kindred*. The focus is on the themes power and empathy. Power and empathy are explored in relation to other themes such as gender, race, violence, oppression and compliance. The current section makes use of multiple characters as examples that support the themes in question.

5.1 Plot

Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* published in 1979 is a novel that incorporates time travel in the depiction of slave narratives. The novel was adapted into a graphic novel in 2017.

Life becomes unexplainable when the protagonist Dana, a 26-year-old African-American writer, is suddenly transported back to the antebellum South in the same plantation where her ancestors were enslaved. Dana's travels back in time and space were connected with the survival of Rufus, a white predecessor in her family. Rufus is the son of Mr. Weylin, a slaveowner and head of the Weylin plantation. Dana is dragged back to the past every time Rufus is in a life-threatening incident and is need of help. She quickly learns that the survival of her lineage depended on the survival of Rufus.

The story follows Dana's multiple travels to the past, her relationship with Rufus, his family, her husband Kevin, and the other enslaved people at the plantation. *Kindred* depicts how Dana's new responsibility influenced her choices in navigating her new reality and the complications that it created.

The story tells how Dana manages to deal with events that she only read or heard about. Her experiences give a detailed account of the hardships, brutalities and complexities of that period. These experiences vary from the daily tasks that needed to be tended to in the plantation, to the violence, aggressions, abuses, whippings and many other life-altering events.

5.2 Power

This analysis sheds light on various power relationships in the story and their meanings. The power dynamic or relationship can be analysed from the perspective of every character. However, I will be focusing on only a few characters. This section dives deeper into the

analysis of what these power relations entail. The analysis demonstrates how a character can, at some point, be in a position of power over something or someone, while simultaneously and/or at a different point have something or someone have power over them. The analysis of power as a theme explores and focuses on this aspect in detail.

Dana, the protagonist, is the most integral character that exemplifies what it means to be both powerful and powerless. Her powerlessness is the key to the storyline which is dependent on her displacement from her present to the past. The displacement happens suddenly and she has no control over it. However, she learns quickly that she not only has no control over the displacement itself, but also her new reality (that is, 1815), presents her with even less power and control to what happens to her and around her. An example of this is an incident during her second journey to the past. Given that she could not spend the night at Rufus' house, the best solution was to go to the nearest place where a family that looked like her lived. On her way, she describes the feelings of being a Black woman walking through the woods to reach her destination during late hours: "I was glad to avoid the road. The idea of meeting a white adult here frightened me more than any possibility of street violence at home" (Duffy & Jennings, 2017, p. 37). She describes her fear further by stating that "Blacks here were assumed to be slaves unless they had their free papers. If they saw me I would be fair game" (p. 39). In the next panel she clarifies: "And there was the fact of eight, white men, out for a leisurely ride in the middle of the night..." (p. 39). This indicates that she was not just afraid of being considered to be a slave, but also the fact that as a woman, she would be subjected to more unspeakable acts of horror. This conclusion can be reached by the fact that the gender and race of the people that she is afraid of is referred to multiple times. Dana was not afraid of men in general, she was afraid of white men and what only they could do to her. Specifically, Dana's fears are tied with the power that these men wield over her and how that power allows them to do whatever they want without repercussion. She refers to herself as 'fair game' and realises that she no longer has control over herself and has now lost all the agency that she had before. In fact, Dana expresses her fear to Kevin saying, "Kevin, I'm not sure it's possible for a lone Black woman to survive there" (p. 54). Her vulnerability was not lost to her, and she knew that she had to be ingenious to guarantee her survival.

Dana's fears are justified. One of the first acts of violence that she witnesses is the whipping of a Black man tied to a tree while his child and his wife were forced to watch. This act is presented in multiple panels that combine a gruesome written description from Dana's perspective, but is also accompanied by strong images of everyone involved. The combination

of words and images makes the moment a memorable example of the power imbalance between the people of colour and the patrollers. Dana describes the reaction of the man being flogged: “The man’s body convulsed, but the only sound he made was a gasp. He took several more blows with no outcry...But I could hear his breathing, hard and quick. Then the man’s resolve broke.” (p. 42). She continues to explain how he then started to moan and cry and scream. She describes further: “I could literally smell his sweat, hear every ragged breath, every cry, every cut of the whip. I could see his body jerking, convulsing, straining...” (p. 42). All Dana and his family could do during this moment was just witness. This speaks to the loss of power on a different level. A person being “shamed before their families and themselves” (p. 43) inflicts psychological wounds for the victim and the witnesses that are not easy to recover from. Such aggressions are prime examples of why people become compliant to an oppressive system and sometimes become active participants in upholding the existing power structure. In other words, an individual becomes compliant when they have been subjected to violence, when they have seen family members subjected to such actions, and/or when they have been made an example of. These elements will be discussed further in relation to the competence aims in the English subject.

Although this moment shows how powerless the enslaved were, it can also be an example of how these types of brutalities can have the opposite effect and spark the innate power that an individual possesses. This means that such acts can motivate resistance and/or escape attempts, which is also what some characters attempt throughout the storyline. Dana reflects on such actions by saying: “My ancestors had to put up with more than I ever could” (p. 55). Here is where the reader is forced to do what Dana is doing, that is, to put herself in the shoes of her ancestors. The reflection to have regarding this aspect of subjugation and loss of agency, control and power is imagining oneself in that position and thinking critically about the actions that one would have taken as an individual in a certain period of time. Specifically, a time where the systemic oppression and distribution of power has already categorized individuals as one thing and one thing only, whether that is the enslaved, the enslaver, the patroller and/or the ally. Dana is forced to live amongst her ancestors. The journey leads to the realisation for the reader that maybe they would not have done anything differently if they were put in the same position as their ancestors. Dana is forced to live in a time that costs her control and agency, but more than that, it makes her realize how powerless an individual is in a system that relies on violence, oppression, loss and fear.

In addition, it can be argued that Dana finds power even in her state of powerlessness. Navigating the era of slavery as a Black woman was complicated. As described above, she always finds herself in dangerous and burdensome situations in her new present. Nonetheless, her character is one of the few that is able to wield the power that they have in an impactful way. The relationship that she is able to cultivate between her and Rufus is the primary reason for that power. This power is also heavily influenced by the fact that she is a woman. It can be argued that their relationship would not have been as strong or meaningful as it is if it was not for the fact that she is a woman. Although the examples in the previous paragraphs show us the disadvantages of being a woman during this period, there is also a great amount of power that comes with being a woman. In fact, her survival is guaranteed on the fact that she is one. In other words, her gender allows her to be in spaces that she would not have been in otherwise. One aspect that is made possible because of her gender is the ability to blend in quickly with the house slaves. This is mainly because a woman, specifically a Black woman, is seen as a resource and not as a threat. As the author Octavia E. Butler describes in one of her interviews, she had originally intended the main character to be a man, but she quickly realised that she could not realistically keep him alive. Butler explains:

So many things that [the male character] did would have been likely to get him killed. He wouldn't even have time to learn the rules – the rules of submission, [...] before he was killed for not knowing them because he would be perceived as dangerous. The female main character, who might be equally dangerous, would not be perceived so. She might be beaten, she might be abused, but she probably wouldn't be killed and that's the way I wrote it. She was beaten and abused, but she was not killed. That sexism, in a sense, worked in her favor (Rowell & Butler, 1997, p. 51).

