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Master's thesis

Identity, Culture, and Literature:

Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* in Norwegian
upper secondary classrooms

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Abstract

This thesis examines how reading multicultural literary texts, opposed to other types of texts, can foster intercultural competence in Norwegian upper secondary English subject classrooms. More specifically, it examines how Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) can be used as a source for teaching intercultural competence to Norwegian learners. It also discusses the central parts of the subject English curriculum, as presented in Knowledge Promotion of 2020 (LK20), the newest revision of the Norwegian national curriculum.

The thesis utilizes two research methods: a literature review, to lay the groundwork for the topics that are being brought up in the discussion, and a close reading of Hanif Kureishi's coming-of-age novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017). The close reading establishes the relevant aspects of the novel for the thesis.

In the concluding chapters, the thesis discusses the didactic benefits of using multicultural literature in upper secondary education in Norway and will try to answer the research question. There will also be a suggestion for further research on this topic

This thesis is theory-based and at this point, it can only offer suggestions as to how to work with intercultural competence through literature in Norwegian classrooms.

Norsk sammendrag

Denne avhandlingen undersøker hvordan lesing av flerkulturelle litterære tekster, i motsetning til andre typer tekster, kan fremme interkulturell kompetanse i norsk videregående engelskfaglige klasserom. Nærmere bestemt undersøker den hvordan Hanif Kureishis *Forstads Buddha* (2017) kan brukes som kilde til å undervise i interkulturell kompetanse til norske elever. Den drøfter også de sentrale delene av Læreplanen i engelsk som presentert i Fagfornyelsen fra 2020 (LK20), den nyeste revisjonen av den norske nasjonale læreplanen.

Avhandlingen benytter to forskningsmetoder: en litteraturgjennomgang, for å legge grunnlaget for temaene som tas opp i diskusjonen, og en litteratur analyse av Hanif Kureishis roman *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017). Litteratur analysen fastsetter de relevante aspektene ved romanen for avhandlingen.

I avsluttende kapitler drøfter avhandlingen de didaktiske fordelene ved å bruke flerkulturell litteratur i videregående opplæring i Norge og vil forsøke å svare på problemstillingen. Det vil også bli fremmet forslag til videre forskning på dette temaet.

Denne avhandlingen er teoribasert og kan på dette tidspunktet kun gi forslag til hvordan man kan arbeide med interkulturell kompetanse gjennom litteratur i norske klasserom.

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1. Introduction

English is a core subject in Norwegian schools, the importance of English as a subject is highlighted by the fact that it is thought of as a second language, as opposed to a foreign language. In 2020, a new revision of the Norwegian national curriculum was implemented in schools all over the country. The new revision came with many changes, this thesis will focus on the emphasis on intercultural competence in the new curriculum for subject English, and also questions regarding identity. Two topics that are closely intertwined and both a part of the subject English curriculum.

One could argue that society is becoming increasingly more multicultural, and presenting narratives with minority representation has, likewise, become more relevant and important. In its section on the central values of the subject English curriculum, states that English shall contribute to developing the learner's understanding that their perception of the world is culturally dependant. In addition to this, it highlights terms like intercultural competence, identity development, and cultural understanding (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). The added emphasis on these terms shows that the multicultural society has been taken into consideration when the revision was developed.

In her article, *Otherness in Children's Literature. – Perspectives for the EFL classroom*, Christiane Lütge (2014) writes: "Opportunities for encountering difference and for creatively engaging with diversity are numerous in children's literature and allow for playful and yet differentiated approaches towards the understanding of otherness" (Lütge, 2014, p.97). She argues that literature can challenge the learners' perceived notions of 'other' and 'self', and therefore holds an educational potential that can be fruitful in the foreign language classroom (Lütge, 2014, p.97). Challenging the learners' preconceived notion of things and people that are 'other' to them, presenting them with narratives that highlight issues and struggles that are new to them, may also challenge them to think differently about their prejudice and worldviews. This is where Lütge believes that literature is a valuable tool to help in the classroom.

These are the things that are being explored in this thesis. To do this, Hanif Kureishi's coming-of-age novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017), has been chosen as a basis for literary discussion. The novel was chosen through a personal fascination with it. I was introduced to it through a course in Multicultural Literature in English at the University of Oslo, and while choosing a topic for my masters, it came back into my mind.

The novel captures growing up, in maybe the most fragile point of young adulthood, through a boy struggling to find his place, navigating being half Indian and half English in London in the 1970s. Throughout the novel, the main protagonist, Karim, struggles with his own identity, being a young adult with a mixed cultural background, and also with his sexual identity in a time where he has his sexual awakening. Through themes like ethnicity, race, culture, appropriation, and otherness, the most prominent theme of this novel can be argued to be identity. The coming of age, struggling with your own identity, finding a place in the world themes of the novel, makes it relatable for youth in the upper secondary age group. These are aspects of growing up, most people can recognize to some extent.

These are some of the aspects that are used in this thesis, to discuss why this is a suitable literary work to use in a classroom setting, to aid in the teaching of intercultural competence.

1.1 Relevance of thesis

Intercultural competence is emphasised in the 2020 revision of the Norwegian school curriculum, however, there are not many suggestions as to how teachers should incorporate it in their teaching. Extensive searches have revealed that there have not been many studies on this topic, literature to promote cultural understanding, specifically relating to the Norwegian school system. Thus, indicating a need for more research to be published. This thesis aspires to be a useful addition to the body of research, by suggesting working with these themes with the help of multicultural literary texts.

The revision of the curriculum has gradually been implemented since 2020. This thesis will look closer at relevant parts of the English subject curriculum in its own chapter. The subject curriculum is what justifies this research and makes it valid. In the *relevance and central values* section of the curriculum, it states that one of the purposes of English as a school subject in Norway is to foster cultural understanding, identity development, and Bildung. It is supposed to lay a basis for communicating with other people both locally and globally, despite cultural and linguistic differences (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). This is why research like this is needed and relevant. To give teachers tools to meet these aspects of the curriculum.

1.2 Thesis aim and research question

“we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it” (Kureishi, 2017, p.53). This is a quote from Hanif Kureishi’s novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) uttered by the protagonist Karim Amir. In this quote, the half English, half Indian teenager is talking about how he and his friend, Jamila, is perceived by the people of London, and, maybe more importantly, with what attitudes they feel they are being met with. It describes a feeling of not quite fitting in, that may resonate with other minority teenagers. This thesis is formed by a wish to add representation, to introduce characters that can be relatable, and by doing this, create another layer of understanding and acceptance in the learners.

This thesis aims to explore how reading multicultural literary texts, opposed to other types of texts, can foster intercultural competence and, in turn, acceptance. It will examine and discuss the potential the novel has for fostering intercultural competence. It will also argue that increased intercultural competence will help learners refute stereotypes connected to prejudice. It will aim to answer the following research question:

- In what ways are Hanif Kureishi’s novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) a suitable source for teaching intercultural competence in Norwegian secondary schools.

1.3 Outline of the thesis

In chapter 2 there will be a presentation of the two research methods used in this thesis. The methods chosen are a literature review and a close reading of Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017). The chapter will include elaboration on why these strategies were chosen. It will also describe limitations and potential problems with the study.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the most relevant parts of the revised Norwegian national curriculum. It will address relevant competence aims for the selected grade level. In addition to this, it will give an overview of central parts of the core elements and interdisciplinary themes, as well as the central values and relevance of the subject.

Chapter 4 will be a presentation of the theory that was chosen during the literature review. It will present relevant sections of the national curriculum that justifies the use of literature in education, and then go on to discuss intercultural competence in education. Lastly, it will discuss relevant aspects of postcolonial literary theory.

In chapter 5 a close reading of *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017) will be performed. The main focus of the reading is exploring and showing how the novel can be used to promote intercultural competence by accommodating discussion on minority issues. This will show how the different theories can be used by teachers and learners alike, to work with this type of source material.

Chapter 6 will address the didactic benefits of working with authentic literature to promote intercultural competence and understanding of identity. It will also argue that literature can promote critical thinking and personal growth in the learners. There will also be suggestions on how to work with this type of literature to achieve this, throughout the chapter.

In the concluding chapter, there will be a summary of the discussion where the findings will be presented. A suggestion for further research on the topic will also be included in this chapter.

2. Methods

To answer the research question and thesis aims, the combination of a literature review and a close reading of *The Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi (2017) is being used. This chapter elaborates on these research strategies, why they were chosen, and how they have been used. In addition to this, it will be addressing potential problems and limitations of the study.

2.1 Research strategy

The engagement with culture and identity in education comes from the focus given to these topics in the revised Norwegian school curriculum, without necessarily giving a clear indication as to how teachers should work with it. The point of view in this thesis is that authentic minority literature is a valuable, and valid, source to discuss these themes in a classroom setting, as well as showing that this can be a meaningful approach for learners to explore issues, they are not necessarily familiar with. First, there is an exploration of relevant theories on intercultural competence in education, and literature in education. Subsequently, theories on postcolonial literature concerning the source novel are explored. After this, a close reading of Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) is conducted, focusing on the most relevant passages to answer the research question.

2.1.1 Literature review

According to Arlene Fink, a literature review is “a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluation, and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners” (Fink, 2014, p.3). With this definition in mind, a literature review is a method for obtaining an overview of a selected topic. For this thesis, the chosen topics are intercultural competence and literature in education. In addition to this, another topic of interest is postcolonial literature. An overview of these topics helps the thesis establish its place in these fields of research, as well as gives a basis for the academic discussion of these topics.

The initial areas of interest are why questions of culture and identity should be a part of education, and how literature can be used to foster intercultural competence in a classroom setting. First, a systematic literature search in Oria was conducted, using search words such as ‘interculturality in education’; ‘multicultural literature in the ESL classroom’; ‘identity and

culture in education', as well as other compatible search phrases. These searches were useful to locate sources that define terminology and give insight into the benefits of literature in education. To provide a basis for discussing intercultural competence in education, Michael Byram's model of intercultural communication competence (1997), has been a useful starting point, as it is widely referenced in other studies of this nature.

Secondly, the interest is the source novel, Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017), and in what ways it may be relevant to the results of the initial searches. A second search in Oria was conducted, clearly showing that theories on postcolonial literature are relevant to look into, as articles and dissertations mentioning the novel, revolves mainly around postcolonial themes such as hybridity and diaspora. For finding sources on this, the book *Postcolonial Literature: A reader's guide to essential criticism* by Justin D. Edwards (2008), is a good starting point. The theory chosen is on hybrid identities, South-Asian diasporas in English fiction, and Queer identities in postcolonial literature. The searches helped narrow down the theory and indicated valuable sources. This theory helps in understanding central issues and themes in the novel, such as family dynamics, identity, religion, and belonging. Susheila Nasta's book, *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (2002), has proven especially helpful in providing insight into these issues.

Thirdly, an overview of the most relevant parts of the English subject curriculum, from the revised Norwegian national curriculum, has been compiled. The review of the curriculum is helpful to affirm the relevance of the thesis, as well as offer another dimension to the discussion of the suitability of literature as a teaching method.

Lastly, the discussion of the didactic benefits is mainly supported by the books *Engelsk for secondary school* by Juliet Munden and Christina Sandhaug (2017), *Teaching English in the 21st century* edited by Anne-Brit Fenner and Aud Solbjørg Skulstad (2020), and *Children's Literature in Second Language Education* edited by Janice Bland and Christiane Lütge (2014). The books *Engelsk for secondary school* (2017) and *Teaching English in the 21st century* (2020), is by Norwegian scholars and helps shed light on the teaching of English in Norway. Furthermore, *Children's Literature in Second Language Education* (2014), lays the basis for the discussion of how to use literature in the ESL classroom, and the benefits of this approach.

2.1.2 Close reading

As previously stated, the second method used for this thesis is a close reading of Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) with a special focus on relevant segments that illustrates issues surrounding culture and identity. According to Catterson (2017), performing a close reading is to pay special attention to certain aspects of a text, and to scrutinize it (2017, p.3). Catterson also states that the type of text that is chosen for the close reading, and the assumption that it carries some sort of meaning, determines the premise for the close reading, and what parts are being scrutinized (2017, p.3). In this thesis, the overall aim is to explore possible ways to work with authentic texts to promote intercultural competence in education. With this aim in mind, it is beneficial to choose a specific literary work that falls under this category. Suitability for the age group, and topics that are relevant to the subject curriculum, also had to be considered when choosing a novel for close reading.