Dana is seen as someone who is able to work wherever she is needed. If not able to work, she is young enough to reproduce and provide the plantation with more slaves that the master could use as currency. The fact that Dana is worth more alive than dead is what secured her survival.

Once again, although powerless in the face of the system, Dana has power over Rufus. This power is also another factor that keeps her alive. Dana and Rufus first meet when he was a young boy and she was a young adult. All of their meetings consist of Dana saving Rufus from life-threatening incidents. This creates a power dynamic that gives Dana an advantage. In addition, Dana is now considered an educated person. The fact that she is able to read and

write puts her in that category. Being an educated African-American in that era puts her not only in danger from the white people, but it also puts her under the scrutiny of the Black people. This means that, On the one hand, she is in danger from the white people given that she is more knowledgeable than them, but also because of the power that she has to teach others to reach a certain level of education. In fact, one of the conversations Dana has with Luke, another enslaved person, deals with this element. Luke reminds Dana that she is not liked, especially by master Tom because she is “educated, and coming from a free state” (p. 79). Luke explains further that “he [master Tom] don’t want no niggers ‘round here talking better than him, putting freedom ideas in our heads. Like we so dumb we need some stranger to make us think about freedom” (p. 79). This means that Dana being educated and from a free state is a double threat to the systemic oppression, thus, the ones in power fear anything that would jeopardize that power. On the other hand, she faces degrading and critical comments about her being different. She is often referred to as someone that speaks ‘white’, or as someone that is not a ‘regular nigger’, or just simply as someone who is ignorant to the ways of the time that she finds herself living in. Nevertheless, the fact that she is different, and her ability to read and write are what help her form a closer relationship to Rufus.

The relationship that Dana develops with Rufus gives her a certain type of power and influence over him. An example of this is when she is taken back to the past and is once again faced with another incident where she had to save Rufus’ life. At this point, Rufus has gotten much older and Dana happened to come in the middle of a fight between him and Isaac, Alice’s husband. Alice is a free born Black woman that grew up near the Weylin plantation. The altercation occurred because Rufus wanted Alice for himself. Given that her husband was not one of the free Black people, Rufus knew that he had power over him. However, Dana’s influence over Rufus is demonstrated when she persuades him to not use the power that he has over Isaac. Dana asks him to not tell anyone that he was almost beaten to death by a slave, but to instead lie and say that he was attacked by a group of white men (p. 117). Rufus did not want to accept it. Dana, however, is very adamant about the matter and continues the argument as follows: “I know you tried to rape his wife. I know she talked him out of killing you. You owe her your life. And me. Let him and Alice have a chance. They’ve given you one” (p. 117). Rufus was still not convinced and his bitterness and anger would not let him accept Dana’s plea. After some back and forth, they agree on him being silent about what really happened. Dana does not beg Rufus to keep quiet and she is always direct with him. This shows that Dana knows that in that moment Rufus is weak and she has the upper hand.

Furthermore, it can be argued that this moment shows a side of Dana that is more selfish and self-serving. Dana saves Rufus because, to her knowledge, he is the only one that could help her reunite with her husband again. She knows that if she is to achieve certain things, she needs to think ahead and plan accordingly. Whether things work out as she expected, her determination, intention and planning speak to the sway that she has over Rufus. This is only one example of the influence that she carries and exercises.

In general, Dana is powerful in the sense that she was able to step in and out of very different periods and survive in both. There is strength and power in being able to adapt. Dana might have had a concept of what slavery was and what being enslaved entailed, but she quickly realizes that she could never have imagined it to be what she actually experiences. This demonstrates her ability to incorporate what she knew previously, and apply it appropriately, while at the same time developing, sharpening and learning new skills. This aspect can be connected to the notion of multiliteracies that pupils should develop. This refers to the maintenance, development and sharpening of an individual's skillset in order to be able to navigate and succeed in various intercultural encounters.

Rufus is a character that exemplifies the theme of power in other ways. The reader meets this character in different stages of his life, that is as a young boy and as an adult. Although the character goes through changes from childhood into adulthood, the power relations that he has with others does not undergo major changes. This means that whatever has power over him when he is a child still has the same power when he is an adult, and whatever power he has over others when he is younger remains so even when and as he gets older.

Namely, Rufus as a white person, regardless of his age, meant that he has power over every enslaved person. In addition, being the son of a plantation owner means that he had even more power over the enslaved people that were in their possession. Also, a power dynamic that was unbalanced is in the relationship between Rufus and his mother. Several occasions have shown the power that he has over his mother. On the contrary, the system that he lived under and the rules that were set by this system had power over him. Besides the system however, Mr. Weylin, Rufus' father was one of the few people that had more authority than him. This is seen on multiple occasions. For instance, during Dana's second visit, when Rufus was very young, he tells her how he tries to burn down the house as revenge for the beatings and whippings he receives as punishment (pp. 32-33). Moreover, Mr. Weylin wields power over Rufus even as an adult. For example, when Rufus is bed ridden after his fight with Isaac, Dana

spends a lot of time with him looking after him. During this time, Dana asks Rufus why Mr. Weylin sold Nigel's father, Luke. Rufus explains that Luke was a hard-worker, but he sometimes did what he wanted instead of listening to what his owner told him to do, hence he was sold off. However, Rufus' concern is more about how he would not be able to stop his father if decides to sell Dana. Rufus states: "Just make sure you don't wind up like him. I might not be able to stop daddy if he decides to sell you" (p. 132). Rufus adds further: "Yes, oh. Give daddy a reason like [teaching someone to read], I don't know what I could do to change his mind. He barely let me keep Nigel" (p. 132). This speaks to the hierarchy in the household. Mr. Weylin holds more power than anyone else in the plantation. Rufus is aware of the power his father wields over him.

An example that shows the intricacies of what having power and losing power means is the incident previously mentioned where Rufus and Isaac got into a fight. This moment shows different layers of Rufus' character and the fact that a person can be powerful and powerless at the same time. As mentioned in earlier paragraphs, Dana had convinced Rufus to not speak of what happened in order to give Isaac and Alice some time to escape. There is a quick moment where Dana steps away from Rufus, from the first three panels on the page, the reader can see the fear in Rufus' eyes. He calls out for Dana but she makes a point in not answering. She describes the moment as follows throughout multiple panels and narrative captions: "I didn't answer. Just dug my washcloth out of my bag and wet it in the stream. I could hear his increasing desperation. Hurt, alone except for me...I wanted him to experience a little of that fear" (p. 115). For someone who held so much power over everyone around him, at this moment he was helpless and powerless. He knew he was dependent on Dana. As a Black woman, it would seem that she might have needed him more in order to survive in that period. However, Rufus was very dependent on her just as much as she was.

Furthermore, even in one of his weakest moments, he still makes a point of reminding Dana that he still was the one in control. Simultaneously, he maintains the mentality that he was the victim in all of this. He is in a position to dwell on the fact that things were happening to him, and that his actions, however awful, are excused. Specifically, their conversation consists of Rufus explaining why he did what he did: "When we were little, we were friends. We grew up. She got so she'd rather have a buck nigger than me!" (p. 115), which shows that he really could not understand why she would choose another. Dana replies back sarcastically: "Yes. How dare she choose her husband. She must have thought she was a free woman or something" (p. 115). This is an indication that it does not matter whether a black person is

free or whether they have papers to prove it. It does not matter because they were never given a chance to begin with. It was a false truth. In other words, the truth was that a Black person was technically free if they had a paper to prove it, but a white person always had the chance to circumvent that and enslave a person again. This is the case between Rufus and Alice. She loses her husband and is forced to live with Rufus. This speaks to the lack of choice and agency a woman had in that period. Rufus ends up being rewarded for his actions. He is the one who raped a woman. Nonetheless, the system is built to benefit him in every way and grant him the power to do what he wants and to whoever he wants to. This brings forth the concept of what is legal is not always right, and vice versa.

In all of that cruelty, the graphic novel makes sure to show glimpses of goodness in Rufus. Although he did not approach the situation appropriately, Rufus was in love with Alice. Contrary to his beliefs, there are no excuses for his behaviour. However, the character shows good qualities when caring for Alice after she and Isaac were caught. Their punishment was beatings, floggings and mutilations. As a result, Alice is bed ridden and has a short period of memory loss. Rufus would never admit to putting Alice in this position, given that she was punished because of his deed. However selfish, Rufus is happy that she is back where he thinks she belonged and that he finally has the chance to provide her a place to heal. What speaks to his awareness of the power that he has and how he exercises it is the conversation that he has with Dana about the care that Alice was to receive. Rufus says: “She hasn’t hated me!” (p. 149) indicating that he knows how Alice feels about him but he chooses to disregard it. It is not hard to see that all he wanted was to be loved. He could not accept that she was not his to have and to love. At the same time, he knew that he was in the position to demand that she be his and that is what he chooses to do. Moreover, regarding Alice sleeping in Rufus’ bed during her period of healing, Dana insinuates by her look that he might do something to her again. To which Rufus replies: “I wouldn’t! It’d be like hurting a baby.” (p. 149). In the narrative caption in the same panel, Dana thinks: “But it would be like hurting a woman soon enough.” (p. 149). It can be deduced that Rufus is very aware of his actions, and it can bring about questions on when violence becomes justified and also whether there are limits to his cruelty. If so, where does one draw the limits and/or the lines? Are they based on age, race and gender? Would she be ‘fair game’ once she is all healed? These questions will be discussed further in relation to competence aims relevant in the English classroom.

5.3 Empathy

The theme empathy can be approached both formally and thematically. On a formal level. The narrative structure, the characters and the graphic format strongly facilitate empathy. On a thematic level, the character Dana is required to empathize with other characters, as well as expect some form of empathy to be shown towards her. In this section, the focus will mainly be on the formal approach. Namely, the emphasis is on reasons why the reader should empathize with certain characters.

Mrs. Margaret Weylin is the first example for this analysis. The reader first meets Mrs. Weylin during the first time Dana is back to the past to save Rufus from drowning. After Dana jumps into the river and pulls Rufus out onto the riverbank, Mrs.. Weylin starts hitting Dana while shouting “You killed my baby! You killed him!” (p. 12). She was scared to lose her son, however, in that moment she also manages to put the blame on someone who is trying to help. Throughout the rest of the graphic novel, Mrs. Weylin is presented as intolerable, nagging and ungrateful. She always found something to criticize about the people working around her. She does not particularly like Dana given that she has a special bond with Rufus. Dana describes Mrs. Weylin: “Like her husband, Margaret Weylin had little education. What reading she did was from the Bible she always carried around. The affectation tricked me into thinking she had some morality” (p. 86). This can often be seen as a typical characterization of slave owners in that period. In other words, a reference to people that used religion to subjugate other people.

Mrs. Weylin is unpleasant to everyone around her except her son. As mentioned earlier, her son is one of the people that exercises the power that he has over her willingly. She caters to his every need. Rufus is rude and disrespectful to her; he knows how to trigger her and what her reactions to his triggers would be. This is illustrated in the time Mrs. Weylin interrupts a reading session where Dana is reading for Rufus. After shouting at her to leave them, Mrs. Weylin makes her way to the exit crying. Rufus’ reaction to this was as follows: “She always cries. It’s the only way to get her to leave me alone. Daddy does it too. But you watch, she’ll be back in a while with a piece of cake with fine white icing” (p. 95). That is what Mrs. Weylin does, she comes back a while later with a piece of cake. Mrs. Weylin lives up to his expectations. Although she cares for him, he never shows that he cares for her as well. Thus, causing her to lash out and to always be mean to everybody else around.

A character that hates Mrs. Weylin more than anyone else is Sarah. This is because Sarah's children were sold off so that Mrs. Weylin could get new furniture. As Sarah describes it in multiple panels:

She [Mrs. Weylin] wanted new furniture, new China dishes, fancy things you see in that house now. What she had was good enough for Miss Hannah, marse Tom's first wife, and Miss Hannah was a real lady quality. But it wasn't good enough for white-trash Margaret. So she makes marse Tom sell my three boys to buy things she didn't even need! (p. 86)

This shows the environment that Mrs. Weylin seemingly created. The character makes it very hard to empathize with her. Nonetheless, it becomes crucial to the achievement of critical literacy to find reasons to do just that. In order to do so, the reader can explore the possible reasons for why Mrs. Weylin acted the way she did. It should be noted that the exploration is to achieve understanding and not to excuse the actions.

A different perspective helps the reader reach a certain level of compassion aimed towards Mrs. Weylin. This can be seeing her not only as the perpetrator, but also as a victim of her surroundings. This is a woman that is expected to follow certain societal norms on what it is meant to be a woman and a mother. She can be considered a victim under the system that she lived under. More importantly, the treatment she received from her husband, Tom Weylin, is a factor that could possibly make her bitter and spiteful. Throughout the story, the reader is introduced to the character Tess, another enslaved woman in the Weylin plantation. In one of Dana's descriptions of the plantation, the reader gets a glimpse of the situation that Tess had to suffer through. Dana narrates:

Later, I did most of the laundry myself, when Tom Weylin started casually taking Tess to bed, and hurt her. Tess was just grateful not to be pregnant. There were many slave children who looked more like Weylin than Rufus did. Children Weylin would whip, work to death, sell. Eventually, Weylin got bored, and handed Tess off to Jake Edwards. (p. 145)

This is a characterization of Tom Weylin. At the same time, it also describes Margaret Weylin's environment. Having a husband that fathers children with others and has no regard for your feelings can be demoralizing and hurtful. She would not be able to do anything given that she lives in a patriarchal household and society. She was expected to accept and make the

best out of her predicament. Therefore, it could be argued that one of the ways she dealt with it is by projecting her anger and frustration towards the other women and their children.

However, this factor could also lead to further exploration on why she would not instead be an ally to the women, given that she does experience a certain level of inequality herself. It seems logical to think that a person that is on the receiving end of injustice and inequality based on their identity would not carry out the same mistreatments on others. Unfortunately, that is not the case with Mrs. Weylin. This can be explained through the understanding that she is still a victim of a system that thrives on the 'us versus them' mentality. It seems like Mrs. Weylin believed that she was better than the Black women around her, and maybe that they deserved the abuse whereas she did not. This example is essential in showing the intersectionality of sexism and racism. In other words, the characters in *Kindred* show how the different forms of discriminations overlap. Mrs. Weylin might have been subjected to the patriarchal and sexist ways; however, Dana, Sarah and other Black women were forced to endure all layers of discrimination.

Another example when analysing empathy on a formal and thematic level is the character Sarah. With all the hardships that Sarah goes through, it would seem that it would be relatively simple for the reader to empathise. The analysis becomes two-layered when the characteristics of Sarah are explored from the perspectives of Dana and the reader.