For this thesis, the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi (2017) was chosen. A close reading of the novel was conducted, followed by a literary analysis of the content of the novel. Kureishi's coming-of-age novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) was chosen for its vivid depictions of a young man trying to find his place in society, as a person of mixed-cultures. Through the depictions of the protagonist's daily life, the reader gains insight into his internal, and external, struggles, as well as insight into a culture that might not be familiar to everyone. Furthermore, the protagonist, Karim, is quite the typical teenager with all the emotions and problems that entails, and therefore, is relatable to learners at the upper secondary school level. Because of these factors, the novel was deemed as a suitable literary work to use in this thesis.

Prior to the close reading of the novel, general points of interest had been established. As the aim of the thesis is to explore how reading multicultural literary can foster intercultural competence in a classroom setting. Therefore, the novel had to be read, with special attention to details surrounding themes of culture, identity, and multiculturalism. In turn, these themes serve as a guideline for the analysis of the novel, and the discussion that follows.

Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) is the only piece of literary work that is read and analysed in this thesis. This choice has been consciously made because this novel has enough material to inform the discussion by itself. Another reason for this is that it is much more realistic for teachers to choose one piece of work to focus on when taking into consideration the time and resources that are available during a school year.

2.1.3 Justification of research strategies

This thesis is an effort to suggest possible ways to work with these issues, through literature, in the classroom. The use of a literature review and a close reading of *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017) are methods that are necessary and relevant to explore the didactic benefits of using literature to discuss these questions, as well as how to translate this into a classroom setting.

The revised curriculum seemingly gives the individual teacher more freedom to choose what should be included in the lesson plans, opening up new possibilities on how to teach the different aspects of the subject curriculum. This means that using and exploring authentic literary texts is relevant for Norwegian L2 learners of English in upper secondary school, and valuable for teachers when presenting the learners with different perspectives and cultures in a classroom setting.

The literature review lays the basis of the rest of the thesis. It laid the groundwork for the theory chapter and helped to narrow the scope of the thesis down to a manageable level. The close reading of *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017) together with the literature review informed the discussion of the thesis.

2.2 Limitations and potential problems

The limitation of this study is that its empirical basis is theory-based, the fieldwork is reading and analysing, and thus it has not been tested in a classroom setting. It does, however, offer discussions and reflections on possible reasons why using authentic literary texts to teach intercultural communicative competence, might be a good idea. Intercultural competence is an important factor in the newest revision of the Norwegian national curriculum, the *Knowledge Promotion of 2020* (LK20) (2019). Furthermore, a potential problem with using novels in teaching is taking into account both strong readers and struggling readers. In addition to this, another potential problem is how to balance reading for enjoyment and reading for a practical purpose. Both of these points need to be considered if the methods of this thesis are being applied in a classroom setting. Teachers will have to take account of these potential problems and decide if this is a method that is applicable for their specific group of learners.

When searching for previous research for this thesis, a lack of material was quickly made evident. There has not been much previous research on this topic specifically aimed at Norwegian schools in the past. The revised Norwegian curriculum has only recently been implemented, which means that there has not been much research on the implementation of it yet and that there are few empirical studies to give evidence that working with authentic texts in this way has any didactic benefit in relation to the revised core curriculum.

It is important to note that the focus and questions asked before reading will influence how the novel is read. By providing a focus for the reading, the reader will look at the novel with a certain gaze, searching for the relevant issues in the story. Lastly, the questions asked in this thesis are inspired by the novel. Meaning that the novel had a big impact on the thesis, both in choosing topics and research questions.

3. The subject curriculum

As previously mentioned, intercultural competence is a key factor of the revised Norwegian national curriculum. This section will look at relevant parts of the revised national curriculum, the *Knowledge Promotion of 2020* (2019). From this point in the thesis, the revision will be referred to as LK20.

3.1 LK20

The revised curriculum is being gradually implemented in teaching in Norway from August 2020. There are several points from the revision that is highly relevant to, and that will validate this thesis. The first part of LK20 this thesis will draw attention to is the competence aims for English VG1 (SF), specifically these [translation mine]:

- read, analyse, and interpret English-language fiction
- read, discuss, and reflect on the content and literary devices in various types of texts, including self-selected texts
- explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world based on historical contexts

(Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019)

3.1.1 Relevance and central values

The logical starting point for looking at the revision is the section called *Relevance and central values*. This section explains in what ways subject English is relevant, and important, in the education of our learners. There are several points in this section that are highly relevant to this thesis. Utdanningsdirektoratet writes that [translation mine]:

English is a central subject for cultural understanding, communication, Bildung, and identity development. The subject will provide the pupils with a basis for communicating with others locally and globally, regardless of cultural and linguistic background. English intends to contribute to developing the learners' intercultural understanding of different ways of living, ways of thinking, and communication patterns (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019).

In addition to this, it states that [translation mine]:

Knowledge of, and an exploratory approach to, language, communication patterns, ways of life, mindset, and societal conditions opens new perspectives on the world, and ourselves. The subject will contribute to developing the pupils' understanding that their perception of the world is culturally dependent. This can open up several ways of interpreting the world, help create curiosity and engagement, and help prevent prejudice (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019).

These statements from the revision show that consideration of the ways we learn, and think about other people matter, and are important to the education of our children. This section applies to subject English in all grades, from first grade, and through upper secondary school. In turn, this shows the relevance of this thesis.

3.1.2 Core elements

The revised curriculum for subject English includes three core elements [translation mine]: *Communication, language learning and encounters with English-language texts*. The core element most relevant to this thesis is *encounters with English-language texts*. In the description of this core element, Utdanningsdirektoratet states that [translation mine]:

Working with English language texts helps to give students knowledge of and experience with linguistic and cultural diversity, and also insight into indigenous ways of life, mindset, and traditions. By reflecting on, interpreting, and critically assessing different types of English language texts, students will acquire language and knowledge of culture and society. With this, students develop intercultural skills so that they can relate to different ways of life, mindset and communication patterns. Students will have a basis for seeing their own and others' identities in a multilingual and multicultural context (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019).

3.1.3 Interdisciplinary themes

Another important point to note from the revised curriculum is the section called *interdisciplinary themes*. Two themes will become integrated into all subjects, these are *public health and life skills* and *democracy and citizenship*. This thesis will be looking at both of these themes.

Democracy and citizenship

Democracy and citizenship are maybe the most relevant of the two interdisciplinary themes for this thesis. The description says [translation mine]:

In English, the interdisciplinary theme of *democracy and citizenship* is about developing students' understanding that their perception of the world is culturally dependent. By learning English, students can meet different societies and cultures by communicating with others around the world, regardless of linguistic and cultural background. This can help open up more ways to interpret the world and help create curiosity and involvement and help prevent prejudice (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019).

Public health and life skills

The other of the two interdisciplinary themes, *public health and life skills*, focus more on the learner's self than the previous theme of *democracy and citizenship*. In the subject curriculum the description reads [translation mine]:

In English, the interdisciplinary theme of public health and life skills is about developing students' ability to express themselves in writing and orally in English. This lays the foundation for expressing your own feelings, thoughts, experiences, and opinions. The training can provide new perspectives on different mindsets and communication patterns, and on their own and others' way of life and life. Managing situations that require language and cultural competence can give students a sense of mastery and help them develop a positive self-image and a confident identity (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019).

3.1.4 Basic skills

The last part of the revised curriculum worth noting for this thesis, is the part surrounding the basic skills that subject English should promote and develop. The section describes four skills, oral, reading, writing, and digital skills, and which aspects of subject English each of these targets. This section will be looking at the skill most relevant to the thesis, namely reading skills.

Reading skills

Perhaps the most relevant skill to this thesis, is the one referencing reading. In the revised curriculum the description of this skill reads [translation mine]:

To be able to read in subject English is to understand and reflect on the content of different kinds of text on paper and digitally and should contribute to reading pleasure and language acquisition. This involves reading and finding information in complex texts with competing messages and utilizing reading strategies to understand explicit and implicit information. The development of literacy in subject English goes from experimentation with language sounds, spelling patterns and syllables, to reading complex text with understanding and, at the same time, increasingly being able to reflect on and evaluate different text critically (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). This section of the revised curriculum indicates that the learners should be subjected to different types of texts throughout their education, to foster this skill. It also links the reading of different texts with critical thinking, which this thesis has mentioned is also a factor in other parts of the curriculum, such as in the core elements which has been accounted for above.

4. Theory

This chapter consists of three parts. The first present theory on intercultural competence in education, and will, among other things, present a discussion of Byram's model of Intercultural Competence and some criticism of said model. The second part address theory on Literature in education, and the third part draws in elements of postcolonial theory which are relevant for understanding and interpreting *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017).

4.1 Intercultural competence in language education

Intercultural encounters have become a daily matter due to globalisation, migration, and, perhaps most prominent, the technological revolution. In light of this, there has been an increased focus on the need for intercultural competence, understanding, and communication, in politics and the media over the last two decades (Hoff, 2020, p.69). However, the term intercultural competence is often perceived as vague and may be understood differently by different teachers (Lund, 2008, p.2). A symptom of this is that even though intercultural competence is an integral part of the subject curriculum, it does not offer many solutions as to how to work with it, or how to assess it.

4.1.1 Byram's model of intercultural communication competence

Michael Byram is one of the most influential academic voices discussing intercultural competence in foreign language didactics (Hoff, 2020, p.73). In 1997, Byram first published his model of intercultural communicative competence in *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. The model was developed from ideas previously published by Byram and Zarate in 1994, in relation to the development of a 'Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching', a project the Council of Europe started in the 1990s (Hoff, 2014, p.508). Byram's model is an effort to explore the issues that arise when trying to evaluate "a person's ability to relate to and communicate with people who speak a different language and live in a different cultural context" (Byram, 2020, p.1). In other words, the goal of the model is to give teachers a tool on how to assess intercultural competence in their learners.

Michael Byram and the model he developed has had a considerable impact on several countries' curriculum development, including in Norway when it comes to ICC (Hoff, 2020, p.74). The

model is referenced in several studies of intercultural (communicative) competence and is still highly relevant when talking about it in the context of foreign language education (Hoff, 2014, p.508). There is no question that Byram's model is a relevant source to use when studying ICC in language education. Furthermore, the fact that it has directly influenced the Norwegian curriculum, makes it instrumental in understanding the aims of the curriculum.

Byram's model describes the factors involved in intercultural communication and argues that these need to be present to become a competent intercultural speaker, as well as being a frame for how to assess and evaluate this competence (Hoff, 2020, p.74). Byram argues that the success of intercultural interactions can be assessed through how effective the exchange of information is, but also how the human relationships are maintained and established across cultural differences (Byram, 2020, p.32-33). To do this, certain aspects of communication have to be observed.

The model Byram proposes for this purpose is made up of five factors, or *savoirs*, that are required to be a successful intercultural speaker. These factors are a set of attitudes, skills, knowledge, and ways of acting that should be possible to assess and test in the learners (Hoff, 2020, p.74). The premise is that by mastering these factors, the speaker is prepared and qualified to communicate with people from different cultures and be successful in doing so. In *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* (1997), Byram elaborates further on these *savoirs* and discusses the relevance of each of them.

The first factor he is addressing is Attitudes (*savoir être*). Byram argues that meeting others with prejudice leads to unsuccessful interactions and that we should approach other cultures with "attitudes of curiosity and openness, of readiness to suspend disbelief and judgment with respect to others' meanings, beliefs, values and behaviours" (Byram, 2020, p.35). With this, Byram means that one should meet others with an openness to see things from the other's point of view and to not fall victim to own prejudices.

Secondly, we find the factor of Knowledge (*savoir*). This is the notion that an individual will knowingly or unknowingly, bring with their previous knowledge of their own and/or the other's country into the conversation (Byram, 2020, p.36). To achieve this dimension of intercultural communicative competence, knowledge will have to have been learned at some point. If the sources of learning have been lacking, the substance to this aspect will also be lacking, leading to less successful interactions.

Next are Skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) and Skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*). The skill of interpreting and relating information is all about previous knowledge, and the ability to relate this knowledge to the situations and encounters that one is faced with. The ability to interpret foreign documents also falls under this dimension. The skill of discovery is “the ability to recognise significant phenomena in a foreign environment” (Byram, 2020, p.40). This is the ability to acquire new knowledge and learn from the encounters.

Lastly, Byram talks about Critical cultural awareness, political education (*savoir s’engager*). This is when the speaker can use the attitudes, knowledge, and skills and critically evaluate their own and the other’s culture (Byram, 2020, p.42). In other words, this is the end goal.

4.1.2 Criticism and new ideas

Hoff argue that, although Byram’s model, as with other early models of intercultural competence, has contributed a great deal to the way we think about and approach the learning of languages, it has in later years been criticised for being overly simplified and lacking, they do not reflect the full extent of the complexity of the intercultural world we live in (2020, p.75). Therefore, there is an apparent need for new ideas and ways of thinking.