The reader is first introduced to Sarah as part of the cookhouse. As Dana is describing the layout of the plantation, she mentions the cookhouse as such: "I didn't pay much mind to the cookhouse, where I would later spend so much time" (p. 75). This narrative caption does not mention Sarah. However, Sarah's picture is drawn next to it in a way that shows her place in the plantation. She is depicted as a servant (based on her clothes) firmly holding a kitchen knife on one hand and a vegetable on the other (p. 75). Even though no words are used in this imagery or depiction, the reader gets the impression of where this character belongs in this story. In addition, it can also be associated with Dana's initial opinion on Sarah and the similarities that she draws to the 'mammy' archetype. The first time Dana and Sarah meet is in the cookhouse when Dana comes to ask for supper, which signals that Sarah was responsible for that task. Moreover, the reader receives a more detailed description of Sarah when she is explaining to Dana how three of her children were sold and how she is left with her only daughter, Carrie. This aspect alone ensures the reader's empathy.

Furthermore, during the times Dana was teaching Rufus and Nigel to read and write, Carrie was also eager to learn. However, Sarah did not want that for her daughter. She explains as such:

You can teach Nigel in my kitchen. Boy wants to learn, it's on him and on you. But don't you teach Carrie. If she learns, if she gets caught learning... she's all I got. I can't see her whipped. I won't see her sold. (p. 96)

This shows Sarah as a caring mother that is willing to be under another person's mercy in order to save the only daughter she has left. Sarah becomes compliant to the system that benefits from her oppression because she thinks that is the only way to protect someone she loves and cares for. Sarah avoids everything and anything that would put Carrie under the gaze of Mr. and Mrs. Weylin. As Sarah explains when referring to Mrs. Weylin: "Still, greedy and mean as the bitch is, at least she don't bother Carrie much. But then Carrie don't have nothing Miss Margaret wants" (p. 86). This is how Sarah wants to keep it, which is to not risk Carrie's life in unnecessary endeavours like reading and writing. It can be deduced that Sarah has seen very many atrocities in her time. Sarah is a character that could be seen as a realist. Her surroundings have shown her the brutality and cruelty that is exercised by other humans. She has accepted that reality and lives accordingly. She does not see how things could be or should be. She seems to have accepted her powerlessness under an oppressive system. It is understandable given that she has been broken down so many times that the only way to move forward was to accept her fate and live out the rest of her days with no hopes for improvement or change. Sarah exists within margins that have been created around her, and anything outside of that is nothing but absurd and fiction. Nonetheless, even in the margins that she found herself boxed within, she demonstrates strength and powerfulness through her endurance and survival. Trying to understand Sarah's choices given her circumstances could help foster empathy in the reader. This aspect will be discussed further in light of a specific English-subject competence in the next chapter.

From Dana's perspective, showing empathy towards Sarah was not immediate. Dana finds herself being judgemental towards Sarah's actions, choices and decisions. It could be said that Dana regards herself as the opposite of Sarah. Initially, she could not understand how Sarah ends up in the position that she is in. Once again, as mentioned in the previous section, it is easier to speculate on how you would have handled certain events and situations from the outside perspectives, without having to experience them in reality. The same is in Dana's case,

she seemed to have an idea on how she would have handled being an enslaved person and dealing with the practices and realities of that period. Dana's reactions were different than what she had imagined they would be when faced with the new reality. Dana empathises with Sarah on a deeper level after having spent time in the antebellum herself and gains understanding and experience from that period.

As Dana describes Sarah: "Sarah ran the house in Margaret's absence. She spread the work fairly, managed efficiently...so of course she was resented by slaves who made every effort to avoid jobs they didn't like" (p. 144). Dana narrates further:

Frightened, powerless, and desperate to keep her only child, Sarah did the safe thing – accepted a life of slavery out of fear. In another house, she'd be called 'mammy'. In the militant 60s, she'd be an idea held in contempt. I'd looked down on her myself for a while. (p. 144)

The first part of Dana's description speaks to the way Sarah carried herself around the house. Sarah does the job that was expected of her, and she expects everyone else around her to do the same. Sarah's understanding is that if a chore or task in that plantation was not done as expected, then someone would have to take the blame for it and the consequences would be dire. It can be argued that Sarah, whether she is hated for the role she plays or not, she also understands that the consequences are real and brutal. Therefore, her role becomes ensuring the safety of everyone the best way she knows how, and that is by avoiding the risk to begin with and by doing as told.

The second part of Dana's description speaks to the image and message that enslaved people like Sarah conveyed during and after the slavery era. This means specifically the idea of someone that works for and with an oppressive system instead of trying to work against it. This notion is indicated by the comparison that Dana draws between Sarah and a 'mammy'. A 'mammy' is a figure, caricature and/or stereotype that emerged during the slavery era and remained still in the modern American society. Kimberly Wallace-Sanders (2008) writes in her book *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory*, that 'the various incarnations of the mammy figure have had a profound influence on American culture. There is virtually no medium that has not paid homage to the mammy in some form or another' (p. 1). This is also the case in the graphic novel adaptation *Kindred*. In describing a 'mammy', Wallace-Sanders (2008) states that: 'Mammy wields considerable authority within the

plantation household and consequently retains a measure of dubious, unreliable respect in the slave quarters; many slaves consider her untrustworthy because she allegedly identifies so completely with the culture that oppresses them' (p. 6). Wallace-Sanders' statement aligns with the description that Dana provides of Sarah. Specifically, Sarah had the authority in the house when Mrs. Weylin was not present. This also led to the unreliability and mistrust that is shown towards her. The idea of her accepting and complying to her reality became somehow unacceptable and unworthy. Furthermore, the latter statement can be supported as such: 'the mammy's stereotypical attributes – her deeply sonorous and effortlessly soothing voice, her infinite patience, her raucous laugh, her self-deprecating wit, her implicit understanding and acceptance of her inferiority and her devotion to whites [...]' (Wallace-Sanders, 2008, p. 2). Elements from this statement that ring true in relation to Sarah might be the self-deprecating wit, for example when referring to the 'ludicrous' idea of an educated Black person, in addition to her acceptance of her inferiority and her forced loyalty to the plantation owners.

Another important aspect that the graphic novel shows is the physical appearance of Sarah, where the similarities with 'mammy' could not be overlooked. Wallace-Sanders (2008) writes that 'mammy's body is grotesquely marked by excess: she is usually extremely overweight, very tall, broad-shouldered; her skin is nearly black' (pp. 5-6). This speaks to how 'mammy' is typically portrayed as a desexualized, non-threatening and devoted person. She adds that:

Mammy is often both her title and the only name she has ever been given. She may also be a cook or personal maid to her mistress – a classic southern belle – whom she infantilizes. Her clothes are typical of a domestic: headscarf and apron, but she is especially attracted to brightly colored, elaborately tied scarves. (Wallace-Sanders, 2008, p. 6)

This is something represented in the drawing of Sarah mentioned earlier. The image gives the reader an association to the image of a type of 'mammy'.