Some of the criticism Hoff discuss is that the early models rely on the notion that an individual’s cultural identity is singular. In Byram’s model, the knowledge dimension, for instance, takes for granted that the previous knowledge the speaker inhabits is true for everyone from the culture they are encountering (Hoff, 2020, p.75). Of course, we now know that this is not true, and that each individual has different experiences truths. Furthermore, this notion indicates that the culture one is from decides how one will react to certain situations.

Hoff find Byram’s model of ICC too restrictive and naïve. It does not take into consideration that societies and countries are becoming more multicultural, and with a more multicultural society comes many more influences that will have an effect on people of the countries (2020, p. 76). Thus, will the notions of Byram’s model not go far enough in considering these additional factors.

In addition to this, Hoff bring up the fact that research has shown that language and culture are not inseparable, but two different things, and therefore, examining how people express their cultural identity may be a more suitable way of exploring intercultural language learning (2020,

p.76). All of the complexity of today's world society will not fit into Byram's model, and therefore, new ways to look at this must be developed.

4.1.3 Intercultural competence and the subject curriculum

Notions of intercultural competence have been a part of the Norwegian curriculum for subject English since the 1990s. In the *Knowledge Promotion of 2020 (LK20)* (2019), the term intercultural competence is explicitly mentioned in the description of the core element *Encounters with English Language Texts*. In addition to this, an important aim of the revised curriculum is to promote the learner's ability to navigate 21st-century challenges, by laying down the groundwork in learning processes (Hoff, 2020, p.79). With the world becoming increasingly more multicultural, it is a fair assumption that intercultural encounters are among these challenges.

Hoff write that "the English subject curriculum defines intercultural competence as the ability to navigate diverse ways of life, mindsets and patterns of communication. This is further linked to the ability to regard individuals' identities in a multilingual and multicultural perspective" (2020, p.80). With this definition, LK20 reflects the need to focus on these issues more than the previous curriculum did. Moreover, the addition of Democracy and Citizenship as an interdisciplinary topic, makes it an aim for subject English to promote intercultural understanding so that the learners will become constructive participants in society (Hoff, 2020, p.80). With all this in mind, it is safe to say that intercultural competence is more important in Norwegian schools today than it has been before

4.2 Literature in education

In the revised Norwegian national curriculum (LK20), encounters with English-language texts are a core element, as has been previously established. Reading has historically been an important way of learning in English classrooms in Norway. Ørevik (2020) state that “It is by interacting with texts in a wide sense that students learn the English language; moreover, textual encounters play a crucial role in their development of intercultural competence” (p.143). By this, they establish the importance of subjecting the learners to a wide selection of literature, covering a range of topics.

This section will look at theories on extensive reading before it will make an account of, and discuss, the values of literature in the classroom. By doing this, the aim is to establish literature, fiction in particular, as a teaching tool.

4.2.1 Extensive reading

In order for learners to be proficient in reading in English, they need to be provided ample opportunities to read text that they have an interest in. Therefore, extensive reading is regarded by many to be an aspect of importance to the learning of a second, or foreign language (Ørevik, 2020, p.142). to make this endeavour successful, the teacher must be able to provide a variety of text, catering to the interests of the group of learners they are teaching.

Bamford and Day published an article in 2002, listing the Top Ten Principles for Teaching Extensive Reading. For this article, Bamford and Day based themselves on Ray Williams 1986 discussion of his top ten principles for teaching foreign language reading and expanded on that to fit with a discussion of extensive reading. The principles Bamford and Day are providing are, in their belief, the basic ingredients for extensive reading (Bamford & Day, 2002, p.136). this section will be looking more closely at four of these principles.

The reading material is easy

The first principle listed is that the reading material is easy. Bamford and Day argue that for extensive reading to have the desired result, the learners must be provided with texts that are well within their language abilities. This is especially important for beginner learners, as few as a couple of words they do not understand per page, can ruin their understanding of the text (Bamford & Day, 2002, p.137). Using texts that are easy makes it possible for the learners to

read without getting discouraged and giving up. Thus, making easy texts available for the learner instrumental for extensive reading, and, in turn, the joy of reading.

A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics must be available

As has been briefly mentioned previously, supplying learners with a range of topics to choose from will entice the learners to read. No learner will enjoy reading extensively about a topic they do not have any interest in, making it important to have a varied selection. There is no rule that says that the material must be novels or huge books, it could also be newspapers, magazines, or comics, to name a few (Bamford & Day, 2002, p137). The most important thing is that they read, not what they read. A good way of ensuring coverage of the interests of the group of learners is to ask them to write down what they are interested in, and choose material based on the list.

Learners choose the material they want to read

Closely connected with the previous point, it is important for the learners to have the opportunity to choose text that they feel they will have some use of. This can be material they think they will enjoy or material they expect to understand and learn from. It is important that the learners feel free to choose and encouraged to keep reading or to stop reading and choose another book if it proves to be too difficult, or not to their taste (Bamford & Day, 2002, p.137). The learner should always feel that their opinions and interests are being considered in this situation. This fosters a healthy class and reading environment and makes the reading more personal.

Reading as much as possible

It should come as no surprise that a part of extensive reading, is to read extensively. One of the challenges for teachers to give the learners a lot of time to do this in a classroom setting is the issue of time. Learners should, according to Bamford and Day, be reading a minimum of one book a week to achieve the goals of extensive reading (2002, p.138), if the learners are only supposed to be doing this reading in English class, the time would not stretch far enough. This means, that reading homework, in addition to the time allotted for reading in class, may be necessary.

These four principles presented above all say something about how to work with extensive reading in schools. According to these principles, it is important that the learners enjoy what they are reading, and that the material encourages them to continue reading. It is also important

to let the learners stop reading if the book is too difficult or not to their liking, to continue to promote healthy and fun reading. Having enough time allotted for reading is also important for not losing the benefits of extensive reading.

The main point of all these principles is that it is not important what the learners read, as long as they are reading something, and find enjoyment in what they are reading. It is also important that they feel like they accomplish something by finishing their chosen material, thus, making it important that the material fits their level of understanding.

4.3 Postcolonial literature

Defining the postcolonial is not an easy task, and opinions on how to do it all differ. According to Oxford Reference, postcolonial literature is an expansion, and replacement, of the term Commonwealth Literature, that was previously used in Britain. It refers to literature from countries that were once colonies or dependants of European nations and are heavily influenced by the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized, also in the time of independence (Oxford Reference). With this in mind, postcolonial literature is writings about the aftermaths of colonisation, in some form or another.

In this section, some aspects of postcolonial literary studies have been chosen to be the focus. First, it will create an overview of the South Asian diaspora in Britain and English fiction, before it will discuss the term of hybridity, and its uses, and misuses.

4.3.1 South Asian diaspora in English fiction

The term 'diaspora' stems from ancient Greek and can be translated to 'a scattering or sowing of seeds'. When talking of diaspora today, we are referring to a forceful or voluntary dispersion of a people or ethnic group from their traditional homeland, and their settlement in their destination country, often as a minority group (Beine, Docquier & Özden, 2011, p.31). Moving forward, the focus will be on the South Asian diaspora in Britain in particular.

In the book *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (2002), Susheila Nasta seeks to place the works of famous and lesser known (im)migrant authors in a historical and cultural framework. Nasta discusses questions of 'home' and 'abroad' and the political and ideological issues surrounding these terms. Nasta argues that in the field of postcolonial literary studies, it is not surprising that the question of 'home' has become a vexed terrain. She writes that: "the notion of 'home', with all the political, ideological and symbolic baggage that it still implies, formed an integral part of the naturalized rhetoric of Britain as Empire and has lingered on in the nationalistic grammar of Britain as a post-imperial nation" (Nasta, 2002, p.1). By making these arguments, Nasta is saying that the politics and ideology that still, to this day, lingers from Britain's imperial past, has made the notions of 'home' and 'abroad' change from what they used to be. The discussion of what is considered home whether it is where you live, or the place of family origin, has become more charged.

This section gives a short account of the history of Asians, in particular south Asians, in Britain. After this, it utilizes Nasta's work to shed light on Britain's colonial legacy in South Asian fiction, and its relevance to Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017).

Asians in Britain

When thinking of Britain and India in the same context, it often refers to India as a British colony. In the 1600s, many young brits turned to India and took on posts as agents for the East India Company (EIC). Usually, these young men came from the clergy or merchant families, bribing their way to India (Visram, 2002, p.3). Even though the salaries were not the highest, hours were short, and living as an agent for the EIC in India brought with it a way of life similar to that of lords, with a huge staff of servants. The agents took parts of the oriental culture and moulded it to fit with their English tastes and lifestyles (Visram, 2002, p.3). Indian servants were cheaper than African slaves, about ten times cheaper, and because of this, Indian domestic servants were preferred by the Brits living and working in India. In turn, these were the servants they brought with them back to Britain, with the added benefit of them being about eight times cheaper than a British servant (Visram, 2002, p.4). To the young brits settling in India, life was comfortable, and they got the chance to build their net worth while living and working there. This made going to India to work for the East India Company attractive to young brits.

Furthermore, for many, the EIC was a steppingstone for other work in India. Fortunes were made in private trade and by other means. The fortunes made in India were brought back to Britain and used to gain status and position. Upon their return to Britain, their wealth was used to buy estates and build property (Visram, 2002, p.4). The returning Brits had become accustomed to a certain way of life in India, and many wanted to live similar lives in England. This is in part why many brought their servants with them back home. In addition to this, some had married Indian women and brought their wives, and children, back with them. (Visram, 2002, p.4). These servants and wives were among the first Indians settling in Britain.

During the seventeenth- and eighteenth centuries, Brits continued to bring in Indian servants. Servants who ran away, were freed, or suddenly were left without employment for one reason or another, could usually find work at estates as footmen, valets, cooks, or maids, and were generally very employable, due to the skills they inhabited (Visram, 2002, p.13). During the same time period, Indian sailors also got jobs on British ships. India had a long history of seafaring, being a maritime country, and Indians were well known for their skills in the field of work. European trading companies had a history of employing Indian seamen, or lascars when

trading in the east (Visram, 2002, p.14). There were attempts made to restrict the number of lascars on British merchant ships, most noticeable was section 7 of the Navigation Act of 1660, which stated that seventy-five percent of the crew on British ships, tasked with importing merchandise from Asia, had to be British (Visram, 2002, p.14). These measures were mostly unsuccessful, and the companies kept employing lascars on their ships. Some of these lascars were left behind in England without provision, despite contracts from the companies employing them promising to take responsibility for their return to India (Visram, 2002, p.15). Because of this, lascars left behind, in addition to the servant already in Britain, were also among the first Indian settlers in Britain.

This period also saw Indians of diverse backgrounds and social standings coming to Britain. Many of these people were educated, some came on personal visits, some to learn about western sciences and culture, and some came as teachers (Visram, 2002, p. 33). This group of travellers left behind some of the first written accounts of Britain, and British society, from the viewpoint of educated Indians. Indian musicians were also among the arrivals of this time period (Visram, 2002, p. 34). This group was of a higher class than the servants and lascars previously mentioned. In light of the descriptions of the first groups of Indian arrivals in Britain, it is safe to say that early Indian settlers and visitors were a diverse group of people, with different ambitions and lives.

From the mid-nineteenth century up until the first world war, the Indian community in Britain was starting to form. Several hundred Asians had settled in Britain, the majority of these Indians. By this time, many were living in Britain on a permanent basis, some were born there, and some stayed for periods of time (Visram, 2002, p.44). The tradition of importing maids and servants continued, but at this time Indians were involved in all social classes. There were also professionals, like doctors and lawyers, who arrived at this time as well (Visram, 2002, p.44). This is the point in history where the forming of a clear Indian community can be seen. It can also be argued that, as educated Indians got higher standings in society, they also influenced culture and society in Britain to some extent, probably more than is given credit for.

In the first world war, Indian and British troops fought side by side, and the war brought many Indians to Britain. As India was a part of the British empire, they took a bigger, and more direct part in the war than they might have had otherwise (Visram, 2002, p.169). By 1918, India had sent over one million soldiers to fight in the war, and the ones wounded in battle were sent to Britain for care. India contributed to Britain's efforts in the war with not only troops but also

with money, war materials, medical personnel, and other essential material (Visram, 2002, p.70). Indian help made a huge difference to the British war effort during the first world war. In fact, Indian citizens were encouraged to aid Britain in the war, hoping to prove their worth as members of the British empire (Visram, 2002, p.170). In other words, Indians were keen to prove themselves and strengthen their position within the empire, this would prove not to be the outcome of their war efforts as they continued to be marginalized in post-war support.