Dana explains that Sarah would have been held in contempt in the 60s. This is mainly because she would have been seen as a 'sell-out' or a traitor of some sort to her own community and/or people. However, this type of mindset overshadows and sometimes completely dismisses the reasons behind Sarah's compliance. She is a character that exemplifies the loss of power and agency. Dana experienced only a handful of the horror that Sarah has lived through her whole life. Dana's own experiences forced her to put her 'moral superiority' (Duffy & Jennings,

2017, p. 144) aside. She was able to empathize and relate to Sarah. Dana's process of learning to empathize with Sarah can be seen as a blueprint for how a reader can also foster empathy on different levels. Putting oneself in one of the character's shoes and questioning oneself on how they would have handled certain situations helps put things in perspective.

In short, both Mrs. Weylin and Sarah were victims of the system and their surroundings. The reader is asked to show empathy for the characters for different reasons and on very different levels. To a certain degree, both could have chosen different paths and took control of their reality in different manners. Sarah could have chosen to risk her and her daughter's life and maybe could have lived to see freedom, and Mrs. Weylin could have chosen to be an ally instead of a perpetrator. However, the purpose of fostering empathy is to show understanding, even when the actions are to be condemned. This is what the curriculum demands of the pupils as it will be discussed in the next chapter.

6. Discussion

The literary analysis reveals various historical considerations that must be taken into account in order to facilitate Norwegian pupils' understanding of the themes power and empathy. This is mainly because of the three time periods that the current reader must consider. Namely, the times of the Weylin plantation, Dana's time and the reader's current time.

This discussion highlights how the examples provided in the literary analysis and their historical context facilitate the development of critical literacy and IC. This chapter discusses the didactic implications of the examples analysed in the previous chapter. This means that the examples are discussed with reference to LK20, and in regard to the previous research and the various applicable theoretical approaches. This chapter follows the structure of the analysis chapter and will be sectioned thematically (that is, power and empathy).

6.1 Power

The first example presented in the analysis chapter deals with Dana's inner thoughts when she is walking towards the nearest cabin from the Weylin plantation. The threat that she faces as a woman and as a black person speaks to the intersectional aspect under the systemic oppression. Similarities can be drawn between the intersectional factor of this example and one of the main research questions to the previously mentioned Hammarström (2015) thesis. Namely, her research into how the novel *Kindred* reveals 'the ways in which race intersects with gender in creating women's experience?' (p. 15). Dana navigates between multiple identity/cultural markers and/or groups simultaneously, and she exemplifies how the struggles that she encounters have a connection to these cultural markers. In a classroom setting, working with and focusing on the character Dana already provides the possibility to develop intercultural competence. As presented earlier in the IC chapter, a person belongs to and identifies with multiple groups that are reflective of multiple cultures. In other words, Dana's age, race, gender, marital status, occupation and experiences open the arena for discourse, interpretation and understanding of the various cultural categories that she embodies.

The second example focuses on what Dana witnesses after arriving at the cabin: the flogging of a man tied to a tree. This example is a graphic storytelling both in words and images. As a result, this factor gives pupils the opportunity to engage with the text on a deeper level given that they are expected to make meaning not only of the words but also of the images. As Hecke

(2013) explains, the understanding of graphic novels does not only entail reading and interpreting the narrative captions and the text in speech bubbles, but also using the illustrations as clues in order to broaden the understanding (pp. 123-124). Specifically, Hecke (2013) states that ‘the pictures have to guide the interpretation, which means that readers have to switch back and forth between text and images’ (p. 124). That is what the analysis chapter does in analysing the examples. In addition, as stated in the previous sub-section 4.4.2, graphic novels tend to be more relatable because of the universality of cartoon imagery. Thus, the example in question becomes more visual and identifiable, and therefore, more empathetic, which is what the curriculum demands of pupils.

Furthermore, it can be argued that *Kindred* provides a more authentic and realistic depictions of slave narratives and violence. In one of her interviews, Octavia E. Butler, discusses how her research on slave narratives made her realise that she was not going to be able to present slavery as it was and that she had to do a ‘cleaned-up version of slavery’ in order for her work to be received and read (Kenan, 1991, p. 497). Even though some aspects of the narratives had to be “cleaned-up”; the complex characters, the multiple perspectives and the graphic depiction of violence in *Kindred* make the narrative as close as it can get to the antebellum period. The graphic aspect of these slave narratives makes the material particularly comparable to other slave narratives. In the classroom context, pupils can do comparisons by introducing supplementary texts. Context, author and format are factors that can be the basis for comparison. In other words, comparison of contexts and authors refers to whose point of view is being told and by whom, which means critically assessing the method and purpose of the narratives that are being conveyed. For instance, using real accounts of violence in order to underscore the authenticity of the narratives from *Kindred*. In addition, using the graphic novel adaptation *Kindred* allows for the assessment of the platforms where these real-life accounts were given and whether or not the former enslaved were able to tell their unfiltered and unedited truth. Most importantly, introducing other slave narratives through various forms of texts allows for comparisons that can be made between the possibilities the different formats provide. For example, even comparing the novel *Kindred* and its graphic novel adaptation can exemplify how aspects of a narrative can be conveyed differently depending on the type of format. In other words, the novel presents clear descriptions of the brutalities; however, its adaptation is able to demonstrate those same descriptions in an even more compelling and impactful way because of its graphic format. The visual aspect of the graphic novel adds to the realistic and authentic depictions of the violence described in the novel.

The above-mentioned examples can be discussed in relation to the English-subject competence aim: ‘explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world based on historical context’ (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b). The aspect of the examples that deals with characters that belong to multiple cultural groups aids in working with the exploration and reflection on the diversity factor of the competence. Moreover, the historical contexts that the competence requires is covered based on the fact that the plot is set in two periods, the 1800s and the mid-1900s. Given all these elements, the learning and teaching possibilities in the classroom based on these examples are many. For example, the topics that could be discussed are: a) the era of slavery and its impact on the psychological and economical state of various groups, b) how gender and race play into the societal conditions, that is, health conditions, living and economic conditions, c) the dehumanisation and humiliation of another person by means of punishment (whipping) can be compared to today’s brutalities that are brought upon black communities (for example, George Floyd and countless others in the US).

A parallel can be drawn between the above-mentioned elements of the analysis and Chun’s (2009) article discussed in the previous research chapter. Chun (2009) emphasizes the historical aspect of using the graphic novel *Maus*. He argues that history can often become a “‘boring exercise in the classroom primarily due to many standardized and sanitized textbooks that strip away the interesting dramas and contradictions that constitute our histories” (p. 147). Therefore, using graphic novels like *Maus* and/or *Kindred* result in more intellectually engaging contents that are realized through their visual narrative strategies (Chun, 2009, p. 147). In short, *Kindred* provides historical context and opens a discussion for further exploration such as how what happened in the past translates and compares to the disparities of the present. These examples also add the layer of relevance and actuality to the classroom given that they urge pupils to draw comparison to their present and their own lives as members of the global community.

How the above topics are discussed is integral in the development of critical literacy. This means that the way the examples are analysed and are used in the classroom is reflective of different approaches to critical literacy. It can be argued that the way these examples are analysed is reflective of the design dimension proposed by Janks (2000). As previously stated, this dimension focuses on being able to ‘use and select from all available semiotic resources for representation in order to make meaning’ (Janks, 2000, p. 177). These examples are analysed based on my semiotic resources which are also influenced by the encounter of the

diverse cultural locations and perspectives. In addition, introducing the possible topics related to the examples brings forth their own set of critical approaches. For instance, working with the example of the whipping and drawing similarities to current situations would allow for the development of critical literacy. This would be possible following the approaches juxtapositioning suggested by McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004) and reading supplementary texts suggested by Behrman (2006). This would allow pupils to actively conduct research on the events of the past and relate it to current events. These approaches teach pupils to have additional resources that confirm or contradict their findings and understandings.