After the war, Indians continued to work in large numbers in Britain, but their position soon became vulnerable. Although Indians, especially those of a lower class, had been discriminated against since the first arrivals, tensions had not been as high as now. In 1919, riots broke out in some of the major seaports (Visram, 2002, p.198). During the war, work was easy to find for the Indians in Britain, but after the war, with young men returning from battle, the competition for employment was again harder, and the Indians were again proven as vulnerable in peacetime (Visram, 2002, p. 199). These factors may be the main motivator behind the riots, as the marginalised Indians again felt unappreciated, despite their effort for the country during the war. In the inter-war years of the early twentieth century, Indians had been living in Britain for generations. When the second world war broke out, jobs were again opening up for this population, both at sea and on land (Visram, 2002, p.267). This again made changes in their lives, and many became better off financially during wartime.

As the second world war came to an end, yet another war had gone by with the help of Indian armed forces and medical personnel. In addition to this, many Indian students immediately volunteered to help during the war (Visram, 2002, p.348). When the war had ended, Britain saw a lack of laborers and was in need of workers, and so, Indians coming to Britain were now encouraged. This encouragement brought more Indian workers and students to Britain. It may have been easy for the new settlers arriving from India during this time, around the early fifties, to form their own communities and keep to themselves. After all, port areas already had established Asian corner shops and communities from earlier, but instead of this happening, Britain saw working-class Indians settling and integrating into white working-class neighbourhoods and forming relationships across the cultures (Visram, 2002, p.354). The Indian population adapted to life in Britain, worked normal jobs, and wore 'appropriate' clothing. Soon, organisations and networks for the Asian workers were established, and they became more rooted in British society, forming inter-cultural identities and traditions. At the same time, they remained aware of the empire's effect on their homelands (Visram, 2002, p.355). All in all, Indians lead productive lives in Britain, some were sent there to become

educated, and many to work. Although discrimination and racism may have continued to have an impact on their lives, many stayed and settled down in Britain for good.

Representation of Britain in (im)migrant fiction: A short historical overview

There are several known literary renditions of India through the eyes of imperialists, but stories of colonial Britain told by the voices of its Asian population are less familiar. One of the earliest works published by an Indian in English dates to 1794, when Sake Dean Mahomet's *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* was published in Ireland (Nasta, 2002, p.17). In addition to this, several travelogues and diaries exist from the period before the twentieth century, as Britain saw a large number of Indian travellers, especially during the nineteenth century (Nasta, 2002, p.17). With this in mind, it is safe to say that stories of Britain through the eyes of Indians date back further than many might think.

The brown Englishman

In Mahomet's writings, he managed to position himself as a 'brown Englishman' manipulating his way through the attitudes of British society of his time (Nasta, 2002, p.17). Mahomet navigated his way successfully through British society, careful not to stir up conflicts of East and West, colonized versus colonizer, and did not assume any distinct identity, or political view, that would mark him as any type of troublemaker (Nasta, 2002, p.17). By marketing himself as a 'brown Englishman' instead of as a native of India, Mahomet avoided discussions and exclusion and managed to produce literary works that presented the reader with both his Indian and English worlds and the flaws and decency of both of them and wrote his accounts in the genre of travel narratives that were familiar in Europe at this time (Nasta, 2017, p.17). Mahomet was smart, and by avoiding drawing any noticeable attention to himself, he managed to gain insights into positions he might not have otherwise.

Another writer that can be compared and put into the same genre as Mahomet, is J.M. Malabari, who visited England several times between 1870 and 1890. Before traveling to Britain, Malabari had already an established reputation as a journalist and poet in Bombay (Nasta, 2002, p.20). Malabari wrote about England and London from his point of view as an Indian citizen and served as a counter-narrative to all the positive publications of Britain and British lives (Nasta, 2002, p.20). While Mahomet was interested in showing both the good and bad sides of both his worlds, it seems Malabari wanted to show a critical narrative, challenging the established notions of what Britain is.

Modernity

Moving away from the earliest narratives, Nasta (2002) discusses the shifts in the way Britain is portrayed in South-Asian diasporic fiction post World War II. At this time, the western modernist writers were at the height of their popularity. But, Nasta argues, the modernist tradition was perceived as exclusively a western, specifically European and American, phenomenon (2002, p. 25). This perception has followed into contemporary theories on modernist writing, marking a clear absence of certain writers in modernist history. Writers of Asian origin are left out of this history, even though their fiction is written in the same modernist tradition as the Western writers (Nasta, 2002, p.25). Nasta argues that the reason for this exclusion might be that Asian writers are automatically put into the literary categories of ‘colonial’ or ‘postcolonial’, leaving the tradition of modernist writing predominantly white-Western (Nasta, 2002, p.26). By leaving out these specific writers from modernist literary history, valuable narratives are also being left out of literary discussions, further marginalising these writers.

Home and abroad

“Home, it has been said, is not necessarily where one *belongs* but the place one *starts* from” (Nasta, 2002, p.1), with this sentence, Susheila Nasta opens her book *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (2002). Nasta writes about the South Asian diaspora in Britain, and what implications it has on literature from South Asian authors in Britain. Nasta writes extensively on the notions of home and abroad, and the opening of Asian Britain for the general public through literature. This section will be a brief account of Nasta’s theory on home and abroad considering diaspora and connect it to Hanif Kureishi’s *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017).

Homing in

In chapter five of her book, Nasta writes about opening up Asian Britain, and to do this, she highlights two authors, one of these is Hanif Kureishi. Nasta argues that Kureishi is good at illustrating the special hybridity of the second-generation British people in his novels (2002, p.173). She is arguing that these kinds of narratives are important to paint a picture of a ‘larger’ Britain that might “acknowledge its cultural and racial diversity as being *inside* rather than *outside* its borders” (Nasta, 2002, p173-174), indicating that this is something that is a notion that is overlooked in other aspects of British society today.

Nasta brings up the point that Kureishi frequently depicts differences between what is his experience as a person of mixed Pakistani and English parentage, and the experiences of the generation before him, an earlier immigrant, so to speak (2002, p.175). This is also true for *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017), where the protagonist, Karim, represents Kureishi's point of view, as Karim is half Indian and half English and Karim's father Haroon represents the earlier immigrant.

In this narrative, Nasta argues that the second-generation immigrant, in this case, Karim, can *home in* on English culture in ways the first-generation immigrant, Haroon, cannot (2002, p.175). This is due to the fact that Kureishi's first-generation immigrant is more connected to his Indian heritage and culture than his son who was born in Britain is.

Nasta argues that the protagonist in *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017), Karim, is a good representation of a new way of writing 'Englishness' in a time where the notion of identity is more fluid, and regarded as an internal, instead of an external factor (2002, p.176). Karim's, and also Kureishi's, mixed-cultural backgrounds, make them equipped to function as ambassadors of what being British in the postcolonial world might look like. While Haroon is clearly still more Indian at heart.

These are points of home and abroad that are interesting to discuss. Nasta brings up some interesting points when it comes to second-and first-generation immigrants and what is considered home. In the case of *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017), what Haroon considers home, and what Karim considers home might be completely different.

4.3.2 Hybridity and hybrid identities

The term *hybridity* is often used in studies of postcolonialism and diaspora. In this particular field of study, *hybridity* usually refers to a person with a mix of cultures. It is a meeting point between the culture of familiar origin and the culture of the host nation, in the case of migration (Hutnyk, 2005, p.79). *Hybridity* as a term has been used in many different fields of research. The term originates from botany and biology and has in later years been transformed into a more general term having to do with mixing and combination (Hutnyk, 2005, p.80). In the field of postcolonial studies, *hybridity* then comes to describe a mixing and combining of cultures.

The term hybridity in light of postcolonial studies has not gone without criticism. Some argue that if a hybrid person exists, so does a pure person, and that can be a dangerous notion. In a way, it is degrading one person's cultural identity, while holding the others in higher regard (Hutnyk, 2005, p.81). Some see hybrid as a negative term, as one of the most well-known hybrids from the animal kingdom is an infertile or non-productive mix between a horse and a donkey, a mule. In the case of plants in biology, creating hybrid combinations is made by merging one plant with another. Hutnyk argues that while the hybridisation of plants may have its positive sides, applying the same notion as we do in these other fields of study, to humans will promote unfortunate notions where humans have distinct races that merge into hybrids if mixed (2005, p.81). It is important to be mindful of the implications descriptive terms might have when using them to talk about people.

A postcolonial hybrid, then, will by the definition given in the first paragraph of this section, be a person belonging to two cultures, and having two distinctively different cultural identities. For this thesis, it is easy to look at this term in relation to the protagonist of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Karim, who has an English mother and an Indian father and struggling to find out in which cultural identity he belongs. These are struggles many of similar backgrounds might recognise.

5. Literary analysis

This chapter will explore the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi (2017). The chapter will be divided into sections where the first section will introduce the novel, containing a summary, as well as describing the genre, and accounting for literary devices. The following section will look at otherness in the novel. This section will discuss different aspects of otherness, and how they are communicated in the story. After this, there will be an example of cultural appropriation in the novel, before focusing on racism. The last section will summarise and conclude on the points addressed throughout the chapter.

5.1 Introducing *The Buddha of Suburbia*

Hanif Kureishi's 1990 novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* depicts the life of Karim, a boy with an Indian immigrant father and English mother, living in the suburbs of south London. Set in the early seventies the novel follows Karim through ups and downs as he is embarking on his life as an adult, starting when he is seventeen years old and following him into his twenties. For this thesis, the 2017 paperback edition with a foreword by Zadie Smith has been used. This section includes a summary of the story, an overview of the genre and genre features, followed by a short discussion of the literary devices used in the novel.

5.1.1 Summary

As mentioned above, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) follows the seventeen-year-old Karim Amir as he is becoming a young man in the London suburbs in the seventies. Karim is the child of an Indian immigrant father and an English mother, and at the beginning of the book, he is living with them, and his little brother, Allie. The relationship between his parents is strained, and it is made clear early on that they are very different.

In the first chapters of the novel, the reader gets to know Karim and his family members. An important event in the opening chapter, is his father, Haroon, bringing him to a party at the home of social climber Eva Kay and her artist son Charlie who is Karim's classmate, and a person in whom Karim has immense admiration, and sexual desire for. At this party, Karim witnesses his father, who is there as an exotic main attraction for the partygoers, cheating on his mother with Eva in the garden. This makes Karim go back inside the house, where he finds Charlie smoking a joint on the floor of his bedroom. Karim joins him, smokes the joint, and

shares a sexual experience with Charlie, which his father catches the end of. Haroon is disappointed and angry with Karim for being with another boy in this manner, and Karim is angry at his father for cheating with Eva. They ultimately agree that they will keep each other's secrets, and never talk about it again.

Over the next few chapters, the reader gets to know more of Karim's family and friends. He meets a girl, Helen, with whom he starts a short relationship, but struggles with his thoughts always returning to Charlie when he is with her. The reader is also presented with Karim's mother, Margaret's, sister Jean and her husband Ted, who is more well off than Karim's family, and utterly displeased with Haroon's antics as a Buddhist guru-like figure at parties in their neighbourhood. His aunt and uncle try to get Karim to talk some sense into his father, which he refuses. And so, Haroon continues to make his reputation as a suburban Buddha, an expert in the secrets of the orient. The relationship between Haroon and his sister-in-law does not get better when Jean and Ted see him kissing Eva at one of these parties.

When things get hard at home, Karim visits his best friend, and occasional lover, Jamila, who is the daughter of Haroon's best friend Anwar and his wife Jeeta. Jamila is a headstrong young woman who fights for women's rights and does whatever she wants. Karim and Jamila have a few sexual adventures, some of which are quite public but are never anything more than friends. Things take a turn when Anwar, who is a shop owner in the city, decides that it is time for Jamila to marry an Indian man, who can help around the shop. He asks his family in India to find a suitable man for her. Jamila, of course, denies it, which sends her father into a hunger strike that nearly kills him, and eventually, she complies, and Changez arrives in Britain and marries Jamila.

Eventually, Haroon leaves Margaret and moves in with Eva, and Karim decides to live with them. Together, Eva and Haroon buy a flat in London and continue to climb the social ladder. Through Eva, Karim gets the opportunity to meet with important people in the theatre scene and is soon cast in director Shadwell's production of *The Jungle Book*, as the character Mowgli. Shadwell makes Karim exaggerate an Indian accent and paint his skin darker than it is for the role. Karim's performance of the character gets praised by his white family and friends, but his Indian ones are not as impressed by the caricature he is playing and believe it to be racist. The critics, however, love the play, and it attracts a lot of attention.