The third example deals with the fight between Rufus and Isaac. The example demonstrates the power relations between the four characters, but mainly the one between Dana and Rufus. The analysis of this incident focuses on the influence and impact that actions and words have on the characters and the outcome in their lives. The analysis does not aim to place blame, but to instead demonstrate the perspectives of multiple characters that belong to different social groups. This aspect of the example can be related to an element from the core value 'democracy and participation' from the curriculum which states: 'all participants in the school environment must develop awareness of minority and majority perspectives and ensure that there is room for collaboration, dialogue and disagreement' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a). This statement can be related to the example in different ways. On the one hand, it can be argued that Dana, as a Black woman, represents a minority perspective, and Rufus, a white man, the majority perspective. The majority perspective Rufus exemplifies is that of victimhood. His way of seeing how events transpired was to put blame on his attackers and to disregard his own actions that brought about the beatings. In addition, there is a common understanding between the characters on whose side of the story would be considered truthful. This emphasizes once again the majority's perspective in that period. Moreover, with this in mind, Dana attempts to create dialogue and collaboration in order to solve the situation the best way possible. On the other hand, this example could be used to raise some questions about and open a discourse around the statement from the core value. It is important to allow the exploration of what makes a perspective a minority or a majority perspective. Is the majority and minority aspect of a perspective based on the cultural background one has, or is it determined based on how many people agree or disagree on a topic, for example? It is imperative that pupils develop awareness of the various perspectives and how they came to be before starting to apply their own.

The same incident between Rufus and Isaac is used to analyse further Rufus' powerfulness, powerlessness and his understanding of his surroundings. Rufus' conversation with Dana highlights the understanding that Rufus has on how things are supposed to be. His position affords him the authority to demand that a woman becomes his lover because he wants her to be. This aspect of the example shows the mindset from which Rufus' behaviour stems. According to the 'relevance and central values' in the English-subject, 'the subject shall develop the pupils' understanding that their views of the world are culture-dependent' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b). In a classroom setting, this value is brought forth through the analysis of Rufus and his understanding, specifically in relation to the cause of his and Isaac's fight. Rufus' understanding is very culture-dependent. This is implied based on the fact that Rufus was a white man during the era of slavery. He grew up with a slaveowner as a father learning how to become one when the time came. Rufus does not know how to be anything else but that. It was jarring to him knowing that Dana was married to a white man, because his reality dictates that a white man cannot love or marry a Black woman. He does not understand and cannot explain the feelings he has for Alice, and he is fighting with himself. It made more sense to Rufus to force a woman than to give her a choice. His understanding reflects his surroundings and is based on societal norms. Rufus reaches a point where he thinks that raping Alice was warranted (even better) than actually admitting his love and her rejection. For Rufus, raping was more of an acceptable behaviour than it was loving a Black woman. He lived in a culture that rewarded abuse, rape and condemned a possible love for a black person. Not only was it in Rufus' nature to be who he was, he was also nurtured into becoming what he became. Analysing this character can help pupils realize that their own understanding of topics, concepts and realities are based on and highly influenced by the cultural markers that they belong to.

Furthermore, the aftermath of the incident shows a slightly different side to Rufus. In other words, as presented in the analysis, after Alice is brought back to the plantation, Rufus takes it upon himself to care for her during her recovery. He sees to her being fed, cleaned and made as comfortable as possible. The analysis shows two sides to Rufus, the caring side and the self-serving side. The analysis' attempt to show a caring side to Rufus reflects a critical literacy approach that Janks (2019) suggests which is reading against and with a text. As presented in the critical literacy chapter, Janks (2019) explains that 'reading with a text is easy to do if we resonate with the writer and really hard to do if the writings [threaten] our worldview' (p. 561). In this case, Rufus' actions are inexcusable and his understanding of the world is distorted,

and it is easier to read with the text in that manner. However, the graphic novel allows the reader to see the multi-layered aspect of a character and allows them to be analysed for all that they are. Therefore, even though every action Rufus does is questionable, reading against that allows the reader to search for the good qualities that he might possess.

Another element that is important to discuss is the last example of the first sub-section in the analysis. That is the conversation between Dana and Rufus about Alice. Referring back to their conversation about how it would be like ‘hurting a baby’ if Rufus was to do something to Alice in her current state. The analysis of this example leads to questions about when does violence becomes justified. The question is specifically tied to Rufus given that he does not think of Alice as a grown woman now because of the state that she is in, but there is a possibility of it happening when she has healed from her physical wounds. These questions can be brought into the classroom to engage pupils in a wider discourse. A competence mentioned earlier, that is also relevant in this case, is to ‘explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world based on historical contexts’ (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b). Specifically, the social condition aspect of this competence is reflected in the questioning of whether acts of aggression and violence are justified based on age, race and gender. It can be argued that *Kindred* provides a perspective into how it might have been historically. Moreover, this would also allow for a classroom discussion in relation to topics such as police brutality and the justice system in the USA. Pupils can explore the same questions about the justification of violence in relation to the current climate. For example, exploring how justice and policing differ from one individual to another based on their race and gender. A specific example would be bringing real cases into the classroom to discuss the outcome and how that specific outcome came to be. Additionally, pupils can try to deconstruct the outcome and explore a reconstruction of a different outcome based on various perspectives and contexts. As McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) suggest, pupils would be encouraged to create an alternative text which aids in their development of critical literacy. Furthermore, similarities can be drawn between this analysis and Boatright’s (2010) critical literacy approach in his study as presented in the previous research chapter. The framework that Boatright (2010) works within is also based on McLaughlin and DeVoogd’s (2004) understanding of critical literacy. Specifically, studies that encourage ‘readers to delve past a comprehension-level understanding of a piece of text to identify the underlying ideologies, or belief systems, inherent in any given word or image’ (p. 470). Discussing the example above gives pupils the opportunity to further explore ideologies and belief systems

of that period, and how these ideologies and beliefs vary depending on the characters and settings.

6.2 Empathy

The current sub-section focuses on how the different analysis of the characters, Sarah and Mrs. Weylin, demonstrate a process which aids in the achievement of empathy. This section presents how the examples chosen in the literary analysis are a foundation for fostering empathy. In addition, the examples are also discussed in relation to relevant aspects of the national curriculum, intercultural competence, critical literacy, multiliteracy and DCT.

Mrs. Weylin's analysis starts with a general characterisation of who she is as a woman, a mother and a slaveowner's wife. On the one hand, she is mean and rude to the enslaved people in her plantation. On the other hand, she is caring, loving, obedient and forgiving to her son. Every character has their own ideas and views on the person that she is. Dana described her as someone with little education, whose religiosity did not provide the type of morality that Dana had expected. Based on these descriptions presented in the analysis, it can be deduced that Dana saw her as ignorant. The interaction between Mrs. Weylin and her son that is presented in the analysis shows how she is perceived by her son and that is as weak and a pushover. Lastly, the analysis chapter presents Mrs. Weylin's actions towards Sarah and her children. Thus, making Mrs. Weylin ungrateful, spoiled and ruthless in the eyes of Sarah. Presenting different examples that show the different sides to Mrs. Weylin is a crucial process of fostering empathy. Mrs. Weylin is an example of how a person can be multiple things simultaneously. The trait and character that she shows therefore depends on the people she interacts with and the context. In other words, exploring different contexts allows a more complete understanding of why others think and act the way that they do. This notion can be supported by a statement from the principle 'social learning and development' in the core curriculum: 'the ability to understand what others think, feel and experience is the basis for empathy and friendship between pupils' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a). In this case, working with *Kindred's* characters in the classroom provides pupils the opportunity to explore the above-mentioned multiple sides to characters and broaden their understanding into what others think, feel and experience, and how this translates into their surroundings. The process of understanding of Mrs. Weylin can be an example or

serve as a basis for pupils on how to apply similar meaning-making processes in other contexts, both in and out of the classroom.