Due to the attention the play is getting, a renowned director named Pyke comes to watch it one night. He is impressed by Karim's talent and casts him for his next play. In Pyke's theatre group, Karim meets Elanor, a beautiful redheaded actress from a wealthy family. Karim and Elanor initiate a relationship, and this is maybe the only time in the story where Karim is truly in love. Pyke's play comes with new opportunities, but also new challenges for Karim. For the play, the actors are tasked with creating their own character, based on someone from their life. After characters based on both Charlie and Anwar are shut down by Pyke, Karim bases his character on Changez, to the joy of Pyke and the others. The relationship between Karim, Elanor Pyke, and Pyke's Wife, Marlene, takes a strange turn when Pyke wants Karim to have sex with his wife, and Elanor and Pyke initiate a sexual relationship. Karim is not happy with this arrangement but feels he cannot refuse as Pyke has given him the opportunity of a lifetime by casting him for the play.

While living in London, Karim is getting involved in politics, through an actor friend from his time performing in *The Jungle Book*, Terry. Meanwhile, Jamila teaches him about feminist militancy. Jamila and Changez, who still have not consummated their marriage, move into a communal living arrangement, where Jamila becomes pregnant by one of the other tenants. This does not bother Changez much, as the child will be raised by all the members of the commune. Through Jamila and Changez's new lifestyle, Karim also learns about socialism. At the same time, the play he is in opens, and he is faced with moderate success as an actor.

In fact, the play is so much of a success that it is taken to New York. Here, Karim finds himself to be the disappointed boyfriend of a coveted actress and is not very happy with his situation. Furthermore, Elanor has made it clear to him that she has no intention of stopping her affair with Pyke. After a drunken fight with Pyke at a party, where Pyke reveals that the relationship between Karim and Elanor is his creation, Karim leaves Pyke and Elanor for good and meets up with Charlie. Charlie has reinvented himself as Charlie Hero, a successful rock artist, and is now living in New York. Karim stays with him for several months but soon realise that he has outgrown Charlie, and his fascination with him, and ultimately returns to London.

At the end of the story, Karim is reunited with the people he loves, in the city he loves. He has grown as a person and has learned a lot about himself, about love, and about life outside the suburbs. As he returns to London, he auditions for a television soap opera and gets the part. In the end, Karim lets the reader know that he is both happy and miserable, and we leave him with this notion, still full of hope for the future.

5.1.2 Genre

The Buddha of Suburbia (Kureishi, 2017) is a coming-of-age novel and is credited as a work of fiction. It is, however, also heavily influenced by the real-life of its author, Hanif Kureishi. Therefore, it is also somewhat biographical. Kureishi describes growing up in the London suburbs, facing what he calls “casual racism”, and an attitude from the Brits of Indians being inferior humans, and born to be their servants (The British Library, 2016, 1:45). He goes on to describe a feeling of being very restricted and oppressed in the suburbs, where the expected future was to work as a civil servant like his father was. He states that he saw it as his only way to get out of the suburbs was to become an artist of some sort, and that is why he became an author (The British Library, 2016, 2:45). There are many similarities between Kureishi’s story and that of Karim, making it clear that the novel is, indeed, influenced by the author’s own life.

The novel is, as previously mentioned, a coming-of-age novel. In some places, it is also listed as a *Bildungsroman*. *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) addresses themes that are highly relevant in a coming-of-age novel. One of these is identity. Hanif Kureishi himself talks about growing up in a time where the notion of what identity is, and how it develops, is shifting. He argues that growing up in the fifties and early sixties, there was an idea that a person’s identity was set from very early on. The expectation was to get married, buy a house, have kids, do your job and then retire, without breaking out of the norm of what your identity should be, and was expected to be (The British Library, 2016, 3:00). Kureishi also argues that by the mid-to-late sixties this changed, and identity became more fluid, much with the help of pop culture and stars like David Bowie, who were constantly reinventing themselves, changing their hair, and standing out in a crowd, playing with gender norms (The British Library, 2016, 3:43). This kept being relevant, and more prominent during the seventies when the story of the novel is set.

These are notions that heavily influenced the story of Karim and his friends and family in *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017). The influence of pop culture, and David Bowie, is shown throughout the novel, maybe most noticeably in the character of Charlie Kay, later Charlie Hero, a classmate of Karim’s. The two boys attend the school where the icon is an alumnus, and Charlie himself is inspired by Bowie escaping the South London suburban life and turning himself into something more. Karim himself is going through many phases of reinventing himself and his identity, trying to find his place. These struggles are relatable to youth of the same age as the protagonist, also growing up and finding their place, and help establish the place of the novel as a coming-of-age novel.

The themes which make *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) a coming-of-age novel, can also categorise it as a Bildungsroman. The bildungsroman originated in Germany and is a literary term of a novel that explores the formative years of its protagonist, and both the psychological and moral growth from adolescence until adulthood (MasterClass, 2021). The word itself is made up of the German words for 'education' (Bildung) and 'novel' (roman) and can loosely be translated into 'a novel of education' or even 'a novel of formation' (MasterClass, 2021). A coming-of-age novel is often a subgenre within the Bildungsroman. That is not to say that every coming-of-age novel is also a Bildungsroman, this said, coming-of-age is often a central theme in the Bildungsroman.

A Bildungsroman follows a certain structure, centred around the protagonist's journey to maturity. In a Bildungsroman, the protagonist usually suffers a loss of emotional significance early in the story (MasterClass, 2021). In *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017), this would be Karim witnessing his father cheating being unfaithful towards his mother in the first chapter, and the subsequent divorce between the parents. This is usually followed by a journey inspired by the loss, during this journey the aim is to come to a greater understanding of how the world works and to gain life experience (MasterClass, 2021). For Karim, this journey can be argued to be when he decides to leave the suburbs with his father after the divorce and is getting serious about pursuing his acting career. The ups and downs he faces during this journey add to the significance of his journey to learning about life and maturing. The following structural point of interest in a Bildungsroman revolves around conflict and personal growth. This is where the protagonist makes mistakes and is at odds with society in some way, but in the end, they end up accepting the norms of society and are again welcomed into society (MasterClass, 2021). In the narrative of *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017), Karim makes many mistakes during his years in London, both sexual, personal, and career-wise. He falls out of touch with his mother and brother and hurts some of the people closest to him with his choices. Eventually, he makes things right and returns to somewhat normalcy. The last point that is being looked for in a Bildungsroman is the achievement of maturity. This is where the protagonist shows that they have learned from their experiences and mistakes (MasterClass, 2021). In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, this happens when Karim returns to London, realising that he has outgrown Charlie, and the rock-star lifestyle and fame pursuit he is living and makes things right with his friends and family. It is also where Karim understands that he has had love surrounding him all along and is content with his life.

Taking all this into consideration, one conclusion could be that *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017), is a coming-of-age Bildungsroman, which is influenced by the political and social environment of the time it was set, and, also, the personal life of the author. This makes it semi-biographical, as well.

5.1.3 Literary devices

When it comes to the style of *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi 2017), one of the most noticeable literary choices from the beginning is that it is narrated in a first-person view, in the past tense, by the main protagonist, Karim Amir. We cannot be certain that Karim is a reliable narrator, as the narration is subjective, and does not take others' thoughts into consideration. Everything that is learned throughout the novel, is from Karim's point of view and his individual experienced. With a first-person, subjective, narrator, we can never be certain that we are getting the whole story, or simply the parts the narrator wants us to know.

Another noticeable thing is the orality of the novel, it is almost as if Karim is talking to the reader, retelling his story. Dialogues are written in everyday speech, and read as organic, and give the impression of realism, that these are conversations these people really have had. The depictions of the environment and body language are vivid and give substance to the writing.

The vivid descriptions of situations, people, and dialogue make the novel fun and engaging to read. An example of these descriptions is when Karim describes his father "practising for the yoga Olympics" (Kureishi, 2017, p.4) in his bedroom only wearing his underpants and vest: "He was standing on his head now, balanced perfectly. His stomach sagged down. His balls and prick fell forward in his pants. The considerable muscles in his arms swelled up and he breathed energetically" (Kureishi, 2017, p.4). Here we can see short descriptive sentences, giving the reader time to really register the mental images of what is happening, almost as if it were to happen in real-time. This way of writing can be found in several places throughout the novel.

In addition to this, the novel is also quite clearly set in history. Evidence of the time we are taken to are found in the political climate Karim describes around him, but maybe more noticeably, through the music, he talks about. Karim regularly references music when telling the story. It is revealed early on that Karim goes to the school David Bowie used to attend in his youth, and his descriptions of boys praying in front of his school picture indicate that Bowie had become quite the considerable icon by this time. Karim also references The Beatles, The Doors, and The Rolling Stones.

5.2 Otherness

According to Merriam-Webster, otherness is “the quality or state of being other or different”.

“My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don’t care – Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs and going somewhere. Perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored” (Kureishi, 2017, p.3).

These are the opening lines of Hanif Kureishi’s novel, and a fitting way to start a discussion of otherness in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. The quote above describes Karim’s feelings of otherness in his own words. The fact that it is the opening paragraph of the story, indicates that this is a subject that will be instrumental to the rest of the story.

5.2.1 Racial and cultural otherness

Karim

The quote opening both this section and the novel itself, shows Karim talking about being in a liminal state, stuck in between two cultures, not really belonging fully to either. Being half white makes it hard for him to feel like he belongs in the Indian community, while the fact that he is also visibly half Indian, makes him a minority in the predominantly white suburbs of south London. Because of these factors, Karim oftentimes feels secluded and different. This is further illustrated by his friendship with Jamila, who consistently calls him ‘creamy’, due to the light brown colour of his skin.

Karim’s dream is to escape the suburbs and become an actor. The first play he is cast in is *The Jungle Book* as the character Mowgli. The casting of Karim in this role can be said to be an example of racism in the novel. The director, Shadwell, cast Karim “for authenticity and not for experiences” (Kureishi, 2017, p.147), and makes him wear nothing but a cloth around his waist. In addition to this Shadwell makes his skin darker, covering him in brown makeup, and decides that he should talk with an ‘authentic’ Indian accent. His role as Mowgli is praised by his white peers, but is hurtful to his Indian friends and family, causing another rift between his two cultures. Despite this, the play is a steppingstone for Karim into the world of acting. He is soon cast by an influential director named Pyke, for his next play.

In Pyke's play, the actors are supposed to create their own character, and Pyke tells them to draw inspiration from people from their own backgrounds. Karim's initial thought is to choose Charlie as his inspiration but is told by Pyke that he needs to choose someone black, drawing on his previous role as Mowgli. Karim initially going to Charlie for inspiration shows that Karim does not necessarily think of his background as black, but that he also recognises his white heritage.

These are the instances where the notion of Karim as a hybrid identity becomes validated. He is often in a liminal space, being unsure of which culture he is most at home in. In the instances where Karim is with his friend Jamila and her family, he feels good, but a little out of place, as his skin is a little lighter than theirs, something Jamila likes to point out every chance she gets, by calling him Creamy. In the theatre, this also becomes apparent, when he feels the different reactions of his family and friends, where his white peers are thrilled with his performances, while the Indian ones find it racist.

Changez

Maybe the most apparent case of racial otherness in *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017), is the character of Changez. Brought to England by Jamila's parents to marry her and be a help in her father, Anwar's, shop. Changez struggles to get used to the English way of life and is described as stupid by Karim in the narration. His position is not strengthened by the fact that he has a deformed arm and is of no use for Anwar in the shop.

Changez is tormented throughout the novel. He marries a woman who has no affectionate feelings towards him, is constantly bullied by his father-in-law, and is made fun of behind his back constantly. He is also subject to an attack on the streets of London towards the end of the novel.

Changes are struggling throughout the novel, but always puts on a brave face, and wants to make his new life in Britain work. Karim suspects him of being too stupid to realize that he is being made fun of, but it is later revealed that Changez knows. He is constantly trying to find his place in the group of people surrounding him and escapes into the world of books when he is unsuccessful. Changez is especially fond of the literary works of Sr. Arthur Conan Doyle, and the adventures of Sherlock Holmes. Karim indicates that he thinks this is childish and introduces him to new types of literature as well. Literature becomes Changez's escape from the world.

Because his wife, Jamila, have no affectionate feelings for him, and he is feeling increasingly more frustrated by the situation, he happens to love Jamila who will not even look at him, he seeks the love and affection from a Japanese prostitute, with whom he forms a lasting relationship.

Marriage

In the novel, the reader is presented to marriage in different ways. This section will focus on three of the marriages in the novel. First, it will address the marriage between Haroon and Margaret, the protagonist's parents. Secondly, it will look at the marriage between family friends Jeeta and Anwar. Thirdly the marriage between Jeeta and Anwar's daughter Jamila and Changez will be presented. Lastly, it will discuss the cultural implications of the marriages, and the differences between them.

Haroon and Margaret

Karim indicates from the very start of the novel that his parents are not in a happy marriage. This is proven when Haroon cheats on Margaret in the very first chapter of the book. Karim describes his father as lazy, and with very traditional expectations of the gender norms in a marriage. Karim narrates that: "Dad had firm ideas about the division of labour between men and women" (Kureishi, 2017, p. 19). This means that Margaret is in charge of all the housework and cooking, even though she also works, while Haroon sees his responsibilities as fulfilled when he gets home from work. When Karim catches his father cheating, he reveals that he knew the marriage between his parents was unhappy, however, he had never considered that his family would break up, and so the cheating and subsequent divorce hurts him.

Anwar and Jeeta

Anwar and Jeeta, Jamila's parents, have a more traditional Indian marriage. Karim says that Jeeta is an Indian princess, sent to England by her family to marry Anwar. There are not many signs of true love between the pair, but they seem generally content together.

Jamila and Changez

Whereas Anwar wanted to marry an Indian girl of his family's choosing, he gave his daughter Jamila no choice in the matter, thus making Jamila and Changez's marriage the most unorthodox out of the three marriages mentioned here. Jamila had an arranged marriage to Changez, without meeting him before it was decided that they should marry. This is not

uncommon in Eastern countries such as India, but are very foreign to Eastern readers, making it a true testament of Indian culture and family dynamics in the novel.

The Suburban Buddha

At the very beginning of the story, Karim's father, Haroon, brings him to a party in a richer neighbourhood, where Haroon is set to be the main attraction. Haroon is hired by social climber Eva Kay to serve as some sort of expert on the orient, a guru who was supposed to lead the guest into a higher sense of enlightenment. This despite the fact that Haroon did not actually belong to any religion practicing these things. This is affirmed when Karim witness, and hears, his father cheating on his mother at the party with the hostess Eva: "Was I conceived like this, I wondered, in the suburban night air, to the wailing of Christian curses from the mouth of a renegade Muslim masquerading as a Buddhist?" (Kureishi, 2017, p.16). the events at this party establish Haroon as the titular Buddha of suburbia, as Karim starts calling him God, or Buddha after this, and he keeps appearing at these parties as a guru.

Haroon came to England in the '50s with his friend Anwar. They were sent to an expensive boarding school and were supposed to come back to India as "a qualified and polished English gentleman lawyer and an accomplished ballroom dancer" (2017, p.24). However, Haroon spends his allowance on expensive clothes and drinks and is cut off by his parents when they find out that he neglects his studies. Haroon also has bad work ethics and works in a Civil Service job that he dislikes, with no hope of a promotion. Haroon wants to be famous and to achieve fame and status he uses generic eastern spiritual teachings. He identifies with whatever is most marketable. He often takes on an identity that is stereotypical and does not really have any hold in the Indian or Muslim cultures he himself belongs to. This is emphasised by his appearing at private parties as a spiritual guru.

In the history of Asians in Britain, Haroon and Anwar belong to the group of Indian settlers arriving in Britain after World War II, as students. Haroon have an aristocratic background from India, and the culture shock was huge for him coming to England as a student. In the narration Karim tells the reader:

Dad was amazed and heartened by the sight of the British in England, though. He'd never seen the English in poverty, as roadsweepers, dustmen, shopkeepers and barmen. He'd never seen an Englishman stuffing bread into his mouth with his fingers, and no one had told him the English didn't wash regularly because the water was so

cold – if they had water at all. And when Dad tried to discuss Byron in local pubs no one warned him that not every Englishman could read or they didn't necessarily want tutoring by an Indian on the poetry of a pervert and a madman. (Kureishi, 2017, p.24-25)

Haroon is a first-generation immigrant to England and is struggling to fit into British society. He craves fame, and his aristocratic background has made him careless with money, lazy, and has a bad work ethic. In many ways, he is the opposite of what a working-class Brit is supposed to be.

Haroon has a need to feel like he belongs in the community, and this is among the reasons why he is taking in this stereotypical, exotic, guru-like persona. His family mocks him when he is “practicing for the yoga Olympics” (Kureishi, 2017, p.2), but at the parties, he feels like people gain respect for him. This is maybe the only place where Haroon feels admired and respected.

Haroon eventually leaves his wife, Karim's mother Margaret, and moves in with Eva, at which point, his youngest son, Allie, refuses to have much to do with him. Karim moves with his father and Eva, while Allie stays with Margaret, further establishing the lack of love and respect he feels at home.

The fact that Haroon is hungry for fame and status, wanting to return to the social standing he is used to from his childhood and youth in India, is probably one of the reasons he is drawn to the avid social climber Eva. He sees her as a means of reaching these goals, and this proves more important to him than staying with his family.

Anwar

At the beginning of the novel, Karim describes Anwar as the uncle he would run to if his father was difficult. Anwar and Haroon arrived in England together as young students and have been best friends most of their lives.

Anwar drastically changes his behaviour a few chapters into the novel, when he has decided that Jamila should marry a good Indian boy, the same way he has married a high standing Indian girl, back in the day. When Jamila refuses to marry a man, she had never met, Anwar goes on a hunger strike that almost kills him, before Jamila agrees to his terms. Anwar is, like Haroon, also a first-generation immigrant in Britain, and one could argue that this is his way of regaining charge of his daughter, that he is feeling is slipping away from him, and joining the British

culture to a larger extent. Here, he is othering himself from the other people in his life, who all think he is being foolish.

5.2.2 Sexual otherness

Karim

The novel is also filled with somewhat questionable sexual encounters, many of which confuses Karim. From early on in the novel, Karim questions his sexuality. He talks about this pull towards both male and female partners:

“It was unusual, I knew, the way I wanted to sleep with boys as well as girls. I liked strong bodies and the backs of boys’ necks. I liked being handled by men, their fists pulling me; and I liked objects – the ends of brushes, pens, fingers – up my arse. But I liked cunts and breasts, all of women’s softness, long smooth legs and the way women dressed. I felt it would be heart-breaking to have to choose one or the other, like having to decide between the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.” (Kureishi, 2017, p.55).

In this segment, Karim suggests that his sexual behaviour is abnormal. Later in the novel, it also becomes clear that this is something that is not easily accepted by his father, Haroon.

Among the sexual encounters Karim has in this book, is quite public sex with Jamila. He also has an encounter with a dominatrix with his friend Charlie, for whom he also has an intense sexual desire. Throughout the novel, Karim seems content with being able to pick up whomever he wants but has few lasting relationships. His sexual encounters are predominantly with females, even though his fascination and desire for men are made evident many times. He also has a longer-lasting, emotional, and sexual relationship with a woman, Elanor, a relationship which seems to have a greater significance in Karim’s life.

The relationship Karim forms with Charlie is complicated and at times all-consuming of his life. Karim struggles with feelings of love towards his schoolmate, but at times that love turns to hate. By the end of the novel, Karim finds catharsis when he realises that he is over Charlie while watching him being, quite descriptively, handled by a Dominatrix.

Karim’s sexual life and his love for theatre collide at one point in the novel when Karim is offered a role in a play by director Matthew Pyke. This collaboration turns into a strange relationship, where Pyke more-or-less gifts Karim to his wife, as an exotic boy-toy for them to enjoy. This turns into some sort of a four-way relationship, involving Karim and his girlfriend

Elanor, and Pyke and his Wife Marlene. Karim feels like he cannot say no to Pyke, because of the opportunities he has given him career-wise. He is not happy with the fact that Pyke and Elanor are sleeping together on a regular basis.

Jamila

Jamila is a free-spirited feminist who does not care much what others think of her. She is strong-willed and sexually liberated. Jamila and Karim have sex quite regularly, a relationship that lasts even after Jamila marries Changez. She has, however, no sexual or affectionate feelings towards her husband, and refuses to sleep with him.

At the end of the novel, Jamila's free-spirited attitude towards sex and relationships are further established, as she and Changez move into a communal living situation, where Jamila becomes pregnant by one of the other tenants. When Karim visits them, no one seems to mind whom the baby belongs to, as they intend to raise it together in the communal living.

5.2.3 Fitting in

“And so I sat in the centre of this old city that I loved, which itself sat at the bottom of a tiny island. I was surrounded by people I loved, and I felt happy and miserable at the same time. I thought of what a mess everything had been, but that it wouldn't always be that way” (Kureishi, 2017, p.284). This is the concluding sentence of *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) and is doing a good job of describing the end of Karim's journey to become content with who he is. He has become an accomplished actor and has upon his return to London landed a job as an actor in a television soap.

Karim's younger brother, Allie, took more drastic measures to fit in than Karim did. Allie's name is really Amar, but he “called himself Allie to avoid racial trouble” (Kureishi, 2017, p.19). Allie went to private school and danced ballet.

5.3 Cultural Appropriation

The issue of appropriation is most noticeable in the friends and acquaintances Eva surrounds herself with. One of the clearest pieces of evidence of this is when they visit the house of: “Carl and Marianne, friends of Eva, who’d recently had been trekking in India. This was immediately obvious from the sandalwood Buddhas, brass ashtrays, and striped plaster elephants which decorated every available space. And by the fact that Carl and Marianne stood barefoot at the door as we entered” (Kureishi, 2017, p.30). It is obvious that these two people want to be showcasing a culture they are not really a part of, as their own, this is further established when Karim overhears Carl say that “there are two sorts of people in the world – those who have been to India and those who haven’t” (Kureishi, 2017, p.30), a sentence that made Karim so uncomfortable that he had to walk away from the situation.

5.4 Racism

There are several instances of racism in *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2018). We have already looked at the racism Karim faces in the theatre and mentioned that Changez was brutally attacked on the London streets. Another instance of racism is Anwar's fear of his store being attacked in the middle of the night, after being subject to angry skinheads tormenting him, and threatening the shop. This is something that affects Anwar's psychological state quite a bit, and he is described to always sleep with a bucket of water beside the bed in case someone tries to burn down the shop. Anwar and his family are always living in fear that their livelihood could be destroyed by people that do not approve of their existence in the neighbourhood.

One could also argue that the way Jamila insists on calling Karim 'Creamy' is a form of racism, as it is derogatory to his lighter shade of brown skin. Establishing for Karim that he is not Indian enough, the way he is always expected to play characters of colour in the plays he is cast in establishes to him that he is not white either, making him double discriminated against by his peers. This is something that contributes to Karim's issues with belonging, and his struggles to finding his own identity.

Not all the racism in the novel comes from outside sources. Some of it comes from within Karim's own family, and his aunt Jean, Margaret's sister. Jean is frequently quite vocal about her feelings towards Margaret's choice to marry Haroon, and her decision to stay with him. She is very disapproving of everything Haroon does, and how he dresses himself. She is constantly finding ways in which to break Haroon's spirit, calling him names and doing her best to sabotage his endeavours. As previously mentioned, Jean and her husband, Ted, is more well off than Karim's family, and lives in a wealthier neighbourhood. When Haroon starts appearing as a guru in their circle of friends, she goes to Karim to try to get him to stop Haroon and his guru parties.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter opened with an introduction to the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi (2017) which included a plot summary, as well as an account of the genre and literary devices. Subsequently, it has explored three central aspects of the novel. This close reading has been done to establish themes and issues in the novel, relevant to the aim of teaching intercultural competence in Norwegian classrooms.

Firstly, the theme of otherness within the novel was addressed. Through the exploration of the novel, it has become apparent that otherness is a very prominent theme in this story, and several types of otherness has been identified. A big part of otherness in the novel stems from racial and cultural otherness, several of the characters are othered either by themselves or by other people around them. Anwar others himself from his family and peers by regressing back to a very conservative and traditional Indian mindset, by arranging a marriage for his daughter, and manipulating his family, claiming dishonour, and going on hunger strike, when Jamila does not want to go through with the marriage. Haroon others himself from his family by leaving them, and also by taking on the guru persona and performing at parties. Karim is othered by several people throughout the story. In the theatre world, he is othered based on his skin colour, but does not necessarily always see this as an issue as he is given roles in plays, but he is given a very narrow scope of roles due to his darker skin tone. Karim is also othered by his friend Jamila, who insists on calling him 'Creamy' because he is half white, and therefore have a lighter skin tone than their Indian peers.