The analysis chapter aims to find reasons for Mrs. Weylin's behaviour in the attempt to not only understand her but to also empathise with her. The analysis describes the environment and society, and how this could have caused her actions. Hammarström's (2015) study has an analytical lens that is similar to this analysis. Namely, another one of her research questions focuses on the 'consequences of patriarchal ideology' and how the portrayals of female characters tackle the 'gender issues of the period'. In particular, analyzing Mrs. Weylin shows the societal forms, and the impacts of patriarchal ideologies and structures. Trying to understand the psychological impacts of her environment (in order to empathise) is a process that aids in the development of intercultural competence. Specifically, the factors 'skill' and 'knowledge and critical understanding' hold direct correlation to the analytical process. In other words, 'skill', as described in the IC chapter, refers to an organised thinking process 'in order to achieve a particular end or goal' (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 44). Therefore, it can be argued that the analysis presents multiple sides to Mrs. Weylin and her environment in order to achieve the goal of understanding and empathising with her circumstance. In regard to the factor 'knowledge and critical understanding', the connection can be made to the aspect of 'critical understanding' that refers to the 'active reflection on and critical evaluation of that which is being understood and interpreted (as opposed to automatic, habitual and unreflective interpretation)' (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 51). The latter statement supports the process of analysis which explores the various sides in order to provide a picture that is closest to the entirety of Mrs. Weylin's experience. This aspect is also supported by McLaughlin and DeVogd's (2004) understanding of the critical literacy practice, which is 'seeking to understand the problem and its complexity. In other words, [raising questions and seeking] alternative explanations as a way of more fully acknowledging and understanding the complexity of the situation' (p. 54). In short, it is important to develop the awareness that not everything is as simple as it seems, and that the task is to try to go deeper in order to further our own thinking and meaning making process.

Using Sarah's character as an example for the theme empathy was critical because it enables the analysis to be from both the reader's and Dana's perspective. As mentioned in the first paragraph of the discussion chapter, it is important to note that the historical contexts that are to be considered span over three time periods. Specifically, the 1800s, 1970s and the present. At the time of the novel's publishing, the historical context to be considered was the past and

the present because of the time travel factor. However, this is circa 40 years ago. Therefore, pupils are expected to put into perspective Sarah's present (1815), Dana's present (1976) and today, allowing for multi-layered analysis. This means that the analysis reveals the need to help pupils decode historical events and symbols (in both Dana's and Sarah's time) in order for them to fully appreciate and understand Dana and Sarah's perspectives and relationship.

The analysis initially focuses on Sarah's characterisation based on the reader's point of view. As described in the analysis chapter, Sarah is described as someone with a singular purpose, which is that of being the one who is in charge of the cookhouse. This first part of the analysis is based on the way that Sarah is drawn in the graphic novel. Analysing images/drawings in order to make meaning is an element that is demanded of pupils. Specifically, a core element in the English subject as a programme subject states that: 'the text may contain writing, images, sounds, drawing, graphs, number and other forms of expression intended to emphasise and convey a message' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020c). Specifically, Sarah is described through an image that conveys her work and position in the plantation. More importantly, it can also be argued that this core element justifies the use of the graphic novel adaptation *Kindred* in the classroom.

In addition, the analysis attempts to show a different side to her, that of a mother and a caretaker. This gives a better understanding of who Sarah is at that moment, and how she came to be that person. A competence aim from the English subject that is relevant when discussing Sarah's analysis is: 'explain the reasoning of others and use and follow up input from others during conversations and discussions on various topics' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b). The competence focuses more on the oral aspect of an interaction. However, the part of this competence that is applicable to this thesis' analysis is that of explaining the reasoning of others. In other words, it is relevant given the exploration and/or understanding that the analysis aims to achieve in order to understand why certain characters, in this case Sarah, chose to take the path that she did. Sarah chooses her path based on her circumstance, what she had available to her and how she thought was best to execute her plan. This aspect of interpretation requires the reader to connect with Sarah on a personal level to be able to find reasons for her actions, whether or not one agrees with her decisions. Such was the case with Dana's process of empathising with Sarah. As presented in the analysis chapter, Dana might have not initially understood Sarah's choices, but in time, she learned to see things from Sarah's point of view. In a classroom setting, discussing Sarah in relation to the above-mentioned competence aim would bring forth discourses that would allow pupils to

bring their own perspectives in understanding Sarah's choices. As a result, it could potentially spark more conversation on topics that have various interpretations depending on the individual's cultural markers. Such discourses also allow for the 'central value' in the English subject that focuses on 'pupils' understanding that their views of the world are culture-dependent' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b) to be put into practice and explored further.

The analysis of Sarah focuses on Dana's description. In addition to that description, the analysis is based on a supplementary source in order to support and/or confirm the understanding that Dana had and where that thinking and meaning making process stems from. Specifically, in relation to Dana's use of the term 'mammy' and its connotations. A framework that is important to discuss here is the dual coding theory. As presented in the theory chapter, DCT is based on the idea that thinking involves two cognitive subsystems that are composed of representational units called logogens and imagens. Relevant to the analysis of the writer's choice to use the term 'mammy' is the representational unit logogen. As described in the analysis, 'mammy' is a term that activates certain meanings and associations connected to African-American women. The term carries a representational meaning. As presented in the theory chapter, representational meaning refers to 'the memory representation activated directly by word or object in any modality, and is defined by measures of familiarity' (Paivio, 2007, p. 101). This means that, in this context, the use of 'mammy' activates a memory that represents the concept or the idea. The activation of the logogen relies on the fact that the reader has some knowledge in order to make these connections.

In a Norwegian classroom, the interpretations and association to this word cannot necessarily be expected of pupils. It is important to know what the pupils are aware of and to what extent. In this case, the meanings associated with the word 'mammy' in different eras may be foreign concepts. As explained by Burwitz-Melzer (2013), 'graphic novels offer glances into target cultures and stimulate readers to decode cultural symbols that differ from those of their home cultures. This may help to make learners aware of stereotypes, and to diminish prejudice' (p. 63). Therefore, the example used in the analysis about Sarah's description would allow for lessons and discourses that enhance the pupils' knowledge on the matter.

Pupils' work with the character Sarah and her association to the term 'mammy' can be related to the critical framing/analyzing dimension from the pedagogy of Multiliteracies, and also be

integral in the development of intercultural competence. I will elaborate on the latter statement in the next paragraphs.