The reader of Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) is also faced with instances of cultural otherness, some things the average, Norwegian learner might not have considered before, something that is other from the norm they are used to. One of these are the different marriage structures in the novel. Especially with the arranged marriage between Jamila and Changez is this issue relevant. In this situation, the reader gets to follow what transpires, from the moment Jamila's father Anwar decides that it is time for her to marry, up until the wedding and them moving out by themselves. However other this arrangement is for Norwegian learners; their marriage is also different in other ways. They decide to be married, but have no intimate relationship, and eventually decides to move into a communal living arrangement, with a group of like-minded people.

The last aspect of otherness this thesis has brought up, is sexual otherness, focusing primarily on Karim and Jamila. Not only do these two characters share a sexual history, but they can also both be considered other themselves with their sexuality. Karim struggles throughout the novel with finding himself sexually. He has several sexual encounters through the book, both with other men, and with females. Few of these seem to have a great impact on his life. He also uses his sexuality to keep his place in Pyke's acting group, when he agrees to be a boytoy for the director and his wife.

When it comes to Jamila, her sexuality is very open and free, and at no point is she embarrassed about it. She openly has sex with Karim after her wedding with Changez, while she refuses to even sleep in the same bed as her husband. After moving into the commune, she gets pregnant by one of the group members, and the commune decide to raise the baby together as a group.

Secondly, cultural appropriation, although not the most prominent theme in the novel, also has been accounted for to some extent. The cultural appropriation Karim encounters with the group of people his father and Eva surrounds themselves with, leaves him uncomfortable, which is a testament to the problematic nature of the issue.

Thirdly, a closer look into elements of racism. There are several instances of racism in the novel, and Kureishi does a good job of describing the fear and helplessness that comes with these episodes. These moments help the reader understand how racism affect not only the direct victim, but also the people surrounding them.

In addition to these themes and issues, identity is an overarching theme throughout the novel. Several of the characters the reader encounter are searching for their own identity, trying to fit in. Of course, as the reader follows Karim and his story closely, his search of self is the most apparent, but also the many faces of Charlie Kay come to mind while talking about identity. Karim's younger brother Allie is also shown as searching for his place. Allie has made his name more English, as he is really called Amar, and attends a private school and goes to ballet class. It seems like Allie's sense of identity is found even before Karim has reflected too much about his own, something he respects his brother for.

In conclusion, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017) contains several themes and issues relating to interculturality and identity throughout the story. The autobiographical nature, combined with the first-person narrator in Karim himself, makes this an appealing novel, with a story that is both interesting, and feels personal to follow. The combination of these factors

makes this a coming-of-age novel, that many learners can find elements of familiarity in. In addition to this, following Karim's story, as a boy with a minority background, through his own words, might let the issues register in a more powerful way, than if the story was told by an all-knowing third-person narrator. All these factors show that *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017) has enough relevant issues and elements, to be a suitable source to use when teaching intercultural competence.

6. Didactic Benefits

As previously outlined, the English subject curriculum states that learners should be exposed to different types of texts through their education. In the competence aims for the first year of upper secondary school, learners attending the general studies programs (VG1, SF), it states that the learners should be able to discuss and analyse different types of texts in English and be able to reflect on the content of the texts. In addition to this, the competence aims also states that the learner should be able to explore the connection between historical contexts and the social conditions and diversity in the English-speaking world and reflect on these issues (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). These competence aims, as written out in full in section 3.1, explain why teachers should consider using a broader variety of literature, on several different topics.

While the competence aims in themselves explain the need to use literature in the upper secondary classroom, other parts of the national curriculum further these thoughts. As outlined in chapter 2, the national curriculum makes several mentions of reading and encountering different types of literary texts, throughout their education in the English subject. Another thing that became more prominent during the 2020 revision of the national curriculum, is intercultural competence, and the role English should have in developing this competence in the learners. Although the national curriculum makes several mentions of both literature and intercultural competence, however, the connection between them is, in any great extent, not made.

According to Christiane Lütge (2014) one of the benefits of using literature to foster intercultural understanding in learners is the fact that literature has the ability to bring different cultural voices into the classroom, and lets the learner imagine how it is to be in the subjects' shoes and see the world the way they do (p.103). Lütge writes that: "Teaching children's literature in its diverse shapes and forms, offers a fascinating platform for exploring questions of identity, values and worldview, the basic ingredients for intercultural learning" (2014, p.104). With this in mind, it is easy to argue that integrating authentic multicultural texts into the English subject classroom can be beneficial to help learners see the connections between history, culture, and society, and promote a more nuanced worldview. Provided that the teacher facilitates for positive classroom discussions and contributes with a historical background for the novel.

In the previous chapters, an effort has been made to account for relevant theory, as well as relevant excerpts and factors from Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) to show highlight the importance of literature in language education. In addition to this, there have been an aim to intertwine the theory and the novel, to build a foundation on which to discuss the didactic benefits of using this type of minority literature in schools. In this section, the thesis will use the factors outlined above to carry out this discussion. The aim of this section is to connect the aspects of the national curriculum with the theory and the novel, to show how authentic use of literature, specifically the chosen novel, Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017), can be used in education. It will also suggest ways to implement this in the classroom.

6.1 Historical context

As previously mentioned, the competence aims for subject English calls for the learners to be able to see connections between historical contexts and the social conditions and diversity in the English-speaking world. *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017) can be used to achieve this.

6.1.1 Postcolonial Britain

The Buddha of Suburbia (Kureishi, 2017) can help learners explore the relationship between the postcolonial world and the historical context it is a result of. Kureishi's novel addresses several postcolonial issues and is therefore a text that can be used for this purpose.

Haroon Amir is an Indian man who were sent to England, by his family, to become an educated man. In the literary analysis it has been established that Haroon, as well as his life-long friend Anwar, both arriving in England in the 1950's, belongs to the wave of Indian immigrants that came over after World War II. Making these two characters a good starting point in discussing south Asian diaspora and immigration.

As outlined in section 4.3.1, there is s difference in how Karim and Haroon experience their lives as part of a minority. Haroon is more connected with his Indian past, as he is a first-generation immigrant, and are more connected to India. Karim, on the other hand, is more English, as a second-generation son of an immigrant and an English woman and must navigate his life as such. The history of Indians in England is necessary to see the differences in their

experience, and to understand why Haroon is actively searching for an identity which is exotic and intriguing to the crowds he wants to please.

The diasporic history of Indians in England can also help make sense of the choices Anwar takes on behalf of his family in the novel. Anwar, like Haroon, seeks to his heritage and homeland when he grows older, and starts to feel more helpless.

6.1.2 Sex, drugs and rock'n roll: 1970's London

The novel itself is set in London during the 1970's. It is also worth looking at the social climate of this time while discussing the novel. As established in section 5.1.1, Karim finds himself being dragged into protests, socialism and feminism by the people surrounding him. The novel is set during the 1970's in a time leading up to the Thatcherism of the 1980's (Nasta, 2002, p.190), a time which saw many changes for minority populations. By knowing something about this, it is easier to understand some of the issues arising in the novel.

A novel like this can also serve as a source of evidence of the time it was placed in and the issues and social conditions of that time. In this novel, British culture is shown through not only the political climate leading up to the Thatcher era, but also through music and style that is vividly described. The soundtrack this novel is given with The Rolling Stones and David Bowie and the likes of them, puts the novel seamlessly into a time, place and ambiance that are worth discussing further.

Kureishi describes the suburbs as a place to leave, and the young people living there is described to want better things for themselves, but rarely getting out of there. The stars of the time, and especially David Bowie as he went to the same school as Karim in the novel, is used as examples of what you can become if you make it in the city.

Munden and Sandhaug (2017) writes that: "A good narrative, be it a novel, a short story or a film, is about unique characters in both everyday and exceptional situations. In choosing stories that are set in realistic social and historical settings, English teachers make good use of the autonomy that *Kunskapsløftet* allows them" (p.375). *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017), is clearly set in a realistic social and historic setting, making it easy for learners to engage with the story, as well as it becomes a valid choice for teachers when selecting literature for their learners.

6.2 Intercultural competence

Christiane Lütge writes in *Otherness in Children's Literature* (2014) that “Intercultural learning as a new paradigm for teaching literature has resulted in an increasing number of postcolonial and minority texts in the foreign language classroom, because these often dramatize intercultural conflicts and reveal causes for misunderstanding and misrecognition of others” (p.98). This can be interpreted to mean that the use of literature to foster intercultural learning can help combat prejudice, as the learner reading the literary work gain an insight into the lives of minority populations, and the conflicts that leads to the prejudice in the first place.

The Revised Norwegian national curriculum includes a certain emphasis on intercultural competence in the subject English curriculum. As seen in chapter 2, there are several instances where intercultural competence is mentioned. To successfully promote intercultural communicative competence, Michal Byram (1997) argues that there are different factors that must be present for learners to have prosperous and successful conversations with individuals from other cultures. Byram's theory is outlined in section 4.1.1. The following section will discuss how to use literature with Byram's theory, and how *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017) fits within it.

6.2.1 Literature and Byram's model of ICC

Byram's model presents five factors that he has deemed instrumental for successful intercultural communication. This section will discuss them in relation to the thesis one by one, aiming to show how *The Buddha of Suburbia* is relevant to foster intercultural communicative competence.

The first factor Byram is addressing in his model is Attitudes (*savoir être*). Byram argues that meeting others with prejudice leads to unsuccessful interactions and that we should approach other cultures with “attitudes of curiosity and openness, of readiness to suspend disbelief and judgment with respect to others' meanings, beliefs, values and behaviours” (Byram, 2020, p.35). With this, Byram means that one should meet others with an openness to see things from the other's point of view and to not fall victim to own prejudices.

Going back to Christiane Lütge and *Otherness in Children's Literature* (2014) where she is saying that minority and postcolonial literature can reveal the causes of misunderstanding and

misrecognition (p.98), one could easily draw parallels between the two. Both are essentially talking about combating prejudice in the learners. To be able to combat these prejudices, the learner must be presented with, and be exposed to different cultures, and the issues they are facing. As Lütge is arguing, literature gives a good starting point for these encounters in the classroom.

The Buddha of Suburbia (Kureishi, 2017) presents its readers with the life and day-to-day struggles of Karim Amir as he is transitioning from boyhood to manhood. Karim himself is met with prejudice and belongs to two cultures. Encountering Karim and following him as he is at the same age as the learners, can help the learner sympathise with the character in a way that might not be possible if they were presented with a much older, or much younger individual. Karim are experiencing many of the same things as the average upper secondary learner, but with the added struggle of being part of a minority. Lütge also argue that one of the benefits of using literature in the classroom this way, is that it can help the learner immerse themselves in the story and help them see the world through the characters eyes (2014, p104). With Karim narrating the story, it may be easier for the learner to become involved in his story, and see the world from his point of view, in turn, helping them to understand and respect him and the culture surrounding him. Following the main character as closely, as the reader does while reading *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017), can have a positive effect on the attitudes of the learner.

The second factor Byram discusses is the factor of Knowledge (*savoir*). This is the notion that an individual will knowingly or unknowingly, bring with their previous knowledge of their own and/or the other's country into the conversation (Byram, 2020, p.36). To achieve this dimension of intercultural communicative competence, knowledge will have to have been learned at some point. If the sources of learning have been lacking, the substance to this aspect will also be lacking, leading to less successful interactions.

As was discussed in section 6.1, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017) has clear historical, social, and political context. To fully consider this factor of Byram's model, teachers will have to make sure that their learners have some added context before reading. Students may benefit on lessons on Britain as a colonial power and the politics leading up to the Thatcher administration, to fully grasp all the political and historical nuances in the story. Many will have some thoughts on the issues that are being addressed, but without the correct information

to base their thoughts on, their outcome can be a misunderstanding one. To follow Byram's reasoning: if the students are not provided with sufficient background information, they cannot be expected to leave behind their inherent prejudice when reading.

The next factor Byram addresses are Skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) and Skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*). The skill of interpreting and relating information is all about previous knowledge, and the ability to relate this knowledge to the situations and encounters that one is faced with. The ability to interpret foreign documents also falls under this dimension. The skill of discovery is "the ability to recognise significant phenomena in a foreign environment" (Byram, 2020, p.40). This is the ability to acquire new knowledge and learn from the encounters.

Drawing on the discussion from the last factors, by going into the encounter with the literary text, the learner should be able to learn new things, and discover nuances for themselves based in the historical context they have, and the attitude and willingness to put themselves in the shoes of another to learn from their experiences. These things in combination, promotes a learner that are keen to learn new things, and that can pick up on nuances because they are well prepared.

Lastly, Byram talks about Critical cultural awareness, political education (*savoir s'engager*). This is when the speaker can use the attitudes, knowledge, and skills and critically evaluate their own and the other's culture (Byram, 2020, p.42). In other words, this is the end goal.

This is where the learner is supposed to end up, after going through the other factors above. These are all the things that are needed for the learner to communicate their views and thoughts in an intercultural context successfully.

6.2.2 Considerations worth noting

Munden and Sandhaug (2017) calls for some caution when choosing to read texts to learn about culture and society as they write that doing so is "an **ethnographic approach to literature**, and it can lead to the neglect of the obvious fact that all authors make artistic choices about how to represent the world. Even when it is the author's ambition to be as lifelike as possible, any narrative, be it fictional or non-fictional, is a representation, and not the truth itself" (p.377).

These are points that are worth noting when deciding to use this approach to intercultural competence in classrooms and is something teachers should consider before choosing to do so.

Another aspect worth noting, is the criticism against Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence. Some of this criticism is accounted for in section 4.1.2 of this thesis. Despite the criticism existing, and is valid, this section has been rooted in Byram's model, with the criticism in mind. This choice has been made because of the influence Byram's model still have in the field of research to this day. Still, it is important to take the criticism into consideration when choosing this approach to intercultural learning.

The last aspect to note here, is the need for some lessons on historical context before reading the novel. The novel is set in a time this generation, and the generations to come, have no life experience from or knowledge of. Teachers will have to consider an approach for providing their learners with central historical and political elements to further their understanding of the novel.

6.3 Culture, society, and identity

Culture and identity are huge factors in *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017). The national curriculum calls for students to be able to reflect on these issues, this is aspects of the subject where the novel can be of great help to lay a foundation for discussion and reflection.

Munden and Sandhaug (2014) writes that “our task as English teachers is to choose topics and texts that encourage pupils to explore culture and society in ways that promote curiosity rather than judgement, to develop engaging learning activities and to be ourselves models of intercultural respect and tolerance” (p.156). in other words, it is our responsibility to set good examples for our learners, and to promote engaging learning situations for them.

By choosing to use literature to achieve this, we can transport the learners into another world, and let them see the world from another person’s point of view. Making it more engaging for the learners to engage themselves with the material. Exposing learners to different cultures through multicultural texts can also help them rid themselves of prejudices they may have towards other culture, whether they are aware of them or not. Learners need to be exposed to a wide variety of cultural expressions to develop the language and communication skills to be able to communicate with others (Munden & Sandhaug, 2014, p.158-.159). we also know that one’s culture is closely intertwined with one’s identity. This section will explore these notions more.

The Buddha of Suburbia (Kureishi, 2017) contains many aspects that relate to culture, society, and identity, making it a good example of literature to use for this purpose. Munden and Sandhaug (2014) argues that when choosing literature for this purpose, teachers should be diligent in choosing works that are set in realistic social and historical settings (p.375). this is criteria *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017) meets.

The main protagonist of the novel, Karim Amir, has a hybrid identity rooted in his two very different backgrounds, his Indian background inherited by his father, and his English background inherited by his mother. Karim grew up in the South-London suburbs, and expresses that, at heart, he feels more English than Indian, but are experiencing that he does not quite belong in either culture, causing him to try and escape the suburbs to find his place in the world.

The Buddha of Suburbia (Kureishi 2017) brings up many issues surrounding culture, society, and identity, that learners should be able to relate to, to some extent. Munden and Sandhaug (2014) brings forward several suggestions of literary works that can serve this purpose, the one thing they all have in common is that the protagonist is a resilient and driven young individual that the learner can relate to, and that are close to them in age (p.377). In addition to this, all the suggested works gives new insight into other cultures, societies, and ways of life than what the learner might be used to (p.377).

The aspects outlined above also rings true for Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Karim gives valuable insight into the life of a struggling actor of mixed race growing up in the suburbs of London in the 70's, something the generation of learners growing up today have no knowledge of. Karim is driven and resilient, his main goal is to escape the suburbs and reach the city, no matter what he must do to achieve it.

In the novel, Karim, as well as his family and friends, are subjected to issues only people of colour can have a concept of how feels, allowing the reader to partake in the experience from his point of view. There are several instances of racially motivated slurs, threats, and violence throughout the book, where Karim, as the narrator of the story, does not shy away from the descriptions. Karim is also subject to a quieter form of racism while trying to make it as an actor. He is treated like an attraction in his first play, playing Mowgli in *The Jungle book*, and having to conform to a racial caricature of an Indian boy. This becomes a pattern in his professional acting career, where he is time-and time again forced to play caricatures of Indian people.

Karim also struggles a great deal to find his own identity, both culturally and sexually. He feels other in every way from both his white and Indian peers. By allowing the reader to follow his story so closely, Kureishi lets the reader experience everything Karim is in a very personal way. This, in turn, facilitates intercultural learning by giving the learner insight into a world they are not otherwise part of.

6.4 Suggestions for classroom implementation

There are many ways of working with literature in language education. This thesis has chosen to focus on reading in class, dramatization, and adaptations. In addition to this, this section will provide a note on struggling readers in the classroom while working with these kinds of projects.

6.4.1 Reading in class

In section 4.2.1, the thesis outlined aspects of extensive reading in language education. This section will expand on these and suggest how to implement reading into the classroom, while reading *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017).

Munden and Sandhaug (2017) argues that when reading in class, the teacher should facilitate so that the learners have as few distractions around them as possible, allowing them to read in their own tempo and comfort level, they must be comfortable (p.296). Learners read in different speeds, and some will be done reading before others. It is important to facilitate for good and specific post-reading activities, that the faster learners can do quietly when they finish reading what they are supposed to. It is important that the more careful readers also get the opportunity to do the post-reading activities. To avoid distractions in the room, these guidelines should be given before the reading has started (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p.296).

One way to facilitate this, is to give out post-it notes to all the learners. While they are reading, they should use the post-it's to write down their thoughts along the way and stick them to the page or margin of the book. At the end of a chapter, they can go back, and with the help of the post-it notes, create a reading log for that chapter. This comes in handy when they are reading longer literary works, and they can at any time go back to see their own notes to refresh their memory.

Reading is a basic skill in Norwegian classrooms, all learners are expected to become proficient readers during their schooling. The descriptions of reading as a basic skill are outlined in section 3.1.4 of the thesis. The section of the revised curriculum describing reading as a basic skill indicates that the learners should be subjected to different types of texts throughout their education, to foster this skill.

As we have seen from the discussion above, there are differences in reading speed, and teachers should facilitate so that every reader is able to read in peace if reading is carried out in class. When choosing literature, teachers should consider the proficiency levels of their whole group of learners (Fenner, 2020, p.251). The thesis will discuss how to facilitate for struggling reader at the end of this chapter.

When choosing *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017) for this thesis, consideration was taken to the reading levels of learners in school when deciding at which level of education to place it. The novel is categorised as a young adult literature, and is relatively easy to read, however, there are some issues that are brought up that demand for more maturity than an average learner of lower secondary school may have, and so the natural choice was to place it within the competence aims and frames for upper secondary school.

6.4.2 Dramatization

One of the suggestions Munden and Sandhaug (2017) brings up in *Engelsk for Secondary school*, is to let the learners choose a scene from the book and act it out in groups (p.403). These scenes may also be chosen by the teacher to get a broad variety of issues and themes being acted out. This kind of readers theatre can help learners better visualise and experience the aspects of the novel they are acting out in front of each other.

In *Body and Language: intercultural learning through drama* (2002), Gerd Bräuer argues that dramatization of intercultural issues, using both mind and body to experience these aspects of interculturality can help in a deeper understanding of the issues that are being presented (p.xi). That living a character's experience through your own body may foster a deeper understanding of the situation

There are many parts of *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017) that is possible to act out in this way. A way to solve this is print out different excerpts from the book and give them out to groups of learners. The teacher should, in this case choose excerpts that depicts instances where Karim narrates about something clearly relating to interculturality. One option could be to dramatize one of the instances where racism occurs, and let the learners experience it for themselves to gain understanding of how this might feel to be a victim of. Another can be at one of Haroon's appearances as a guru in a higher class neighbourhood than that he belongs in. there are many fun ways to do this, but the scene should have a clear purpose.

6.4.3 Struggling readers

There can be many reasons for a learner to be struggling with reading. writing. This could be a film or series based on the novel, a graphic novel, or an audio book. Not every learner will be comfortable reading, and some might have dyslexia or other reading challenges that makes it hard for them to focus on large works of literature. A good way to engage more learners in the story that are presented, is to look at different adaptations of the story in other formats than in writing. This could be as an audio book, graphic novel or a film or series adaptation. For the student struggling with reading, these can be great alternatives to traditional reading.

6.5 Summary

This discussion has showed that there are many relevant parts of *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017), that can be used in a classroom setting in Norwegian upper secondary schools, and that there are many didactically beneficial aspects to using it.

The discussion has also suggested ways of incorporating the novel directly into the classroom, also considering struggling readers, and options for facilitating to them. The discussion have connected the novel with the theory provided in the theory chapter, and provided evidence as to why this is a suitable novel for this purpose.

7. Conclusion

The overall aim of this thesis has been to explore how reading multicultural literary texts, opposed to other types of texts, can foster intercultural competence and, in turn, acceptance. In addition to this, it has aimed to examine and discuss the potential the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi (2017) has for fostering intercultural competence. It has also aimed to argue that increased intercultural competence will help learners refute stereotypes connected to prejudice.

The research question the thesis has aimed to answer is:

- In what ways are Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) a suitable source for teaching intercultural competence in Norwegian secondary schools.

This chapter will summarise the findings of the research made in this thesis, and offer a conclusion based on the findings. The last section will discuss possibilities for further research in terms on how to further develop this study.

7.1 Summary of findings

This thesis has showed that Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) can be used in a pedagogical way to teach intercultural competence in Norwegian upper secondary classrooms. It has explored the revised Norwegian national curriculum, as well as relevant theories surrounding postcolonial issues, reading in education as well as interculturality in education.

The thesis has provided a close reading an analysis of Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) focusing on parts that are relevant to the topic of the thesis. It has investigated topical challenges that are addressed by the novel and how this relates to the aims for education in Norway. It invites readers to explore the issues further, and to look at the challenges and issues with a keen eye and willingness to explore further.

The discussion has showed in what ways the novel is suitable for teaching intercultural competence in Norwegian upper secondary classrooms, and have offered ways to implement this directly into the classroom. It has showed hoe the novel connects with the theory, and accounts for facilitating for struggling readers.

In conclusion, Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2017) contains several valuable aspects that should be present when teaching intercultural competence in Norwegian secondary schools. The findings of this thesis have indicated that with the help of this novel, teachers of English in the general studies programs in Norwegian upper secondary schools, can cover many of the aspects of the revised national curriculum of 2020. By implementing activities, such as dramatization, around the novel in a classroom setting, learners can further immerse themselves in the story, and better understand the issues they are presented with. Summarising the findings of this thesis, and taking all aspects into consideration, the concluding remark is that there are clear indications of *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017) being a suitable source for teaching intercultural competence, and that this thesis has given examples on ways to use it for this purpose.

7.2 Suggestions for further research

This thesis has made suggestions on how to work with *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi, 2017) to promote intercultural competence from a purely theoretical standpoint. It has also provided historical and theoretical context to the novel and for the classroom discussions.

Going forward with this, it would be interesting to try it out and observe how applicable it really is in the classroom. This could be followed by a questionnaire and interview process, where the results can be made into statistics to have more quantitative research on how this works in practice.

Another interesting thing to try would be to also incorporate the BBC miniseries based on the novel into the discussion. And see if that could prompt more thoughts and reflections in the learners. Working with youths, there is no way to avoid having learners that do not want to read, or that have reading abilities below the level needed to work with a novel like this. To also get these learners involved in the discussion, the miniseries, or the audiobook, could prove to be valuable alternatives to the novel for these students. This is also something that would be interesting to research at a later point.

Another aspect worth researching is incorporating the novel into a period where the education is focusing on set themes. As mentioned in section 6.3.2, full understanding of the historical, political, and social climate the book is set in, requires some knowledge into Britain's history as a colonial power, as well as the time leading up to the Thatcher era in British politics. It

would be interesting to see how the novel can be used in a project spanning over a longer period of time, incorporating several aspects of British culture.

In short, further research should include interviewing and questioning learners and teachers on the use of literature in the English classroom. It should also include ways in which we as teachers, can better include the struggling learners, and the ones unwilling to read, into these kinds of classroom activities.

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