As previously presented in the Multiliteracy chapter, the critical framing and/or analyzing dimension focuses on analyzing functionally and analyzing critically. Considering Sarah and her characterisation as a ‘mammy’ within this framework allows for an extensive meaning making process. Within this dimension, analysing functionally refers to the examination of the function of ‘a piece of knowledge, action, object or represented meaning’ (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 20). This represents the exploration of the term ‘mammy’ and its represented meaning and the connotations that it brings. Moreover, analysing critically implies the interrogation of ‘human intentions and interests’ (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 21). In this case, the questions that can be asked are: whose point of view or perspective does the term ‘mammy’ represent?, who are the ones affected by its use?, and what are the social and political consequences of the term? Through critical framing, pupils can distance themselves from the text (or character) and question the purpose of certain characterisations.

In regard to intercultural competence, the character Sarah would allow pupils to work with the knowledge, attitudes, skills and values factor of the Council of Europe’s intercultural competence model (2016). This means that pupils will work in enhancing their own competency by reading, studying and analyzing these factors in relation to the character Sarah. Specifically, pupils can work with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that Sarah holds and how these elements influence her decision and meaning making process. The discussion would be based on: a) how the values that Sarah holds dear motivate her actions (for example, her only child is important to her and that becomes her point of reference in deciding how to act), b) Sarah’s attitude on things around her (for example, her attitude towards Mrs. Weylin and how that impacts her), c) the knowledge that Sarah operates from (for example, her understanding of people’s social classification), and d) the skills that she adapts in order to achieve a goal (for example, she learned to adapt and be compliant in order to ‘secure’ her daughter’s safety). Simultaneously, pupils are confronted with cultural markers that differ from their own which allows them to confront their own cultural and identity markers. They would be put in a position that they would have to develop self-understanding and self-awareness in order to explore how their own knowledge, skills, attitudes and values navigate their own lives and impact their views on matters.

In conclusion, as Burwitz-Melzer (2013) states, using graphic novels ‘may motivate learners to identify with different characters, to use empathy and train the changing of perspectives, as well as the acceptance of different opinions’ (p. 63). In other words, working with the various characters in the classroom provides pupils the opportunity to interact with characters different from them, challenge their own views, support and argue for their perspective, give them courage to express and advocate on behalf of others. As a result, pupils are equipped and can potentially exercise these elements of critical literacy and intercultural competency outside of the classroom.

Lastly, it is important to note that the previous paragraphs discuss aspects of critical literacy and intercultural competence when working with the characters Dana, Rufus, Mrs. Weylin and Sarah. However, there are more ways to work with these characters and the examples shown in the literary analysis chapter.

7. Conclusion

This thesis set out to demonstrate how using a graphic novel in the English classroom can help foster critical literacy and intercultural competence. Specifically, this thesis' aim is to exemplify the use of the graphic novel adaptation of Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* in an English classroom in order for Norwegian pupils to develop critical literacy and intercultural competence.

As clarified in the theory chapter, critical literacy education deals with (a) understanding the importance and influence of a text, (b) identifying the perspective that are represented in said text, (c) bringing the perspectives and voices of marginalised and/or suppressed people to the forefront, and (d) internalizing this newly learned competency (that is, critical literacy) in order to be able to actively make necessary and systemic changes to societal constructs and norms. The present thesis is an example of how the graphic novel *Kindred* is a literary work that allows this type of education. Namely, as discussed in the previous chapter, working with the themes 'power' and 'empathy' in the literary analysis allows for the application of various critical literacy approaches. This thesis demonstrates how the approaches 'juxtapositioning' and creating 'alternative text' suggested by McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) can be applied in analysing events and characters. Moreover, a possible use of the critical approach of reading supplementary texts suggested by Behrman (2006) is also exemplified.

Specifically, the literary analysis and discussion demonstrate that working with the main themes through the use of these approaches allows pupils to cover the main aspects of critical literacy education. As discussed, pupils gain understanding of the fact that the way *Kindred* communicates topics and themes is an example of how a text can influence their thinking and meaning making process. This literary work helps pupils identify various perspectives that a text can provide; not only through working with the characters Dana, Rufus, Sarah and Mrs. Weylin, but also by contextualising the various time periods that had to be considered. This results in the understanding that these time periods influence the perspectives of the characters, and how the reader understands these same perspectives as a reflection of the times they represent. In addition, pupils are afforded the opportunity to reflect on their own perspectives and how their present and their cultural markers influence their understanding of other people's perspectives. Moreover, *Kindred* brings forth the perspectives of character from the era of slavery in the US. This aspect solidifies the critical literacy factor of introducing perspectives, voices and narratives of people that endured centuries of oppression.

The development of intercultural competence is realised through the various perspectives that the pupils encounter. As illustrated in the literacy analysis and discussion chapters, approaches that support multiliteracy and the development of critical literacy, inherently allow for the fostering of intercultural competence. This is mainly because pupils working with various characters and perspectives through the previously mentioned approaches cultivate the ability to ‘deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communications patterns’ (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b), and further their understanding. Discussing specific characters with cultural markers and backgrounds that differ from the Norwegian pupils provides intercultural encounters which allows for the development of intercultural competence.

This thesis also highlights the importance of pupils having an awareness and understanding of their own cultural views. In other words, the literary analysis and discussion chapters of this thesis emphasize how working with the various *Kindred* characters allows them to incorporate several competences suggested in the Council of Europe’s (2016) model of intercultural competence. The character Dana’s values, knowledge, attitudes and skills are discussed as examples on how intercultural encounters and interactions are influenced based on a person’s ability to apply these competences. This discussion also shows how pupils can develop and apply these competences based on what the intercultural context that they find themselves in demands.

An essential factor that this thesis communicates is that the achievement of critical literacy and intercultural competence do not require the use of all the possible approaches, techniques and methods suggested and presented in the theory chapter. This means that, in order to achieve these competencies, it is imperative that: (1) pupils are not overloaded with multiple approaches at one time, and (2) approaches and techniques should be adapted to the classroom environment and topic. Being able to appropriate the various approaches to the needs of the classroom maximises the learning outcome. This thesis showcases this aspect by applying varying approaches and by adapting to the topic of discussion. There is no fixed method that helps the fostering of critical literacy and intercultural competence. Therefore, it is the teacher’s responsibility to exercise these approaches depending on the pupils and context.

Moreover, this thesis is important because it: (a) highlights an alternative format for storytelling, namely a graphic novel, (b) advocates for methods to become critical thinkers and participants of the global community, and (c) serves as an example on a literary work’s

potential in the development of critical literacy and intercultural competence. This thesis demonstrates how introducing various narratives fosters empathy in pupils and furthers their meaning making process and understanding.

An additional aspect that would have strengthened further the present thesis is practice-based research. In other words, using the graphic novel adaptation *Kindred* and applying the theoretical approaches suggested in this thesis in a real-life classroom situation. This would provide a detailed description of the outcome of the process. Furthermore, a practice-based study with this specific literary work and these theoretical approaches has a potential to reveal both the advantages and the challenges with working with diverse narratives. A possible classroom practice that can be replicated or adapted is the one by Rhoades et al. (2015) mentioned in the previous research. This would imply the use of the graphic novel across multiple subjects.

Finally, another interesting future study would be a research project based on the juxtapositioning of the novel *Kindred* and its graphic novel adaptation used in this thesis. This could be done by using the novel in one classroom and the graphic novel in another, or by using both works in the same classroom. Conducting such research would allow for different theoretical approaches to be applied depending on the genre and format. This study could also be taken further by researching both groups that either worked with the novel or the graphic novel, and examining if the understanding of the themes is influenced depending on the literary work pupils have read.

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